

Internationalizing Teacher Education: Who gains and who loses?

Justin Saldana, PhD

Associate Professor

University of La Verne

1950 Third Street, La Verne, CA 91750, USA.

Abstract

This paper problematizes the discourse of internationalizing teacher education using a critical framework of difference. The notions of difference, power and subjectivity are used to unpack the academic and pedagogical practices of internationalizing teacher education. Internationalizing teacher education should involve the questioning of power dynamics in the privileging and marginalization of knowledge, skills, and ways of being, knowing and doing. Johang Galtung's concept of Cultural Violence is used in establishing a point of reference from which to explain that by participating in this experience abroad the participants are helping to legitimize, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources. Galtung's model of language and cultural imperialism is used to describe the potential harm that internationalizing teacher education might bring to already unequal power relationships in host locations.

This paper problematizes the discourse of internationalizing teacher education using a critical framework of difference. The notions of difference, power and subjectivity are used to unpack the academic and pedagogical practices of internationalizing teacher education. Internationalizing teacher education should involve the questioning of power dynamics in the privileging and marginalization of knowledge, skills, and ways of being, knowing and doing.

Johang Galtung's concept of Cultural Violence is used in establishing a point of reference from which to explain that by participating in this experience abroad the participants are helping to legitimize, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources. Most of the research on the topic of internationalizing teacher education focuses on the transformation of teacher candidates' attitudes, values, and beliefs upon return from their experience abroad. Many studies point to the positive effects of international student teaching experiences in terms of growth in both personal and professional dimensions. (Baker, 1985; Mahan&Stachowski, 1985; Vail &Tennison, 1991).

Other studies show that as a result of completion of residency requirements in international settings, teacher candidates are more accepting of people who differ from themselves; are aware of significant intercultural contributions to modern life; are more frequent and active participants in internationally oriented activities; and are supportive of policies promoting the free exchange of ideas, goods, and people among diverse nations. (Wheeler, 1985). The literature also discusses the benefits to the teacher candidates, the teaching profession, and to the students they work with back in the United States.

Subtractive Internationalization

However, the literature is scant in regards to what happens to the environment and its people after the teacher candidate leaves the time and space from which he/she benefited. The research also shows that teacher candidates might be reticent to engage in an open way about what that means.

For example, Roberts (2007) discusses her observations working with pre-service teachers, and their unwillingness to acknowledge that as citizens of the United States they are over privileged. These pre-service teachers are willing to concede that others in impoverished countries may be disadvantaged. These pre-service teachers are also willing to acknowledge that globalization has winners and losers, and they often claim that the benefits are far greater than the deficits. Roberts (2007) further argues that first world privilege in the United States remains an invisible bundle of unearned assets that can be cashed in on a daily basis without recipients' accountability and visibility for actions that support hidden systems of advantage.

Although this view does not presuppose a zero sum game where one has to relinquish assets for others to gain them, it does point to the existing situation of denying advantages that some people gain from those disadvantaged in other parts of the world. While silences and denials surrounding privilege serve to protect unearned advantages and conferred dominance half of the world's population lives on two dollars a day (Aristide, 2002).

It is understandable that pre-service teachers do not have the mindset that allows them to think critically and reflectively about these issues.

Several studies of teacher preparation (Haakenson, Savukova, & Mason, 1999; Sutton, 1999; Merryfield, 1991) indicate that few prospective teachers are exposed to international content in university-required courses, or in teacher pre-service course work. Very few prospective teachers take foreign language classes. Heyl and McCarthy's (2003) study of 690 licensed teachers in 2001, from three universities, found that 76% of the students did not study foreign languages at all. Education major's participation in study abroad programs is very low as well. In the same study Heyl and McCarthy (2003) found that the institution with the highest percentage of students with study abroad experiences was below 7%.

In addition, Hayward (2000) states that prospective teachers have a limited understanding of issues outside the United States regarding the world's cultures, histories, economies, and political relationships. Heyl and McCarthy (2003) support that contention in their transcript analysis of 690 licensed teachers. Broadly defined "international" curriculum accounted for 15 % of the total earned college credits, with a low of 8% and a high of 26%.

Thus, this is the frame of mind that pre-service teachers have when they go abroad. This frame of mind doesn't get in the way of them taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in international education, but it does get in the way of them understanding the consequences of their experiences in terms of how that experience affects their hosts, and what happens to their hosts, and their environment, after the teacher candidate returns home. It is difficult for teacher candidates to realize that first world privilege is associated with an illusion of meritocracy. They also fail to recognize the myth that choice is equally available to all people.

Therefore, pre-service teachers might not have an understanding of how they are contributing to the inequality and the structures of dependency described below, since their interaction/participation serves to legitimize the status quo and unequal relationships in their host countries and in relation to that of Western colonialism.

Alexander (2001) recognizes that the history of education demonstrates that education has been influenced from international perspectives. There has always been an exchange of ideas and other ways of doing things: ideas, perspectives, and approaches to schooling don't stop at a country's border. When these ideas, perspectives and approaches are imposed on another country or society from the outside it is called colonialism. The concomitant processes associated with this approach are obvious and explicit, in that two parties are coming into contact on an unequal status. Little (2000) states that globalization is happening in the context of unequal relations of power: some countries are having globalization and internationalization thrust upon them with all its attendant challenges and problems. Subordinate relationships are being created within the structures of globalization; in addition to whatever dynamics already exist within each society.

Language Imperialism

Another important concern in the issue of globalization and in regards to internationalizing teacher education is the issue of language. There is a degree of privilege associated with our ability to consider the point of internationalizing teacher education, especially given that most likely that experience will take place in a way that accommodates pre service teachers' inability to speak something other than English. It is important to note that some critics see English as contributing to the promotion of global inequalities and structures of dependency and subordination.

Phillipson (1988) refers tolinguicism as “the ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of their language”. Linguicism is a condition which is best identified within the context of linguistic imperialism, which Phillipson (1988) defines as “an essential constituent of imperialism as a global phenomenon involving structural relations between rich and poor countries in a world characterized by inequality and injustice”. As mentioned above, pre-service teachers engage in this without realizing it, as most engage in English, and have little understanding as to how this affects their hosts.

Galtung offers an explanation of language imperialism as well. Galtung writes that (in Phillipson 1992) the world can be divided into two domains. One domain is the Center, where the powerful Western countries are. The second domain is the Periphery, where the developing and emerging countries are. This configuration is important in understanding Galtung's notion of imperialism, since he asserts that “one society or collective can dominate another”. This domination could manifest itself in a variety of ways, such as, economically, politically, militarily, culturally and socially, and as Phillipson suggests, linguistically. Language is the medium through which the elite of the Center regulate the Periphery, and language plays a crucial function by providing the link between the dominant and the dominated groups and is representative of the basis upon which the notion of linguistic imperialism is built.

Pennycook (1995) establishes a clear distinction between what Phillipson (1992) called linguistic imperialism and the term discourse imperialism. Linguistic imperialism is the (deliberate) spread of the English language itself, along with all of its implications, violence, coercion, etc.

Discourse imperialism refers to the expansion of a certain discourse dictated by the West, mainly by white men, but most importantly, a discourse written in English, which guarantees the supremacy of some countries over others.

Linguistic imperialism is evident in what it does and in how it affects the countries in the center and the countries in the periphery. People can have differing ways of thinking about this phenomenon, in terms of its benefits, consequences, etc. simply due to the fact that it is out in the open. Discourse imperialism, however, is more insidious and almost unperceivable, but not less harmful. Discourse imperialism is the medium, as well as the end result, of what westerners contribute to when they engage in activities in the countries in the periphery that may appear benign. Discourse imperialism is the pairing of cultural violence, in that both are destructive, and both are insidious and almost unperceivable.

Cultural imperialism

Giroux's summary of cultural theorists' perspectives provides a valuable context from which cultural imperialism can be examined. Giroux (2004) reminds us that many cultural studies theorists such as Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Douglas Kellner, Meghan Morris, Toby Miller, and Tony Bennett have provided valuable contributions to our understanding of how culture deploys power and is shaped and organized within diverse systems of representation, production, consumption, and distribution.

These cultural theorists argue that:

Material relations of power and the production of social meaning do not cancel each other out but constitute the precondition for all meaningful practices. Culture is recognized as the social field where goods and social practices are not only produced, distributed, and consumed but also invested with various meanings and ideologies implicated in the generation of political effects. Culture is partly defined as a circuit of power, ideologies, and values in which diverse images and sounds are produced and circulated, identities are constructed, inhabited, and discarded, agency is manifested in both individualized and social forms, and discourses are created, which make culture itself the object of inquiry and critical analyses. Giroux (2004).

This discussion of culture provides a foundational understanding from which to address cultural imperialism. Culture is a dynamic process within a particular time and place, and when this process is intentionally disturbed such disturbance creates undue conflict and an uneven power relationship imposed from outside an already existing dynamic.

The thesis of cultural imperialism refers to the process of deterritorialization in which the relationship of culture to geographical and social territories is being increasingly reformulated by time and space compression (Negus, 1997; Robins, 1997). Tomlinson, (1997) shares a thesis that is a multi-layered conceptual tool for framing a complex totality of global cultural exchanges and interconnections. At one level the thesis suggests that some cultures are rendered subordinate to others and that the encounters between cultures are never on equal terms.

Hall (1992) suggests that the western notions of economic progress and liberal democracy have provided benchmarks against which other cultures have tried to measure their sense of being. Many cultures have not measured up positively against western notions and have internalized their shortcomings by blaming their own cultural characteristics. This phenomenon pushes them even farther into trying to adopt western culture into their daily life.

A second level of Tomlinson's (1997) thesis of cultural imperialism relates to the emergence of capitalism in the Western World. The thesis merges Western and capitalist values, where major corporations and the resulting trading relations are seen to be promoting capitalist and Western cultural values, as they pursue profits and expand trade. As the bourgeoisie seek to recreate the world in its own image, it has to pay attention not only to economic but cultural aspects as well (Marx, 1977).

A third level of the thesis relates to the effects of the American cultural exports to the rest of the world. American movies, television and corporations are seen to disseminate cultural products, which are favored over local products and values. The transnational media and communication industries have helped create the notion of "Western dominance". As Barker (1989) puts it "American capitalism has to persuade the people it dominates that the "American way of life" is what they want. American superiority is natural and in everyone's best interest".

Cultural Violence

In looking at the internationalization of teacher education through Johan Galtung's model of structural violence and cultural violence the potential for proceeding in internationalizing teacher education in a destructive way can be observed, without even being aware of the negative impact on those benefit is gained from.

Galtung (1990) suggests that cultural violence legitimizes direct and structural violence, as it changes the moral color of an act from red/wrong to green/right, or at least to yellow/acceptable.

Galtung (1971) explains that direct violence is an event, but structural violence is a process with ups and downs. Cultural violence is an invariant, a "permanence" (Galtung, 1971) remaining essentially the same for long periods, given the slow transformations of basic culture. It is because of this that these processes are insidious and almost unperceivable: nevertheless, they are destructive. Cultural violence legitimizes direct and structural violence by making reality opaque, so that the violent act or fact is not seen, or at least not as violent. However, this is not what makes cultural violence: "Empirical or potential legitimization of violence" is the key to cultural violence (Galtung 1990).

By 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence - exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) - that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence (Galtung 1990).

The teacher candidate experiencing the language and culture where he/she is a guest is the beneficiary of the study abroad experience, at the expense of imposing, willingly or unwillingly, a measure of culture and language imperialism. The beneficiary of the study abroad experience allies himself/herself, often unaware and unwillingly, to one side of the often uneven equation of imposed subordination by the dominant class.

Language imperialism, cultural imperialism, and cultural violence are complicated phenomena, and often become even more complicated when actors are so near them that they can't appreciate a critical perspective that distance, experience, and awareness provide. As noted above, prospective teachers do not have the critical awareness required to examine broad perspectives, especially in self-serving ones where they are the direct beneficiaries of the experience. Most also do not have a similar experience such as that of learning a different/another language, that might provide some idea in regards to psychosocial processes that might develop at least a personal level of empathy.

Conclusion

In sum, Galtung's model of language and cultural imperialism was used to describe the potential harm that internationalizing teacher education might bring to already unequal power relationships in host locations. It is difficult to unpack and examine such unequal power relations in abroad host locations, especially when teacher candidates lack a foundational understanding of unequal power relations in the United States.

It seems that the purpose of internationalizing teacher education is to produce teachers who are globally aware and who engage in the acquisition of skills and experiences that would enable them to work effectively with diverse students back in the United States. Therefore, a great start would be for all engaged (teacher candidates and teacher education faculty) to develop a minimal level of awareness and understanding of the dynamics that unequal power relationships of subordination and domination have created in the American school system. Teacher candidates and teacher education faculty need to develop a minimal level of understanding of what this means, and how this inequality affects what they think they know about teaching and learning.

As noted above, currently the curriculum for prospective teachers does not include course work or experiences associated with the development of critical analysis of the school system that creates actors who work on its behalf to perpetuate it. The competencies needed for teacher candidates to understand such dynamics are the same competencies that they would need to fully take advantage of their experience abroad.

The current situation is such that when prospective teachers go abroad they don't understand that teacher education is contributing to the promotion of global inequalities and structures of dependency, as well as to ideologies and structures that are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources at their host destinations. Furthermore, upon return, their new frame of reference, the one they use to guide them in the work they do with diverse students, might be totally flawed, depending on their (mistaken) interpretation of things experienced and observed in their experience abroad.

References

- Alexander, R. (2001). Border crossings: Towards a comparative pedagogy. *Comparative Education*, 37(4), 507-523.
- Aristide, J. (2002). Globalization: A view from below. In Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson (Editors) *Rethinking globalization: Teaching for justice in an unjust world*.
- Baker, F. (1985). Alternative student teaching: Boon or boondoggle? *The Clearinghouse for the Contemporary Educator in Middle and Secondary Schools*, 58(7), 285-286.
- Barker, M., (1989). *Comics: ideology, power and critics*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Gieben (eds.), *Formations of Modernity*, Cambridge, Open University/Polity Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2004) Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies Vol. 1, No. 1, March 2004*, pp. 59-79
- Galtung, J (1971). A Structural Theory of Imperialism, *Journal of Peace Research* (Vol. 13, No. 2, 1971)
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research*. 1990 27: 291.
- Haakenson, P., Savukova, G., & Mason, T. (1998). Teacher education reform and global education: United States and Russian perspectives. *International Journal of Social Education*, 13, 2, 29-47.
- Hall, S., (1992). The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power, in S. Hall and B.
- Hayward, F. (2000). *Internationalization of higher education: Preliminary status report 2000: Final Draft*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Heyl, J. D., & McCarthy, J. (2003). International education and teacher preparation in the U.S. Paper presented at the Global Challenges and U.S. Higher Education: National Needs and Policy Implications, Duke University, Durham, NC.
- Little, A. (2000). Development studies and comparative education. *Comparative Education*, 36(y), 279-296.
- Mahan, J., & Stachowski, L. (1985). Overseas student teaching: A model, important outcomes, and recommendations. *International Education*, 75(1), 9-28.
- Marx, K., (1977). *Selected Writings*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Merryfield, M. (1991). Preparing American secondary social studies teachers to teach with a global perspective: A status report. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 42, 11 -20.
- Negus, K., (1997). The Production of Culture, in Du Gay, P. (Ed.), *'Production of Culture/Cultures of Production'*, London, Sage/Open University
- Pennycook, Alastair (1995): "English in the World/the World in English". In J.W. Tollefson (ed.) *Power and Inequality in Language Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 34-58.
- Phillipson, R. 1988. Linguicism: structures and ideologies in linguistic imperialism. In J. Cummins and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (eds.), *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*. Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Robins, K., (1997). What in the World's Going On', in Du Gay, P. (Ed.), *'Production of Culture/Cultures of Production'*, London, Sage/Open University
- Roberts, A. (1999). Taming the monsters: Practical intimacies in a Costa Rican classroom. *International Education: An Action Research Journal*.
- Roberts, A. (2007), Global Dimensions of Schooling: Implications for Internationalizing Teacher Education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter 2007.
- Sutton, M. (1999). Fostering global awareness in teacher education programs. *Michigan and Ohio Journal of Teacher Education*, 12.
- Tomlinson, J., (1997). Internationalism, Globalization and Cultural Imperialism, in K. Thompson (ed.), *Media and Cultural Regulation*, London, Open University/Sage.
- Vail, N., & Tennison, J. (1991). International student teaching: Stimulus for developing reflective teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, 13(A), 31-36.