

Cultivating L2 Students' Resilient Mind Through Content-Based Language Course Design and Teaching in College

Meng Zhang, Ph.D.

New York University Shanghai

Abstract

The COVID19 pandemic, the economic crisis, and the geopolitical concerns are weighing on the entire human life. They push me as a second language (L2) educator and researcher living in the age of change to think and work on the new meaning of L2 education. In my paper, I argue that in addition to the language and academic skills training and practices at the tertiary level, L2 courses should be (re)designed with a dimension of cultivating students' resilient mind (adding upon the five minds proposed by Gardner in 2006). Here the "resilient mind" refers to the ability to navigate life, adapting to change, learning through adversity and understanding feelings and emotional responses to situations. (O'Keeffe, 2019). Such mind setting is essential for GenZer's success not only in the academic fields but also in their future career and life. My paper demonstrates how L2 education could contribute to such mind cultivation. One practical realization is through the adoption of the content-based language instructional (CBLI) approach. The two English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses I've designed and taught at a Sino-Western liberal arts university are titled Smart Cities (urban planning-focused) and Fashion Consciousness (fashion-art-industry focused). Content topics were carefully chosen given their cross-disciplinary feature, room for language practice, connection to students' everyday life and experience, and importantly, the fact that a wide range of meaningful, controversial, and cutting-edge themes and phenomenon are internally embedded in them with the potential of fostering students' resilient reasoning capacity (e.g., the 'smart' avenues of a city in the (post-)pandemic age; fashion industry's reaction to the diversity-equity-inclusivity statements). Keeping balance between content and language practices in addressing the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), the topics are assigned with various kinds of in- and out-of- class activities, such as, themed poster writing and oral presentation in the target language (e.g., on sustainable fashion practices), open-ended survey design and analysis (e.g., on people's attitudes towards shared mobility), and semi-structured interview with professionals from both topical fields. These activities and assignments get students more adaptive and enculturated into the challenging, competitive,

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multilingual and multicultural environment. The L2 teacher in such classroom context acts as a designer and researcher, a facilitator and mentor, instructing language knowledge and skills at vocabulary, sentence, and discorsal levels while raising students' awareness and cultivating their global perspectives on society.

Keywords: New Dimension for L2 Education, L2 Curriculum Design and Teaching, Resilient Mind-Setting, CBLI, College Education