

CCERBAL 2023
BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM: TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES,
MOBILITY, AND WELL-BEING
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KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Transversal competence for ecologies of knowledges and intercultural translation

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In mainstream Canadian classrooms, French and English, be it first or second language (L1 or L2), are often taught in silos and in separation from students' home languages to avoid "interference" (Jacobson & Faltis, 1990). Yet these monolingual approaches do not account for students' competence and knowledges in other languages whether learned inside or outside school, hence squandering valuable multi-lingual/cultural resources. This also reproduces hierarchies of language, culture, and worldview, putting minoritized language communities to shame and even in danger of extinction as in the case of Indigenous learners (Ball & McIvor, 2013; Sterzuk, 2020). These mono mindsets and practices also preclude opportunities for more coordinated collaborations between language teachers that can support transversal competence and more complex literacy engagements that foster critical global citizenship.

In this talk, I focus on my recent research studies with English and French teachers (L1 or L2) on their cross-language and cross-curricular collaborations to promote not only conceptual and linguistic coherence but also students' complex, critical engagements in eco-social issues. I frame these transversal competences within the lens of *ecologies of knowledges* and *intercultural translation* as proposed by De Souza Santos (2014), which aims to challenge universal truth and hierarchies of knowledge that are western- and human- centric. Ecologies of knowledges recognise epistemic diversity and plurality, moving us beyond abyssal thinking associated with monolingualism, monoliteracy, and monoculturalism. This critical framing of transversal competence also helps us bypass a neoliberal agenda of bi/multilingual education for mere employability to recentre the focus on students' critical global perspectives and intercultural reflexivity for civic engagement in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent human/natural world. Elaborating on two collaborative action research studies with Quebec elementary and CEGEP teachers of English and French (L1 or L2), I discuss how teachers' cross-language/curricular efforts fostered students' critical inquiries while promoting transferable language strategies and meta-linguistic/cultural awareness.