

Teaching History and Memory in the English Language Development Classroom

BLC Fellow Presentation

May 3rd, 2013

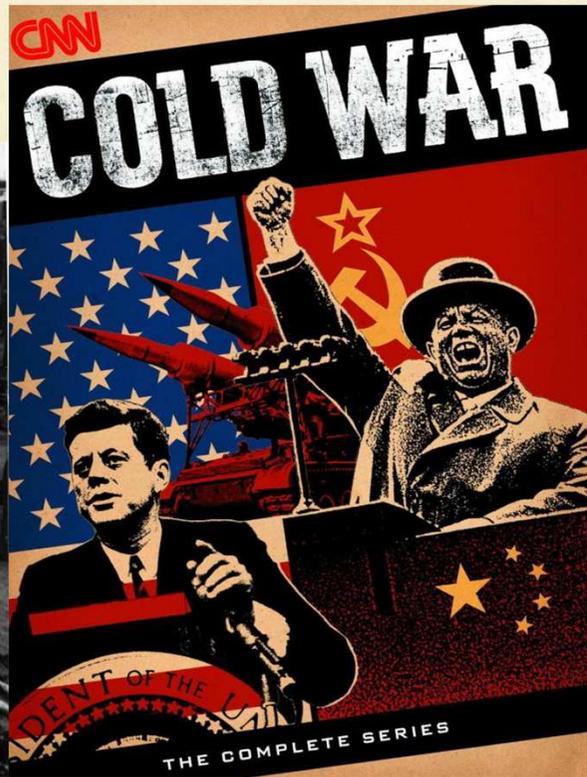
Jaran Shin

What Has Been Missing in the ELD Classroom and Curriculum?

- The substantial gap between (high school) ELD and the regular English classes
 - Students in the regular English classes are presented greater opportunities.
- How about the ELD students?
 - (Still) Drill and practice
 - Vocabulary and grammar focused learning
 - Culture?

How about History and Memory?

- In order to address these issues, I will focus on a very particular way of viewing culture, i.e., history and memory.
- The close connection between culture and history (e.g., Tegmark, 2012): Interpretation of historical events as cultural dimensions of interpretation



Why History and Memory?

- Reflecting/Reconstructing learners' sense of values and identities (Kramsch, 2009, 2011; Tegmark, 2012; Wertsch, 2002, 2012)
- Realizing the complex historical representation (e.g., Kramch, 2009; Kubota, 2012; Levine, 2012; Lyotard, 1979)

Research Questions

- How did students in the ELD class interpret the historical events described in the course materials vis-à-vis their prior knowledge, experiences, and memories?
- Can reading historical fiction equip students in the ELD class with an awareness of multiple perspectives?

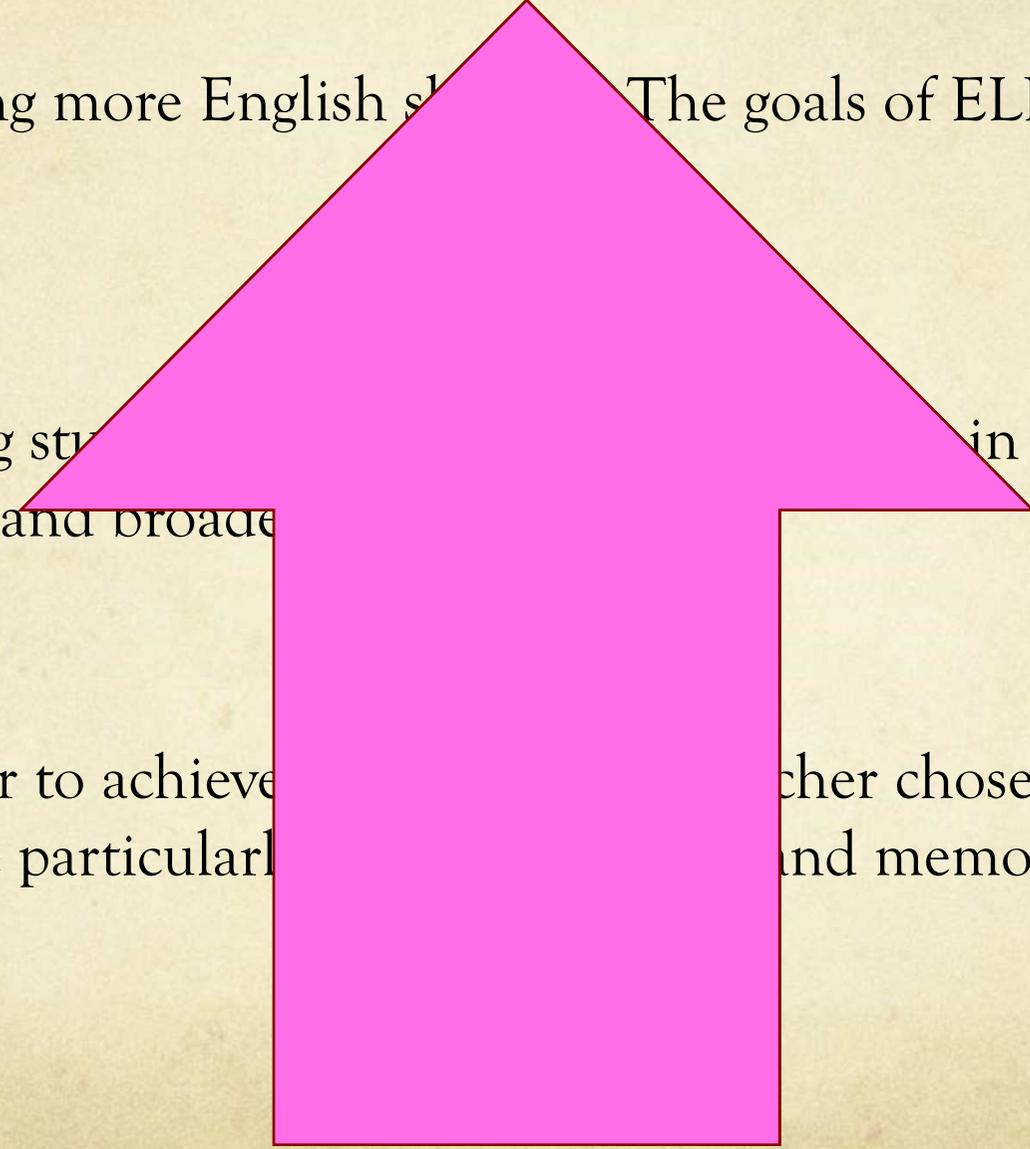
Some Emerging Issues/Questions

- (At the college level) The MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007) emphasizes teaching ‘critical language awareness’ and ‘historical and political consciousness’ with functional language abilities in a foreign language classroom.
- Is this goal too ambitious to language learners (including recent immigrants, ELLs) in secondary school?
- Is teaching a “target culture” enough?
- What does it mean by “foreign language” to recent immigrants (ELLs) who learned English as a FL in their home countries?

The Classroom Context

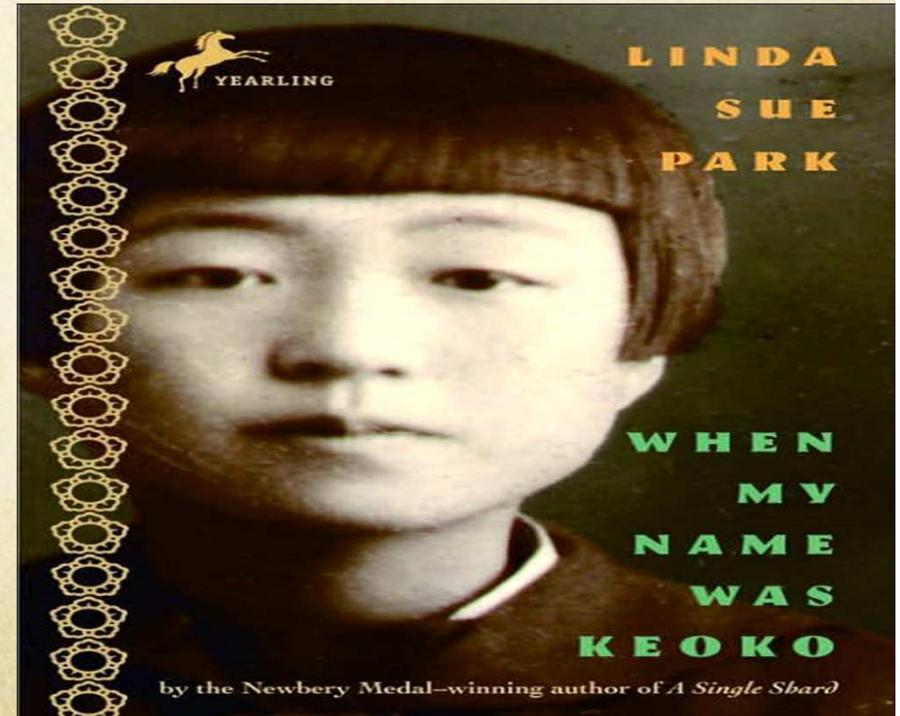
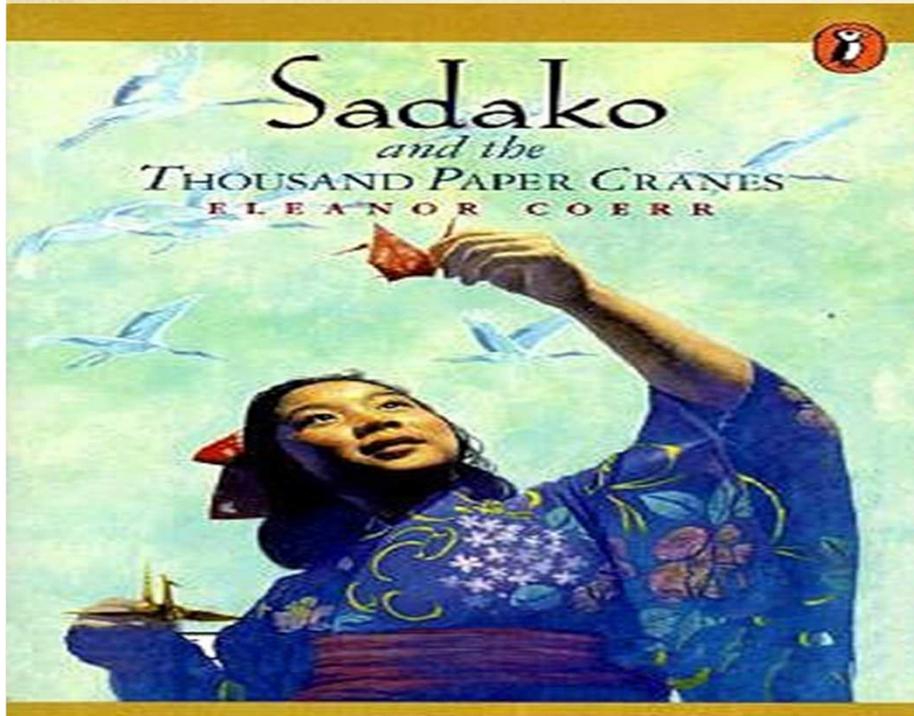
- An ELD 4 (the intermediate level) class at a public high school in Oakland
- All students in the ELD class are immigrant students with diverse linguistic and cultural background.
- The ELD 4 teacher

The Teacher's Two Major Goals

- Teaching more English skills. The goals of ELD classes in CA
 - Helping students gain in understanding history and broader
 - In order to achieve this, the teacher chose two books that are particularly helpful for reading and memory.
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Two Literary Works

- A Japanese girl suffering from leukemia in Hiroshima
- The U.S. dropping atomic bombs in Hiroshima
- The Japanese people's suffering
- The Japanese colonization of Korea
- The brutality of the Japanese in Korea
- The role of the United States



Methods

- Empirical data collected in 2011-2012
 - A corpus of audio recordings of the ELD 4 class
 - Field notes
 - Teacher/Student Interviews
 - Students' works (e.g., journals, plots, images)
 - (Summary prompts) "What is the chapter 1 of the story about? What's happening in the story?"
 - (Essay prompts) "Describe the moment when the bomb explodes. What happens to places and people? How do the people in Hiroshima feel? How do you feel?"
- Data analysis: Qualitative methodology + Case study
 - Inductive thematic analysis

Some Findings

CL's Story:

“Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes”

○ October 15, 2011 (A Short Essay: Feeling about Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima)

“Today, I saw a cartoon in class, it named “Barefoot gen”.

In the Hiroshima, when the bomb explodes, everything was disappeared soon in the powerful light, quickest and strongest. The busy city became a wasteland. How terrible!

At the same time, the people also were disappeared, the bodies were twisty, the eyes were out of the human, the bodies were thinner and thinner until they were disappeared, including babies and animals, nobody could escape, maybe except for the people that were staying in the basement.

According to the expressions of people, I think the people felt how horrible, how unfortunate at that time, and why they could be died. Maybe in their mind, they just could think the bomb was coming, and then they died because it was quick to explode.

I feel horrible, how dreadful. But I can't forget the Japanese killed the Chinese, at that time, how many Chinese were died? Millions of people. I never forget, but the dead of people in Hiroshima were innocence, I am confused!”

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CL's Story: "When My Name was Keoko"

○ February *, 2012 (Chapter Summary)

"Japanese ordered Koreans to destroy their rose of Sharon trees for making environment beautiful. The rose of Sharon trees were the national tree of Korea. An then, Japanese planted their national tree in Korea, the cherry trees. **The Japanese wanted to make Korea as same as Japan, they wanted to make Korea became the second Japan.**"



What Happened
in the Rest of the Classroom?

Other Students' Summary Examples

Student 1

“Chapt 10 summary

- Tae-Yul love airplane.
- Tae-Yul sees an airplane for the first time.”

“Chapt 11 summary

- Japanese made a new laws.
- Ms. Ahn doesn't know Japanese.”

Student 2

“Summary: 27: Sun-Hee

- A few days Sun-Hee read Tae-Yul card about he was OK and Sun hee was right. It was so like Tae-Yul to want to fly an airplane.”

“Summary 29: Sun hee

- The soldier got to Sun-hee home for telling about Tae-yul was died and Omoni screaming so hard and crying.”

Student 3

“Chapter 3 summary

Sun-Hee is remembering when she was six years old. Olymics take place in Europe. A Korean runner wins the gold medal, but he is using a Japanese name. Sun-Hee family are very angry.”

A Result of Pedagogical Misconception?

- Students did what they were asked to do (i.e., writing a summary); however, they did not take a risk to link what they read to what they learned.
- Students' engagement with the material was not satisfactory.
- The kind of instruction that students have been exposed to through the use of summaries does not help them to conceptualize what "summary" means.

[Example] Main ideas in the text are:

- 1) Sun-hee is remembering the Olympics.
- 2) Olympics take place in Europe (not in Asia).
- 3) A Korean runner wins the gold medal, but he is using his Japanese name.
- 4) The Sun-hee's family are very angry.

Can We Really Blame the Teacher?

- **No! The reality is a lot more complex!!**
 - Teacher's instruction of "main ideas" of each chapter can be also understood as his efforts to monitor students' comprehension of the readings.
 - Through various classroom activities (e.g., discussion), there were other kinds of modeling the teacher promoted across the academic year:
 - Deeper understanding of the texts
 - Raising critical questions
 - Making connections between the texts and personal backgrounds

WHY????

Why is there this inveterate/deep-seated mis-match between teacher's ambitious goals and students' engagement/achievement?

Why This Less Satisfactory Outcome?

(Both from teacher's and researcher's perspectives)

[Some student factors]

- Students' language/literacy background
- Students' attitudes toward learning/class/school
- Students' interests in history and memory

[Some teacher factors]

- Teacher's attitudes toward students
- The way the teacher articulated his goals/purposes of giving history related course materials to students

Teaching History and Memory: What Do Educators Need?

- Matching teacher's and students' concept and goals of learning and schooling
- The types of activities: The importance of giving more effective prompts

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