Inclusive assessments in language teaching

Current practices and future possibilities

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Artwork by Ani O'Neill, Buddy System, 2001

Ko wai au? Nō hea ahau? *Who am I? From where do I come from?*

Ko Taal te maunga.	*Taal is my mountain.*
Ko Moananui-a-Kiwa te moana.	*The Pacific ocean is my sea.*
Ko Piripini te iwi.	*Filipino are my people.*
Nō te motu o te Piripini ahau.	*I am from the archipelago of the Philippines.*
Kei te Tāmaki Makaurau inaianei.	*I currently live in Auckland.*
Ko Te Noho Kotahitanga tōku marae.	*Te Noho Kotahitanga is the marae I belong to.*
Kei Te Pūkenga ki Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka taku mahi.	*Unitec-Te Pūkenga is where I work.*
Ko Rosario Iguin tōku ingoa.	*My name is Rosario Iguin.*
He kaitohutohu matauranga ahau, he kaiako hoki.	*I am an Academic Advisor and a kaiako.*

What this talk is about

- **Inclusive assessments:** Key but often overlooked in language education and assessments.
- **Presentation goals:** Stimulate thinking and dialogue on attitudes, beliefs, and practices in inclusivity.
- **Practical reflections** + **Theoretical foundations:** Applying inclusivity to our assessments and teaching methods + Drawing from frameworks to inform discussion.
- **Call to action:** Urging educators to re-evaluate assessment approaches.
- **Takeaways + Connection:** Actionable insights for improved quality and inclusivity in teaching practice + Let’s get connected and continue learning from each other.

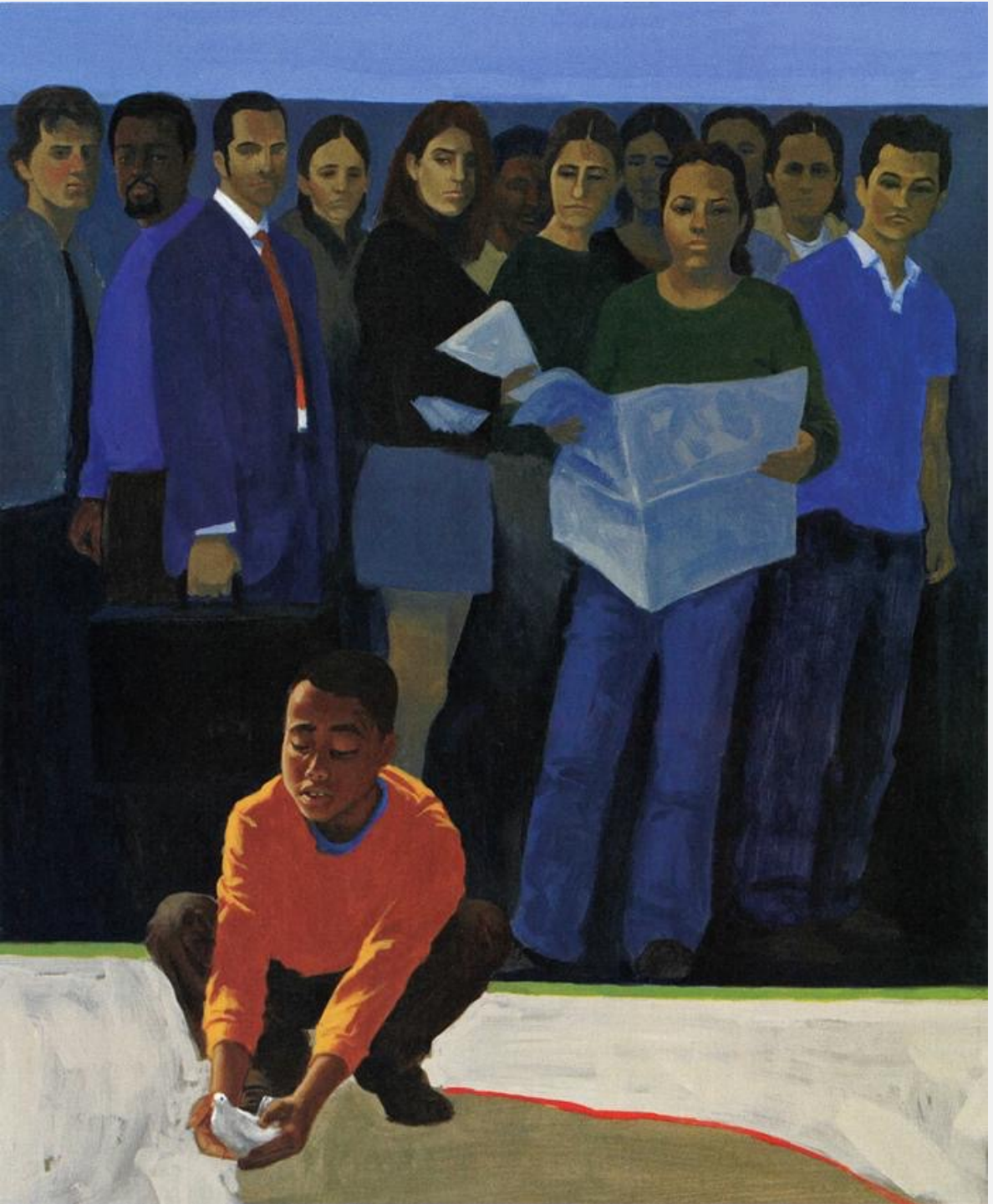
Technique & methods for reflective practice

Critical incidents:

- Unplanned or unanticipated event that becomes a subject of conscious reflection (Richards and Farrell, 2005)
- Such incidents hold significance in a broader context (Tripp, 2011)
- Analysing these incidents allows teachers to discern the underlying values and beliefs shaping their teaching perceptions (Farrell, 2007)

Narrative inquiry:

- Only teachers can pinpoint the knowledge that aligns with their unique concerns and its effective application (Ellis, 2010)
- Empowers teachers to select their experiential concerns and pertinent theoretical knowledge (Feryok, 2011)



Reflexivity

bell hooks in 1996. Photograph: Karjean Levine/Getty Images

"To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination." - bell hooks, 2003 (Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope)

Illustration by: James Ransome (LearningforJustice.org)

Inclusivity

- Inclusive assessment refers to the design and use of fair and effective assessment methods and practices that enable all students to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do (Thomas & May, 2010).
- Much of the research concerns ensuring students with disabilities are not disadvantaged by assessment practices that prevent them from demonstrating their full capabilities (Adams & Brown, 2006; Waterfield & West, 2010).
- ‘Inclusive’ has in itself become much broader in scope in recent years to include:
  - educational background (e.g. prior learning experiences, previous qualifications)
  - circumstantial contexts (e.g. family or caring responsibilities, in employment)
  - cultural aspects (e.g. values, religion and belief)
  - dispositional factors (e.g. attitudes, preferences) (Waterfield & West, 2010).

Critical incident: The misinterpreted essay prompt

- **Background:** Diego, a diligent student from Colombia, has always faced challenges in his studies due to his dyslexia. However, this was not disclosed and was not at all apparent to any of the teachers or the school.
- **Incident:** On the day of the academic essay writing test, learners were presented with the essay prompt: "Discuss the problems of cheating in schools and propose potential solutions." Diego, due to his dyslexia, misread the word “cheating” as “chatting”. Consequently, he wrote a comprehensive essay on this topic, instead of “cheating”.
- **Aftermath:** When my colleagues and I marked the essays, we were puzzled by this off-topic essay. Then, we realised the misinterpretation and kindly approached Diego. He was embarrassed as he explained his reading error and dyslexia. The academic team, empathetic to his situation and now aware of his dyslexia, gave him another opportunity to address the correct prompt.

Reflections

Critical incident: The vetoed dialogue

- **Background:** As a curriculum and materials developer, I had always been cognisant of issues of representation in our teaching resources. In 2018, I was tasked with developing a reading assessment for an upper-intermediate English course.
- **Incident:** In designing the reading assessment, I incorporated a dialogue between two characters. In the conversation, a woman expresses her feelings for another woman, using pronouns like "she" and "her" to refer to her romantic interest.
- **Aftermath:** While I believed this would be an organic way to introduce LGBT+ discourse into the curriculum, however, upon review, management decided to veto the inclusion of this dialogue, citing concerns over potential controversy.

Reflections

Mural by Pounamu Wharekawa and Wintec's Āniwaniwa Alliance at Centre Place, called 'A Joyful Meeting'.

Critical incident: Mātauranga Māori

- **Background:** When I had the chance to lead the design and development of a full programme, I decided to prioritise the inclusion of Mātauranga Māori, believing that it would not only be beneficial for international students to understand Māori knowledge, but also align with the educational sector's broader responsibilities to te tiriti.
- **Incident:** Determined to centre Mātauranga Māori, I crafted an assessment that was wholly centred around it. Given the uniqueness of this approach, especially in an English language teaching environment geared towards international students, I anticipated potential resistance. However, to my surprise, I received support and good feedback from colleagues and the institution.
- **Aftermath:** The assessment was well-received by students who found it enlightening and felt more connected to Aotearoa New Zealand’s biculturalism. However, upon further reflection, I realised that teachers will need very good support, guidance and resourcing to equip them with the teaching of it. I also realised that resistance may not have arisen then, but it could be happening now.

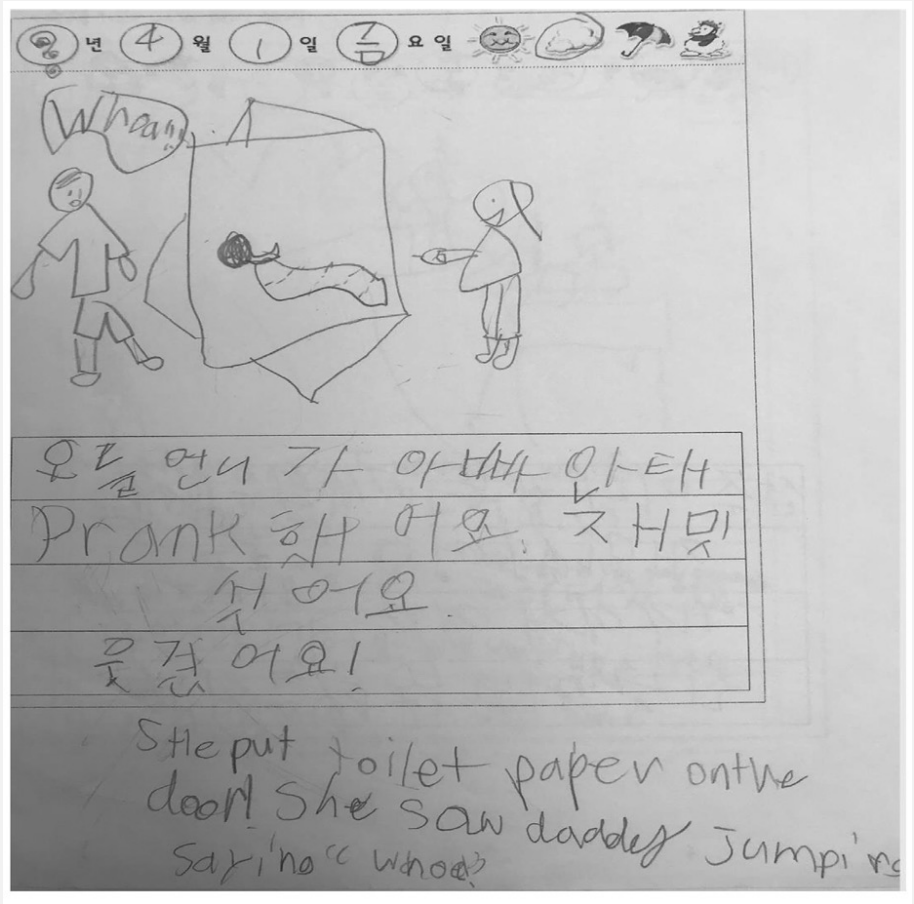
Reflections

Photographs by Rosario Iguin, showing students in a range of class and assessment activities.

Critical incident: Translanguaging

- **Background:** As a multilingual teacher, I have always valued the importance of leveraging students' native languages as tools for understanding and acquisition of a second language. However, with high-stakes tests like IELTS focusing predominantly on English proficiency, there exists a tension between recognising multilingual identities and preparing students for these assessments.
- **Incident:** During a mock speaking assessment designed to simulate the format of the IELTS speaking test, I noticed a groups of students frequently engaging in translanguaging. They would occasionally intersperse their English responses with words or phrases from their mother tongue, particularly when they struggled to express complex ideas. While their peers understood and often appreciated the clarity these insertions provided, I was faced with a dilemma. Do I mark them down for not adhering strictly to English, or do I recognise the cognitive and communicative value of their translanguaging in the context of a mock assessment?
- **Aftermath:** In the moment, I decided to provide feedback without penalising the students for their use of L1. However, I also clarified the expectations of standard language assessments like IELTS. In the staff room, this sparked a broader discussion among educators and students alike: Are standardised tests inadvertently erasing or diminishing bilingual and multilingual identities by not accommodating translanguaging?

Reflections



A picture of a child's writing in Korean and English (Lee & Garcia, 2021)

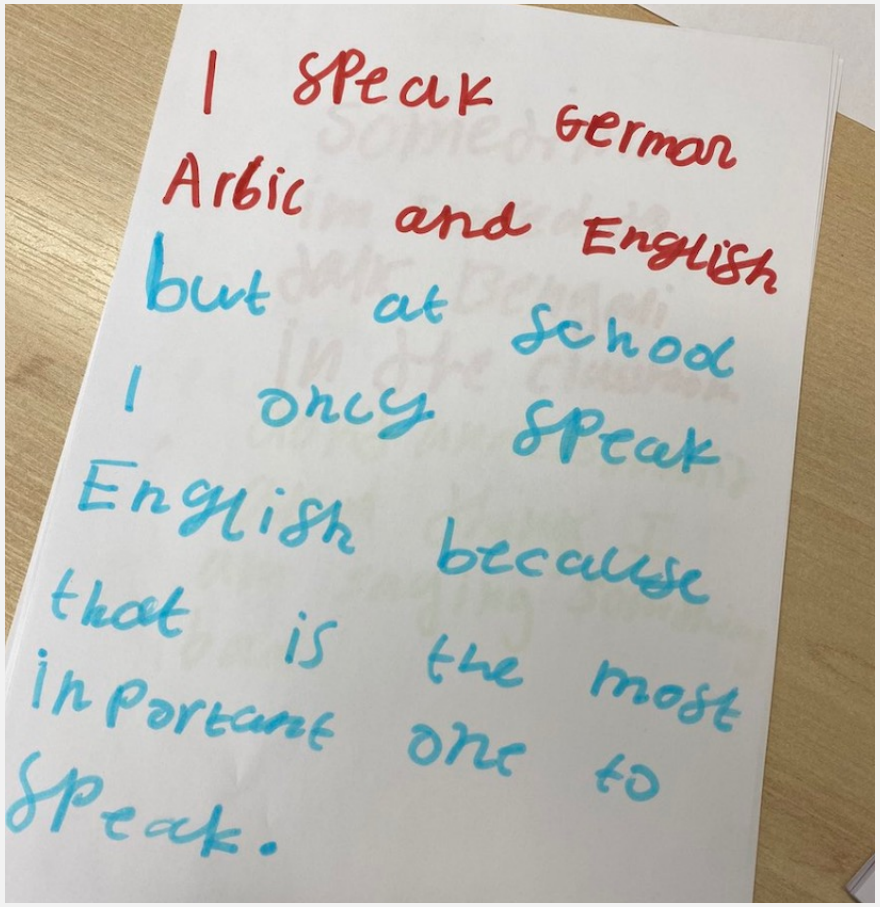


Image by Warda Farah

Vision of the future

Photograph by Rosario Iguin. A picture of my mother-in-law and daughter at the night markets in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Tiriti centered, cosmopolitan future looks like this

Video post by Te Rangikaiwhiria Kemara

Over to you…

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. Thank you for listening.

He pātai? Do you have any questions?

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Let’s get connected

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