

Cam's Linguapax adventure - Helping children learn about languages of the world through an online audio and graphic novel

Olenka Bilash, University of Alberta

[Background]

Embracing the United Nations view that plurilingualism is a strategy to a world of greater peace, with all persons striving for trilingualism (the ability to speak their mother tongue or the language of their ancestors, the language of their society and at least one additional international language), a 5-step UNESCO certificate program was developed for elementary-secondary students. Step 1 introduced students to key concepts of language use, language loss and language endangerment (Fishman, 1990. 2000; Crystal, 2000) through an online audio and graphic novel in which the main character Cam visits each continent to learn about the “treasures” of languages of the world. In Step 2 participants were asked to reflect on what they are learning from learning another language and how language changes when it comes into contact with other languages. In Step 3 participants examined language use and language loss in their own communities by interviewing local multilinguals. In Step 4 participants proposed solutions to rapid language loss in Canada and shared their ideas. In Step 5 students worked collaboratively to move one of their proposed solutions one step forward.

[Methodology]

This paper presents preliminary findings of how these students re-examine their Canadian and global identities as they become aware of language loss through an online audio and graphic novel. It draws on data collected from observing participants using the site.

[Findings]

Preliminary results reveal that through increased language awareness, student-participants began to see linguistic rights as part of social justice, thus changing their notions of the good citizen (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004).

[Presentation]

The preliminary data and interpretation will be presented in a power point. Access to the internet is required.