



CONFERENCE 2023

Shaping the Future:

Key Themes in Higher Education

Creating a translingual and transcultural class: A reflexive investigation

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Outline

- Introduction and context
- Teaching Academic Writing to a transcultural and translingual undergrad class
- Question and Answer



(Reinhold, 2020)

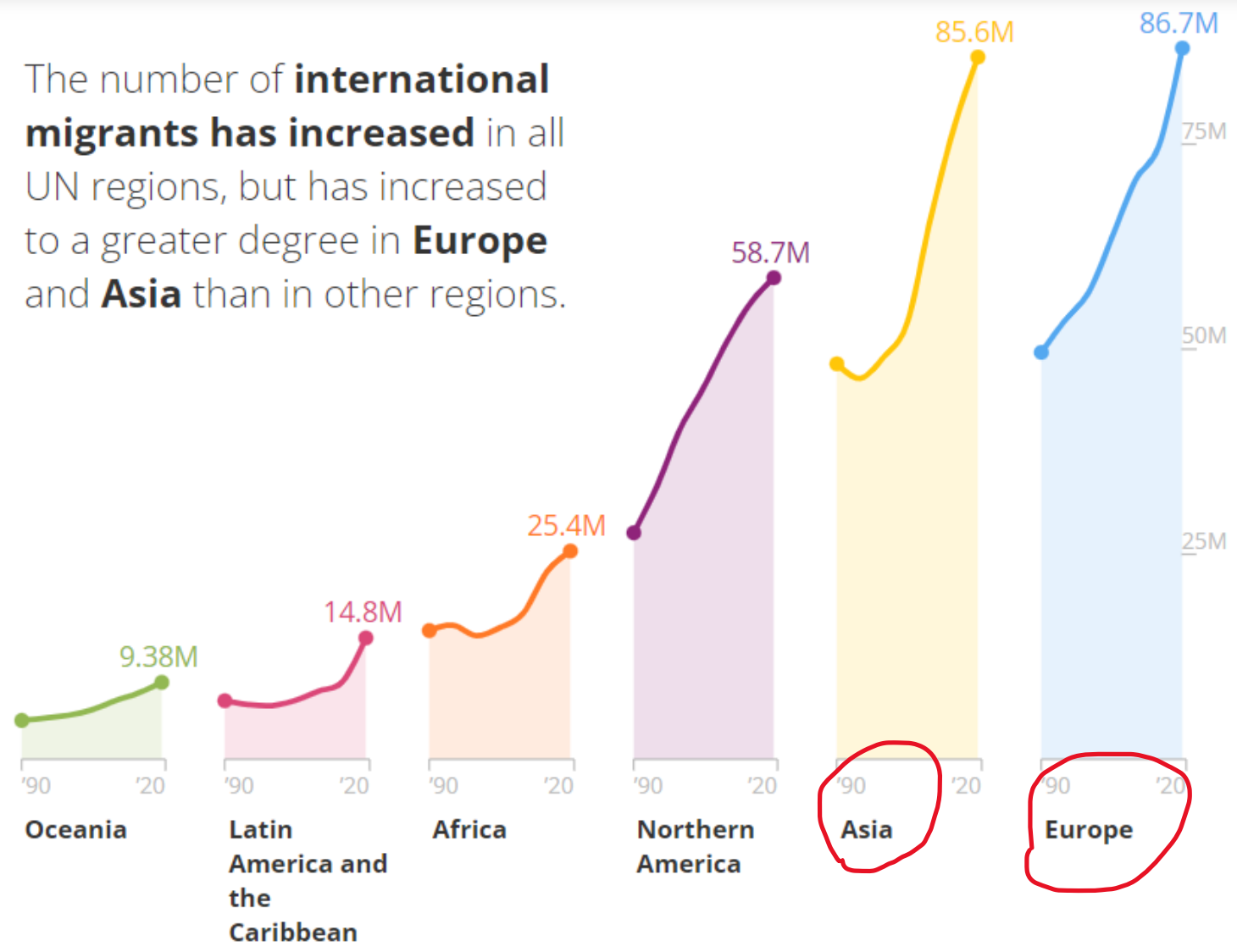
Introduction

- The estimated number of international migrants has increased during the past 10 years (World Migration Report, 2020).



(Multi-lingualism & Multi-culturalism, n.d.)

The number of **international migrants has increased** in all UN regions, but has increased to a greater degree in **Europe** and **Asia** than in other regions.



This interactive uses the latest international migrant stock data, published by UN DESA in January 2021, whereas the World Migration Report 2020 draws upon the latest available data at the time of publication (November 2019).

International migration from 2000 to 2020

(World Migration Report, 2020)



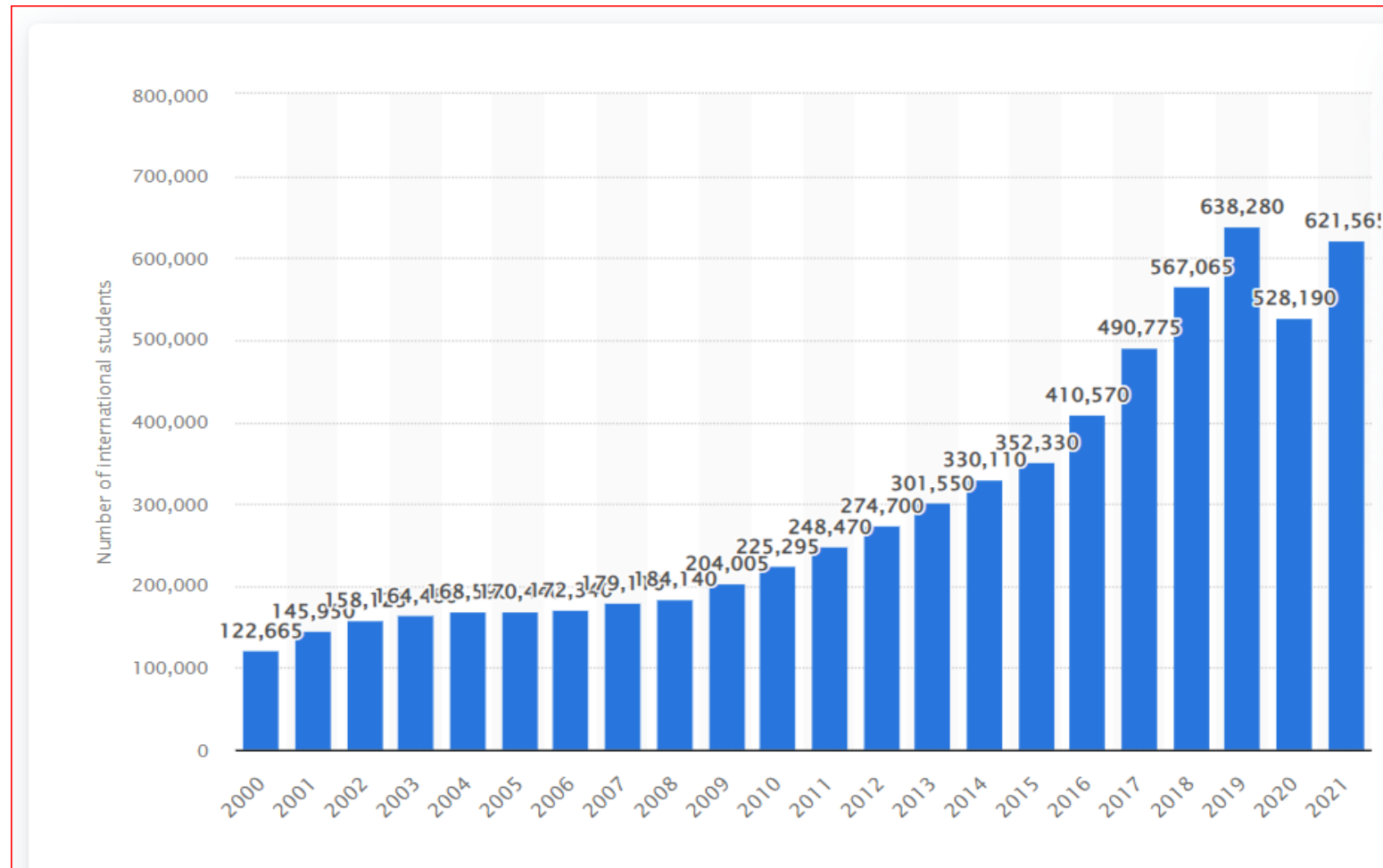
The Canadian context

- In 2021/2022, Canada's population grew by a record 703,404 people (+1.8%) to reach an estimated 38,929,902 on July 1, 2022.
- The vast majority of this growth (93.5%) was due to international migration ("Canada's population estimates", 2022).



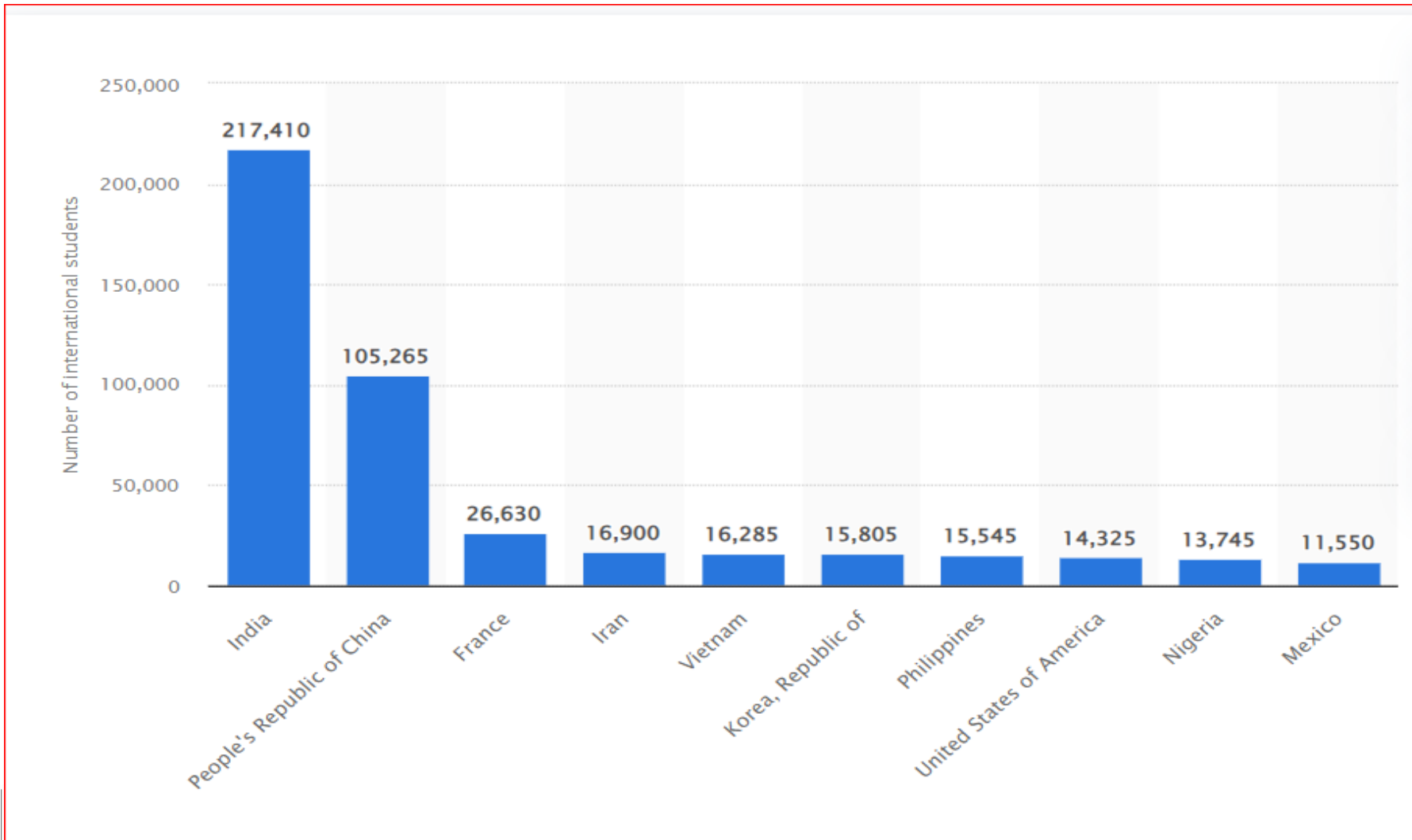
(Why Canada Is Expected To Welcome 2 Million New People During 2018-2021, 2019)

Number of study permit holders with a valid permit in Canada from 2000 to 2021



(Number of study permit holders, 2023)

Top ten origin countries of study permit holders with a valid permit in Canada in 2021



(Top ten origin countries, 2023)

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- Therefore, the educational impacts of migration should be investigated more than before in immigrant receiving contexts such as Canada.

Gap in the literature and purpose and significance of the study

- Although past studies have explored international migration and education (e.g., Smith, 2020), few include instructors' reflexive investigation of their response to teaching multilingual and multicultural classes in the Canadian higher education system.
- To bridge this gap, this qualitative case study, informed by transcultural and translingual approaches to education (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018) and Constructivist Theory (Vygotsky, as cited in Bada, 2015), will demonstrate how the researcher/instructor creates a space where the domestic and ESL international students and herself engage in co-constructing new knowledge.

Transcultural and translingual approaches to education (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018)

- **Transculturalism** “involves situating oneself in liminal social spaces and drawing from values and practices of diverse cultures to constantly reconstruct one’s identity and social belonging” (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018, p. 5). Transculturalism also emphasizes decoupling the link between community and culture and focuses on practices and processes rather than on product or form (Lee & Canagarajah).
- **Translingualism** considers the languages in synergy, creating new meanings and forms in contact, and assumes communication occurs by mobile verbal resources that are appropriated beyond separate labels (Blommaert, 2010, as cited in Lee & Canagarajah, 2018).

Constructivist Theory

(Vygotsky, cited in Bada, 2015)

- Constructivism is an approach to teaching and learning based on the premise that learning is the result of mental construction. According to this view, students learn by fitting new information together with what they already know. Also, learning is affected by the context in which a lesson is taught and by students' beliefs and attitudes (Bada, 2015).
- Proponents of Constructivism encourage students to use active techniques such as experiments and real-world problem solving to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and discuss what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. The teacher ensures they understand the students' pre-existing conceptions and guides the activity to address them and then build on them (Oliver, 2000).

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- Tam (2000) lists the following four basic characteristics of constructivist learning environments:
 - 1) Knowledge will be shared between teachers and students.
 - 2) Teachers and students will share authority.
 - 3) The teacher's role is one of a facilitator or guide.
 - 4) Learning groups will consist of small numbers of heterogeneous students.

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- Using transcultural and translingual learning perspectives and Constructivist Theory provides an appropriate framework through which the researcher can analyze her teaching techniques in an Academic Writing class.

The study

- **Context:** undergraduate Academic Writing course; 15-30 ESL and English-speaking students in the Arts and Design programs
 - India, Iran, China, Mexico, Columbia, and Brazil
- **Course Learning Outcome:** To improve students' formal and research writing skills
- **Course Materials:**
 - Academic Writing for Graduate Students by Swales and Feak (Unit 1)
 - Sample research papers
 - Citation and research writing handouts
- **Learning Activities:** Hands-on, task-based, group and individual

Data collection procedure and analysis

- **Collected Materials:** The educational materials and course outline, teaching techniques, and the instructor's reflective notes
 - Revisited and coded to identify how the instructor creates a transcultural and translingual learning space.
- **Term:** The Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall 2020 quarters

Results

- **1. Blurring language boundaries:**
 - **1. A. Students' linguistic repertoire**
 - Encouraging the students to take notes in their first language at the pre-writing and critical reading stages
 - Encouraging the students to share examples of formal and informal words and grammatical structures in their first language, that is, languages other than English, before they learn English formal writing conventions.

- Aim:
 - To develop metalinguistic awareness of and rhetorical sensitivity to various languages, forming a new understanding of language usage and use that rise above the individual languages and communities (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018).
 - To acknowledge common grounds in the languages represented in class and blur the boundaries among them
 - To acknowledge the students' bilingual/multilingual competence, using it as an asset to gain new knowledge about academic writing
 - To share authority with the students and actively involve them in the learning process (Tam, 2000).
 - To utilize the students' pre-existing knowledge and build on it (Oliver, 2000)
- This approach works against the monolingual instructional ideologies, which discourage using languages other than English in English dominant educational contexts.

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- **1. Blurring language boundaries:**
 - **1. B. Instructor's linguistic repertoire**
 - Giving examples of informal and formal words from the Instructor's first language, Farsi.

- Aim:
 - To make students comfortable in sharing examples of non-English formal and informal words and phrases in the English as a Medium of Instruction context
 - To act as a facilitator, rather than transferer of knowledge (Tam, 2000), co-constructing new knowledge with the students and creating a space where the Instructor and students from various linguistic and cultural background participate in meaning making
 - To share knowledge between the instructor and students (Tam, 2000).

Example

- Instructor: How do you say “how are you” in your first language in a formal and an informal context?
 - **Farsi:** Hale shoma chetoreh? [How are you] (Formal, spoken)
/ Omidvaram haletan khoob bashad [I hope this finds you well] (Formal, written)
 - **Farsi:** Chetorin? [How're you doing?] (Casual, spoken)
 - **Farsi:** Chetori? [What's up?] (Informal, spoken)

- Discussing the **lexical, structural, functional, and modal characteristics** of Farsi and English examples and those from the students' first languages
 - **Lexical:** Different lexical items
 - **Structural:** Direct questions (Formal, casual, and informal; spoken), statement (Formal, written)
 - **Functional:** Formal, casual, and informal
 - **Modal:** Spoken and written
- Learning to use language based on the **context, audience, and purpose** of communication

- **2. Peer Feedback within a Translingual and Constructive Framework**

- Aim:

- To promote group/pair work in class (Tam, 2000)
- To Promote task-based learning (Tam, 2000)
- To promote translingual negotiation among the students

Example

- Instructions: Exchange the paper's first draft with a partner and comment on your partner's draft using the following criteria.

Criterion	Mark
The order of the pieces and paper format	2
Abstract	3
Introduction	5
Literature Review	5
Conclusion and Recommendation	5
Acknowledgement	1
Bio	1
References/Works Cited and in-text citation format	5
Grammar, writing style, punctuation, vocabulary	3
Total	30

- Peer feedback tips:

1. Avoid fixing mistakes in your partner's draft, if any. Only explain what needs to be fixed. For example, if the sources have been incorrectly cited in the text, you may write, "The in-text citation needs to be revised".
2. Provide professional and logical, rather than emotional, feedback. An example of logical feedback is, "The ideas have been sufficiently explained". An example of emotional feedback is, "WOW! I loved how you explained the ideas! Good job, dude 😊".
3. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the work using the evaluation criteria and offer suggestions for improvement.

- The students are asked to treat unconventional use of English in the peer papers as sites of negotiation rather than considering it as poor practice or error. They are encouraged to use questions to create space for translingual negotiation. For example, they are encouraged to ask, “What is the main idea of this paragraph?” when the main idea has not been written.
- Although language use is not neglected on the evaluation criteria, they exclude terms such as “standard written English” and “grammatical errors”, because these terms imply a monolingual instruction ideology, prioritizing English over other languages.

Conclusion and Reflection

- Employing the strategies mentioned in this presentation, informed by the translingual, transcultural, and constructivist perspectives on learning, assists the Instructor to remain open-minded to the possibility of co-constructing knowledge with the students.
- This also assists the students to develop metalinguistic awareness about communication styles in various languages, removes the Instructor from the center of the teaching stage, motivates the students to learn from each other, acknowledges the students' multi-lingual and multi-cultural competence, and utilizes this competence to construct new knowledge.

Implications

- This research challenges the necessity of following an English-only policy in teaching Academic Writing to multilingual classes.
- This research also implies that a transcultural and translingual space can indeed be created in the larger English as a Medium of Instruction educational context.
- Given the increasing number of international migrants (World Migration Report, 2020), using transcultural and translingual teaching approaches in multilingual educational contexts are highly recommended.

Thank you for your attention!

- Questions and comments?
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