

Teaching in a multicultural context: What are the best practices used to support immigrant students?

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Abstract

This study aims to examine teaching practices that support immigrant students in two multicultural primary classes in Quebec, Canada. We referred to two complementary theoretical frameworks, the teaching work analysis approach and the historical-cultural approach. Two case studies were presented, including a grade six teacher and her student and a grade three teacher and her two students. Data was collected through class observation, interviews with the teachers, and interviews with the students. We analysed 22 sequences of support rich in interaction between the teacher and her student(s). Our findings showed that the teachers relied on many forms of support and used many tools in order to adjust their practices according to their class context.

Keywords: teaching practices; support; immigrant students; professional adjustment; multicultural classroom

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1. Introduction

Many western countries are marked by the diversity amongst their inhabitants due to immigration. For example, in the last seven years, Canada has annually received between 240,000 and 265,000 immigrants (Quebec statistic institution, 2013) from different countries. Quebec¹ in particular received more than 55050 immigrants in 2012 (Quebec statistic institution, 2013). Arriving from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and religions, immigrants have contributed to creating a multicultural society. Schools are affected by this heterogeneity. In fact, the school is most likely to promote the culture of the host society and to facilitate the integration of immigrant students, while, at the same time, recognizing the ethno-cultural diversity of its student body.

In Quebec, since the 1960s, many measures, policies and action plans have been established to promote the reception and support of immigrant students in their integration into French schools. For example, Quebec has opted for a welcoming class model, the first of which was established in 1969 (McAndrew, 2010). This class was designated to provide support in French language for students who recently arrived in Quebec. Access to this welcoming class increased after the issue of Bill 101 in 1979, which required immigrant students to attend only French schools (McAndrew, 2010). In fact, immigrant students who do not master French language have to join the welcoming class before attending the regular² one, regardless of their age or their class level. The prime objective of this class is to promote French acquisition and citizenship education among immigrant students. In addition to welcoming class and to Bill 101, the educational reform of the 1990s was accompanied by many policies that focused more on diversity at schools as well as on linguistic and cultural integration. For example, the Linguistic Policy was issued in 1996 to reinforce the use of French and to encourage schools to facilitate the linguistic integration of students. In addition to the importance given to French as an official language, a clear imperative to recognize the culture of the host society as well as the different ethnic cultures was assumed. For example, the Policy Statement on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education published in 1998 defined Intercultural Education as the ideal way to live together in a democratic, pluralist and francophone society (McAndrew, 2010). This policy urges teachers to facilitate students' social and cultural integration and to encourage them to value their own culture and to tolerate the cultures of others.

Thus, teachers are expected to deal with diversity and to integrate these measures and plans into their classrooms. In addition to their traditional tasks, teachers are confronted with new challenges daily in terms of supporting immigrant students in their social, cultural and linguistic integration into the school, along with all of the required disciplinary skills and competencies. As a consequence, the work of teachers has become more complex and diverse. In relation to this new multicultural context, this study intends to answer the following general questions: how do teachers cope with diversity in their classes? What practices are implemented to support immigrant students in the real class context while taking into consideration the needs of other students?

2. Theoretical Framework

To explore these questions and to understand the complexity of implementing teaching support practices in a context of significant diversity, we referred to two complementary theoretical frameworks. First, the teaching work analysis approach (Altet, 2002; Amigues, 2003; Courally, 2007; Tardif & Lessard, 1999) defines classroom

¹ Quebec is the French province in Canada. The first language of instruction in most public Quebec schools is French. The Bill 101 forces all immigrant students to join the French system only.

² Regular class in Quebec follows the official curriculum while welcoming class that is specific for immigrant recently arrived to Quebec, follows a particular curriculum.

teaching practices as real work executed by teachers by virtue of classroom context. It is helpful to understand the way teachers take class factors into consideration when planning for or implementing practices of support. Second is the historical-cultural approach, which is based on the work of Vygotsky (1928, 1978) and provides a theoretical framework to understand the support given to immigrant students in regular classes as well as to analyze individual and group interactions between teachers and students. In relation to this approach, we refer to the concept of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) as a form of support developed through collaboration between teacher and student.

2.1 *Teaching Work Analysis Approach*

Our objective is to study teaching practices of support in a real class context in relation to class factors and prescribed teaching work. Tardif and Lessard (1999) consider that prescribed teaching work is planned, measured and similar for all teachers operating under the same educational system. It is related to governmental measures and plans that teachers are required to implement in with the curriculum, school policies, report cards, and other things. It is also related to all class factors that may affect the teaching process. However, this work contains a singular and unique part for each teacher (Altet, 2002). In fact, teachers couldn't necessarily implement all of the prescribed work. In their heterogeneous classes, they face many incidents, unexpected situations and surprising behavior on the part of their students. The class environment is also not totally controlled. Therefore, teachers' work is continuously adjustable (Bucheton, 2009) according to their own interpretation of each situation. For example, some teachers may ignore incidents that occur suddenly in class, while others may address them.

On the other hand, teaching work established effectively in classrooms is called real work (Lessard, 2010). Courally (2007) states that real work could not be understood without considering the prescribed work as it is redefined by teachers. Real work is a continuous process of internal negotiation about what teachers have to decide to consider or ignore in a class, while taking into account the class factors and the prescribed work. This adjustment-based teaching illustrates teachers' professionalism (Bucheton, 2009). In this meaning, teachers adapt their practices according to their class factors and to students' needs. They make decisions linked to practices of support before and during interactions with immigrant students. This adjustment is planned, anticipated or emerges *in situ*. Hence teaching practices of support are defined as the real work that teachers do in class to support immigrant students while taking into consideration other classroom factors. To deepen our understanding of teaching practices of support and of the interaction that develops between teachers and students, we refer to the historical-cultural approach.

2.2 *Historical-Cultural Approach*

For the purposes of this article, three fundamental concepts from the Vygotskian approach serve as the theoretical basis for the study of teaching practices of support: semiotic mediation, zone of proximal development and scaffolding. The historical-cultural approach founded by Vygotsky supposes that learning and development occur by social interaction through the use of tools to mediate activity (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts." (p. 57). In this sense, students learn and develop their higher order thinking skills through interaction with their teachers and/or peers in the classroom.

Moll (2011) summarizes the essence of the Vygotskian approach: "human thinking develops through the mediation of others." In fact, mediation is defined as an interactive interaction process that leads to development (Vause, 2010). Semiotic mediation, a term used by Vygotsky, refers to the use of psychological tools during interaction. Like Vause (2010), some authors state that mediation is a direct interaction done through another human being (Coll & Marti, 2001). Others believe that mediation can be indirect and is not limited to support by other human beings but may also be only an interaction with a tool (Baleghizadeh, Timcheh, & Timcheh, 2011;

Wells, 1999 cited in de Guerrero & Villamil) as long as this tool is recommended by an expert. In our study, semiotic mediation refers to teacher's direct and indirect intervention/interaction to support immigrant students through the use of tools. Tools enable people to master physical and mental processes and psychological functions. Physical and technical tools are called artifacts (e.g., pen, hammer, etc.). They extend human physical ability by enabling people to do things that they could not otherwise do without them (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). In a sense, they complete the power of the human body. On the other hand, mental tools extend our mental abilities by acting as extensions of the mind (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, language, symbols, signs, and texts—once internalized—help individuals to master their own natural psychological functions of perception, memory and attention (Kozulin, 1998). These tools depend on experiences and previous generations (Schneuwly, 1987). Yet, an individual can transform his world and evolve with a dialectical movement: « Man differs from animals in that he can make and use tools. These tools not only radically change his conditions of existence, but they even react on him in that they effect a change in him and his psychic condition » (Luria, 1928, cited in Cole, 1996, p. 108). In class, interactions between teacher and student take place through the use of tools. When interacting, each one adjusts himself according to the situation and to the tool being used. Therefore, it is challenging for an immigrant student to interact using a tool that belongs to a different culture. In fact, each culture has its own set of tools (Kozulin, 1998). This is why teachers in multicultural class are expected to use a variety of tools to reach all students.

As mentioned, for Vygotsky, learning occurs through interaction. However, this interaction operates in what Vygotsky (1978) called the zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as « the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers ». Applied to teaching practices, the concept of ZPD clarifies the strategies and tools used by teachers through interaction to support students effectively. In fact, operation within the ZPD is contingent, because it doesn't necessarily lead to development.

Another mediational concept related to ZPD and inspired by Vygotsky's theory is the concept of scaffolding, described as an explicit form of support provided by the more knowledgeable partner to the less knowledgeable one when operating within the latter's ZPD. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976, p. 90) define it as something that "enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts". Hogan and Pressly (2005) consider that "it is an extremely social form of interaction, with peers and teachers interacting closely with a student as she or he attempts a task" (p. 5). In this sense, in a class context, scaffolding is the support that teachers give to their students to cover their needs or to help them complete a task that cannot be completed without assistance. Indeed, the concept of scaffolding differs from the concept of helping the learner in a unidirectional way (Nassaji & Swain, 2010). It is not related to traditional teaching but is a form of mediation and joint interaction. It requires establishing intersubjectivity (Wertsch, 1984), where teacher and student share the same understanding of the task (Hogan & Pressly, 2005). In a similar vein, Lidz (cited in de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000) describes scaffolding as "the mediator's adjusting the complexity and maturity of the teaching interaction to facilitate the child's mastery of the task; providing support when necessary; and providing encouragement and prompts to the child to move ahead when ready" (p. 80). In addition, it is a temporary support that should be removed gradually while completing the task (Fisher & Frey, 2008; Hadwin, Wozney, & Pontin, 2005; Lajoie, 2005). Thus, in this study, scaffolding is defined as a temporary, interactive and mediated practice of support that operates in a dynamic way on the zone of proximal development of a student.

Adopting the teaching work analysis approach and the historical-cultural approach to understand teaching practices of support in a real class context, we intend, in this study, to understand what practices of support among immigrant students are implemented by teachers in a multicultural real class context.

3. Methodology

The data for this study is part of a thesis research project about teaching practices to support immigrant

students who have recently arrived to Quebec (Canada) and integrated into regular primary classrooms. We conducted a multi-case study (two cases) involving two teachers from two different highly diverse primary schools and three of their immigrant students. Two of the students are newly integrated into regular classes. Based on a qualitative interpretative methodology, we aimed to understand teaching practices of support implemented among immigrant students who did not master the French language as the language of instruction. Moreover, we intended to understand students' and teachers' points of view regarding support.

3.1 Context and Participants

We selected two schools in the same area and two classes (grades three and six) rich in interaction between teachers and students. These two classes contained immigrant students who had not mastered the French language. We picked three students who do not have learning difficulties. We worked with two cases: the first case consists of a grade six teacher called Carla and one immigrant student called Jana; while the second case involves a grade three teacher, Sophie, and two of her immigrant students, Tania and Windy.

First Case: Teacher Carla, Student Jana

This grade six class contains 23 students, of whom 16 are immigrants. Two students, including Jana, have passed the welcoming class. The class teacher stated that ten to twelve students have linguistic difficulties in terms of pronunciation, grammar and sentence structure. Moreover, eight students have individual plans.

The teacher, Carla, was born in Quebec. She has a baccalaureate in primary education. She has nine years of experience in both wealthy and less wealthy schools. She has been teaching grade six for two years. She mentioned that her lessons are always pre-planned. She provides one recovery hour per week for the students in need. Carla has previously taught in a mono-ethnic school, so she is aware of the difference between teaching immigrant students and Canadian students. During the interview, she said that she is adapting herself to the multicultural class. She is aware of her students' needs in such a context. However, she commented that she should not be solely responsible for the support that Jana (the participant and the new immigrant student) requires. She mentioned that as grade six teachers, she has to take into consideration the particularity of the class and other students' needs.

Jana, the student, was born in North Africa. She arrived to Quebec in 2011. She has passed one year in welcoming class before integrating into the grade six regular classes. She writes and reads in her native Arabic language. She mentioned that she speaks Arabic and French at home and with her friends. During the interview with Jana, she mentioned that sometimes she feels embarrassed in class; she doesn't like to be supported in front of her colleagues. She refused the fact that she has linguistic challenges in French.

Second Case: Teacher Sophie, Students Tania and Windy

The grade three classes contain 25 students, of whom 15 are immigrants. Only Windy has passed the welcoming class. Six to seven students have linguistic difficulties, including two who have learning difficulties; one student has an individual plan.

The teacher, Sophie, is Canadian. She has a baccalaureate in primary education. She has had 14 years of experience in deprived and rich schools. Currently, she is a grade three class tutor as well as a part time teacher. She co-teaches and collaborates with another teacher. Sophie said that she has adapted to teaching in a multiethnic context, and that she promotes Quebec culture in order to help immigrant students further integrate. At the same time, she implements different activities related to her students' cultures. Regarding her teaching, she mentioned that she opts for the whole group support that she considers particular to the multiethnic context. During this support, she stresses the meaning of words, instructions, and sentence structure. She said that this negatively affects the native students who feel bored. Regarding the support she provides to immigrant students, Sophie believes that it is as a part of her teaching duty. This is why she always takes the initiative to stimulate the students and evaluate their understanding during tasks and activities.

The student, Windy, moved from Asia to Quebec three years ago. She has passed two years of the welcoming class before integrating into grade three. She reads and speaks her native language at home. She knows English as well. She mentioned that she prefers her previous school in Asia because she could more easily express herself. She insisted that she doesn't have any difficulty in French language. Windy mentioned that she didn't have a good experience in her welcoming class and was forbidden to ask questions.

The second student, Tina, was also born in Asia; she arrived in Quebec when she was two years old—this is why she didn't go to a welcoming class. As with Windy, she reads and speaks her mother tongue, particularly because her parents don't know any French. However, she mentioned during the interview that she doesn't like her name because it is not a Quebec one. She added that many people don't know how to pronounce it and sometimes they make fun of it.

3.2 Instruments

We collected data using four sources of information: class observation (117 hours of observation in both classes); individual interviews with each teacher (n=15); individual interviews with the three students (n=17); and work production analysis of participant students such as writing tasks, math and reading assessment sheets.

3.3 Procedure

For data collection, we observed classes for three months in both grades six and three. This allowed us to have a general overview of the classes, especially while each was supporting immigrant students. We took notes and recorded audio. We selected 22 units of observation rich in interaction between the teacher and the participants, called sequences of support (nine from grade six; and 13 from grade three). We define each sequence of support as an interaction between a teacher and student(s) aiming to support, through the use of a tool, a student or a group of students in a difficult task. These sequences of support are connected to nine tasks coming from nine learning situations (four from grade six; and five from grade five). To deepen our understanding of the sequences of support, we interviewed the participants to better understand their roles in constructing the practices of support. We did seven general interviews with them (two with each teacher; one with each student). Moreover, we did 23 specific interviews with them after the end of the tasks related to the sequences of support (six with Carla, and five with Jana; five with Sophie, three with Windy and five with Tina). This helped them to communicate their points of view, to explain their actions and to identify and describe their strategies during the practices of support.

3.4 Data Presentation and Analysis

We used a qualitative approach to analyse our data, presented in the form of tasks and learning situations. As mentioned before, every task was illustrated by sequences of support. Inspired by the historical-cultural approach of Vygotsky, we divided each sequence of support into two planes. The social plane (interpsychologic) related to the direct interaction between each teacher and her student(s). The duration of this plane differs from one sequence to other. It is then followed by the individual plane (intrapyschologic), which corresponds to the interaction of the student by herself. These two planes were preceded by trigger elements, which refer to the elements that provoked the support. After this, we presented the points of view of both teacher and students about the sequences of support. We also described the task, its context and the flow of the teaching-learning situation.

We started with a horizontal analysis for each case followed by a synthesis of the same case. For the case of Carla and Jana, we presented four tasks including nine sequences of support, both individual and collective. In the second case, Sophie, Tina and Windy, we presented five tasks including 13 sequences of individual, collective and small group support. Then, we ended by a transversal analysis for both cases and issued general findings.

To answer the question about the teaching practices of support and the tools that teachers used in class, we

analysed the data by referring to the concept of scaffolding described above (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) and the concept of assisted performance (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). We refer as well to the model of schooling scene of Bucheton (2009) and the gradual release of responsibility model (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) use the concept of assisted performance to define what a student can do with help, through the support of the environment, the teacher and themselves. They consider ZDP to be the distance between assisted and unassisted performance, and mention that assisted performance promotes cognitive development if a student interacts and cooperates with others. They relate this concept to what they call activity setting, which encourages students to participate and converse with the teacher and with peers. Activity setting includes whole group work, focus group work, and independent learning centers.

As for the model of schooling scene, Bucheton (2009) considers that teacher class adjustment depends on the outcome of each student. She mentions that teachers, in order to control students and to scaffold them, organize their classes according to six scenes. In our study, we refer to the first, second and fourth scenes only.

- 1- The dual scene that consists of working face to face with one student in order to help him or her.
- 2- The collective scene, which is the most popular and consists of giving instructions to the whole class.
- 3- The group scene that consists of circulating between the students and offering support according to what the teacher notices.
- 4- Atelier means that the teacher sits with a group of students and adjusts her teaching according to each one of them while other students are working alone.
- 5- The private scene, where the teacher keeps her eyes on the other students while working with an individual or a group of students.
- 6- The scene off, where the teacher controls any kind of drop among any students.

According to this model, the teacher has a margin of manoeuvre to adjust her practices in order to create a class environment convenient to learning and support. The teacher uses different scenes to cover different students' needs, while still keeping watch over other students.

As for the gradual release of responsibility model of instruction, Fisher and Frey (2008) suggest that the cognitive load should shift slowly from the teacher to the student. The model starts with the focus lesson while the teacher is giving instructions. The second phase is guided instruction while teacher and student collaborate together. During this phase, the teacher may adjust her teaching according to the student's needs. The last phase is the independent learning task while the student is working alone.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this section, we present and discuss the most general findings deriving from the transversal analysis of the 22 sequences of support. As previously mentioned, each sequence is divided into three elements: trigger elements that provoke the support, the interpsychological plane and the intrapsychological plane. For the purpose of this article, we present the findings related to the first two elements only. We present the practices used by the two teachers to support their immigrant students.

4.1 Three Types of Trigger Elements Related to Immigrant Students' Difficulties Provoking Support

Three types of trigger elements were noted. The first type is issued from an anticipated difficulty by the teacher before task implementation. The second arises from a difficulty noticed by the teacher during task execution. The third stems from a difficulty mentioned by the immigrant student during task execution. These three types prompt teachers to support students while taking the class context into consideration. Anticipated difficulties are expected by the teachers, while the other two types are unexpected because they emerge during task

execution.

Type 1: Difficulties Anticipated by the Teachers - Some difficulties are expected by teachers before task implementation. In fact, their years of experience teaching in multiethnic contexts allow Carla and Sophie to anticipate linguistic difficulties among immigrant students, especially in written tasks. For example, Carla predicted that her class would find it difficult to solve a math problem evaluation; so she decided to read the problem and explain it. Similarly, Sophie expected some linguistic difficulties among her class in a reading comprehension task. In general, anticipated difficulties are related to word meaning and text comprehension. We will explain more in the following section.

Type 2: Difficulties Noticed by the Teachers - During task implementation, teachers identify difficulties among their immigrant students while solving a particular task in mathematics, and in French writing and reading. In the face of these unexpected difficulties, teachers intervene when it is possible to support their students individually. For example, 12 sequences of support out of 22 are interrelated to difficulties noticed by Carla and Sophie. In fact, our class observations show that both teachers were able to identify these difficulties by questioning immigrant students and checking the progress of their work. For instance, Carla asked Jana many times if she has any difficulty in her mathematics evaluation. Carla then decided to intervene when she noticed that Jana didn't write anything. Sophie, during a writing task, came close to Tina and Windy to check what they are writing and accordingly decided to intervene.

Type 3: Difficulties Mentioned by the Students - In some tasks, students express their difficulties by themselves. However, our observations show that this happens rarely, especially for Jana and Windy who both recently arrived in Quebec. Tina, on the other hand, is more comfortable asking for support.

Based these proclaimed difficulties, teachers decide whether to take action in order to support the students. They then mobilize particular tools. This decision may be made according to teachers' judgement or perception of the situation. In fact, teachers take many factors into consideration before supporting the whole class or spending individual time with the students to support them on solving the problem. This interaction between the teacher and the student(s) is called the interpsychological plane.

4.2 *Interpsychological Plane*

This plane corresponds to the duration between the commencement of the interaction between the teacher and the student(s) until its end. This interaction is direct in 17 out of 22 sequences because the teacher is present during the support given to the student(s). In five sequences, the interaction is indirect. The teacher suggests the tool that the student has to use, but she is not present physically during this interaction.

In this part, we will present what practices (forms of support and tools) the teachers used to support their students after taking into consideration the trigger elements. We noticed that the teachers implemented many forms of support by using different tools.

Forms of Support and Tools - In general, we have noticed that the two teachers rely on many forms of support to cover different students' needs in a multiethnic classroom. The teachers adjust their practices according to the class context and apply three forms of support: the individual support, the small group support and the whole group support (collective support). The form depends on the type of difficulty that triggers the support (anticipated or noticed by the teacher, or mentioned by the student). It also depends on the nature of the difficulty (linguistic or not). Yet the teachers didn't limit their intervention to individual support. In fact, much research about support and scaffolding privileges individual support (Cloutier, 2009; Masters & Yelland, 2002; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Rodgers, 2005; Wood et al., 1976). However, in our study, we noticed that the teachers plan in prior the collective and the small group support in order to bridge linguistic difficulties anticipated among immigrant students. This variety in using many forms of support allows teachers to control their classes by taking into consideration all of their students' needs. In the same sense, Bucheton (2009) declares that teachers adopt different

professional acts as a continual adjustment to control class interaction with students.

In addition, we noticed that the teachers used many tools during their interactions with the immigrant students. These tools were suspended by the end of the interaction. Our analysis shows that language is the most used tool taking the form of conversation, exchange, verbal presentation and giving instructions. Other physical tools are used such as story-books, wall displays and figures. In the following section, we will go through each form of support and the related tools.

Collective Support

In this study, collective support is identified when the teacher targets the whole class to support students on a particular task before starting their individual work. We have detected five sequences of collective support out of 22 derived from five tasks in mathematics and French writing and reading for comprehension in both classes. However, our findings show that the collective support related to the documented learning situation is always followed by individual support among immigrant students.

In general, collective support was implemented at the beginning of a task when the teachers anticipated difficulties among their students. Class context sometimes requires teachers to plan for a support that targets the whole class (Mercer & Fisher, 1997, cited in Guk and Kellog, 2007). The two teachers mentioned during the interviews that they anticipate linguistic difficulties among their immigrant students. For this reason, they plan for collective support before asking the students to start working individually. The collective support, as we observed, consists of reading and explaining the task to facilitate its comprehension by the students, giving clues, explaining the meaning of some words and asking questions to check for understanding. For example, before starting a problem in a mathematics evaluation, Carla reads the problem and explains the difficult words. She mentioned during the interview that she expected that immigrant students including Jana will not be able to understand the situation, so she decided to read it. Sophie did the same thing before asking her students to do the reading evaluation: she gives instructions and explains some words. In addition, after the collective support, she opts for a small group support asking six students to sit down on the floor with her. Tharp and Gallimore (1988), in connection with the concept of assisted performance, endeavoured to explain the action of teachers in the ZPD of students, considering that the whole group setting is used to orient the students to their independent task. On their part, Fisher and Frey (2008) consider that the first phase of their gradual release of responsibility model is the focus lesson: "this is the time when the teacher is demonstrating, modeling, and sharing his or her thinking with students." (p. 17). In a similar vein, Bucheton (2009) talks about the collective scene in her model of professional adjustment, defining it as the time when the teacher explains and scaffolds students' work by targeting the whole class.

In this form of support, the class is easier to control in terms of time and management, and teachers don't risk losing the focus of the other students. For this reason, teachers can spend more time supporting the whole class than with each particular student. Collective support lasts 10-15 minutes approximately, while individual support lasts about 2-3 minutes. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) state that the whole group setting lasts 20 minutes the beginning of the day. As for Fisher and Frey (2008), the focus lesson is a brief sequence that lasts 5-10 minutes at the beginning of each task. Although all of them stated that it occurs at the beginning of the day, this diverges from our findings. In fact, the collective support precedes the individual one, but is not limited to the beginning of the task. It is possible that an unexpected event occurs in class and forces the teacher to offer collective support. For example, Carla, in her analysis task³, noticed after reading what the students wrote, that they still don't master how to analyse a text. She decided to intervene directly by giving them more instructions and reading a text model.

Although this form of support helps teachers to manage their class and their time, it may have some limits. To what extent can this form of support cover the particular needs of each student and work within each child's ZPD? In fact, as we observed, in the sequence of collective support, the teachers control the support depending

³ In this task, students are asked to read a story and analyse it. They have repeated it three times during the first semester.

on their own perception and estimation of the difficulty. This means that the students' roles are passive, and they don't express themselves explicitly. In connection with this, we noticed that the verbal presentation and giving instructions were the privileged tools by both teachers in all sequences of collective support. Indeed, these tools limit verbal exchange and discussion between the teacher and her students who didn't express their difficulties. At the same time, the teacher didn't have the chance to ask them individually about their needs. In addition, a teacher may identify a particular difficulty for a student, but this doesn't mean that she has time to stop her collective support and scaffold him individually. So it is obvious that collective support can't cover all of the students' needs, especially those of immigrant students. It is not necessarily appropriate or necessary for the whole class because each child has different difficulties. In addition, their ZPDs are not the same. Actually, Sophie was aware that the collective support may demotivate the native students who didn't need the same support. Obviously, some of immigrant students benefit from the collective support, especially with word meaning. Yet this doesn't mean that these students don't have other difficulties to be covered. Thus, in all the tasks that we have observed, collective support was followed by an individual support targeting the immigrant students. Certainly, the succession of two or three sequences of support for the same task means that students have other difficulties that appear during task resolution and that are unexpected for teachers. For this reason, teachers act and opt for other forms for support. For instance, Sophie chooses the support in small groups in one of her tasks.

Small Group Support

In our study, the small group support consists of offering support to a particular group of students chosen by the teacher while the other students work individually. This form appears in grade three classes. It followed the collective support given at the beginning of a task in reading for comprehension. It seems that Sophie is aware that the collective support didn't cover the specific needs for some students. Sophie anticipated specific linguistic difficulties among 6 students, including the two participants. Thus, she decided to raise the intensity of support. They sat together on the floor while the other students worked alone. She reads the text to them and explains difficult words. The teacher reads the whole text for comprehension, explains ideas, gives the meaning of unusual words and encourages the students to ask questions. In addition, she asks them questions related to the general ideas of the text and answers all their questions. Actually, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) talk about the focus group as a form of assisted performance, where the teacher targets a specific group having similar difficulties. In a similar vein, Bucheton (2009) identifies what he called atelier as an adjusting act or scene when a teacher sits with a group of students and adjusts her teaching according to each one of them.

Like with the collective support, it is Sophie who controls the support and facilitates the task for them. Although the tool used is the verbal presentation, the interaction with only six students permits Sophie to identify more of their difficulties. This support is more personalized and more adapted to students' needs than the collective support, because the tool used is more interactive. There are more exchanges between the teacher and the six students. This helps her to more easily detect their individual difficulties. At the same time, the students find more space to ask questions and express their difficulties. In this sense, the teacher is able to act, to some degree, within the ZPD of each one of these students.

However, this form of support requires more effort to manage the class. The teacher has to manage two groups at the same time. In fact, while working with the small group, many students of the class interrupt Sophie with other questions. She answers them many times. So, she moves between the two groups to establish order in the class. Sophie maintained the classroom with a multiplicity of events simultaneously taking place. She always keeps an eye on the entire class. Bucheton (2009) calls "private scenes" those moments when teacher has to keep in his field of vision other students who work individually in the class.

As mentioned before, the teaching process is not limited to what is planned prior to class. During task resolution, some unexpected difficulties emerge. Teachers make decisions to consider them and to support students individually.

Individual Support

It seems that whole group and small group support became a part of Carla and Sophie's teaching processes even though they have certain limitations related to teachers' action in the ZPD of each student. However, teachers face unexpected difficulties not noticed beforehand or mentioned by students during task resolution. For instance, Carla noticed that Jana was having difficulty solving her mathematics evaluation. Sophie noticed that Windy was having difficulty in her writing task. In the face of these difficulties, the teachers decided to support or to ignore them depending on the class context.

In our study, individual support means that the teacher offers individual support to one of her immigrant student in a specific task. 15 individual sequences out of 22 were identified deriving from nine different tasks. In fact, during task execution, teachers identify difficulties among immigrant students by checking their work and asking them questions. They circulate around students' desks, read what they are writing, ask them questions and intervene accordingly. Thus, it is assumed that this form of support is more adapted to students' needs because teachers can identify specific and particular difficulties. Tharp and Gallimore (1988), in connection with the concept of assisted performance, consider that the independent assistance occurs after offering whole support. On their part, Fisher and Frey (2008) consider that the last phase of their gradual release of responsibility model is the independent learning task where the student is working alone. This is when the teacher can intervene individually to support students. In addition, Bucheton (2009) talks about the dual scene, which consists of working individually with one student in order to help him or her.

Since the support consists of individual interactions between teacher and student while other students are working alone, we noticed that the duration of this form of support is limited to 3 minutes. It is a question of class management. It also depends on the context of execution. For example, while Carla was correcting the mathematics exercises with the whole class, she allocated 2 minutes only for individual support with Jana. According to Carla, she can't leave the other students alone. However, Carla allocates more time to a sequence of individual support with Jana while the other students were working alone on a writing task.

As for the frequency of the individual sequences of support, we have noticed that they are more numerous than the other forms of support. It seems that the teachers are aware of their responsibility to support the immigrant students, especially those just arriving from a welcoming class. For this reason, we have also noticed that initiative is taken by the teachers to support the students, not by the students themselves.

During this support, the teachers used different types of tools such as dialogue and conversation, written comments and other physical tools (books, wall displays, and figures). This leads the teachers to communicate with their students, and to understand more of their difficulties. The dialogue allows the teacher to ask questions in order to engage the student, to situate the level of the student and to act in her ZPD. At the same time, this tool allows the student to express herself and to negotiate her needs. Sophie, for example, mentioned during the interview that the dialogue with Windy in the reading comprehension task helped her to better understand Windy's individual difficulties. However, the individual support depends on class factors because the teacher has to put more energy and effort to manage the class while individually supporting the immigrant student. The individual support requires that the other students in the class are busy with a task. Carla mentioned that she is worried that she will lose her class while she is individually supporting Jana.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to point out that this study shows that using three forms of support is a teaching adjustment made according to class context. Thus, scaffolding is seen as a teaching work adjustment. The collective support doesn't assist the teacher in acting within the ZPD of each student as per the individual one. This is confirmed by many studies that underline the difficulties of acting in many ZPDs at the same time during collective support (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Cloutier, 2009; Hobsbaum et al., 1996; Maloch, 2002; Masters & Yelland, 2002; Rodgers, 2005; Vallat, 2012). As for Tharp and Gallimore (1984), they declared that teachers

should be aware of the needs of each student in order to scaffold them. However, individual support doesn't mean that the teacher acts effectively within the ZPD of her student; teachers' action related to scaffolding didn't necessarily lead to task internalization by the student. For example, during the indirect mediation, the teacher couldn't easily understand the student's needs and also couldn't recognize the evolution of her difficulties in the same way that she does when interacting directly. In fact, some authors (Coltman, Petyaeva, & Anghileri, 2010; Lajoie, 2005; Lefrançois, 2000; Masters & Yelland, 2002) state that the physical presence of a teacher is important to scaffold students while others believe that scaffolding is done through indirect interaction via tools (Baleghizadeh et al., 2011).

As for the methodology of the study, we find that collecting data from the real class context among the whole class is a contribution because it reflects the real teaching work. This shows how the teachers adapt themselves and adjust their practices according to class context. They implement many forms of support and many tools as well as varying the time of support depending on each situation. In addition, the use of many instruments for data collection is enriching for the study. Focusing as well on the student's point of view through interviews is a positive aspect almost absent in many other studies about scaffolding. We believe that the students' role is a prime element to co-construct the teaching practice of support.

Finally, in our study, we were able to witness that teaching in a multicultural class is a complex and diverse task. It is a continuous work of adaptation and adjustment for the sake of students' needs. Offering a particular support for immigrant students in this context is done while taking into consideration other students and class context. This may affect the form of support implemented, the time allocated for each sequence of support and the tools selected.

6. References

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