

Counter-stories from Poland: Identities and Language Identities of Adolescent Refugee-background Students

Presentation from Aleksandra Olszewska

Tuesday, October 22, 2019, 1:30pm-3:00pm, Room 414

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With the rise of an anti-refugee sentiment in Poland and worldwide, research on the complexity of refugee-background students' (RBSs) identities and language identities remains an unexplored and challenging territory (Daniel, 2019; Warriner & Bigelow, 2019). This study aims to prioritize adolescent RBSs' voices and examine what RBSs' counter-stories reveal about their identities and language identities.

The conceptual framework of this qualitative study includes constructs of identity (Holland et al., 1998), language identity (Norton, 2000), RBS identity (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017; UNHCR, 1951, 1967) and Refugee Critical Race Theory (Delgado, 1989; Strelakova-Hughes et al., 2018). Counter-storytelling was adopted in designing this study as a humanizing research methodology (Paris & Winn, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Ultimately, one outcome from this work is to advocate for transformative educational and language policies and practices for RBSs (Block et al., 2014), as well as to remind all stakeholders about our common humanity in building a more socially just world, wherein no human being is considered illegal, all individuals' rights are respected, and all humans are celebrated (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Aleksandra Olszewska is a Fulbright fellow from Poland and a PhD candidate in ESOL and Bilingual Education at College of Education, University of Florida, the US. She holds an MA in Linguistics, Teaching, and Translations from the Institute of Applied Linguistics at University of Warsaw, Poland. She completed part of her MA studies at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, the US and at Institut Supérieur des Traducteurs et Interprètes, Brussels, Belgium. Aleksandra worked as a research assistant in Project STELLAR and taught ESOL methods courses at University of Florida. Her professional experience also includes teaching and serving international students at American School of Warsaw as well as teaching French and English to K-12 and adult learners. Aleksandra's research interests focus on translanguaging as well as teacher preparation for multilingual immigrant- and refugee-background students.

