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Poetry Inside Out: Bridging cultures through language

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ABSTRACT: This paper is about a writing and literary translation program called Poetry Inside Out (PIO). Students in the PIO program study poetic form and structure, figurative language, and the fundamentals of literary translation in an extended workshop format. During a typical Poetry Inside Out workshop, participants read, discuss, translate and recite poems by great authors. They examine the lines, words, cadences and structure of a poem, practise valuable language arts skills, and produce their own poetry inspired by the authors they study. Literary translation is fundamental to the program because it challenges students to think about the ways syntax, grammar, vocabulary, rhythm, nuances and colloquialisms of both languages influence meaning. The purpose of this paper is to explore the synergy between the program principles, what we teach, and what students learn in response.

KEYWORDS: Literacy, translation, poetry, writing, imagination, writers' workshop.

> This is how it happens…when you read some poems…a rainbow comes out of your head…you climb up to the top of the rainbow and slide down into your imagination (Poetry Inside Out 4th grade student[1]).

Poetry Inside Out (PIO) is a unique in-school writing program that offers students dynamic opportunities to learn to write poetry via the closest possible contact – translation. The purpose of this paper is to examine the components of this program, the work our students produce, and to consider what happens when kids have the chance to read lots of great poems by renowned poets in another language, learn how to translate those poems and to use what they learned as an inspiration and model for their own compositions. That is the work of Poetry Inside Out. Essentially PIO is a literacy project that builds students' capacity to read for understanding, effectively communicate, and fundamentally understand the power of the imagination.

Poetry Inside Out, established in 2000, has worked with more than 5,000 elementary and middle-school students. PIO is part of the Center for the Art of Translation in San Francisco, California, a non-profit organisation that promotes and preserves the linguistic cultural heritage of diverse communities through public events, education, and publishing international literature and translations. Through programs in the arts, education and community outreach, the Center brings writers and readers together across the boundaries of language.

Participation in the Poetry Inside Out program facilitates students' building an awareness of the power of their own words, as they learn in an extended workshop

[1] All of the Poetry Inside Out student quotes in this paper were from a collection of student interviews conducted by Marty Rutherford and Anita Sagástegui during the 2008/09 school year.

format to translate great works of poetry, which in turn acts as a mechanism for them to create their own poems. During a typical PIO workshop students read, discuss, translate and recite poems by great authors, such as Federico García Lorca, Alma Flor Ada, Francisco X. Alarcon, Du Fu and Langston Hughes. The PIO curriculum is designed so that participants delve into the lines, words, cadences and structure of a poem, practise valuable language arts skills, become inspired, capable and adventurous enough to compose their own creative works. The following poem, written and translated by fifth grader Ariana López, illustrates a bit of what PIO students accomplish.

No todo en la vida	**Not everything in life**
No todo en la vida es tristeza hasta una lagrima derramando de tu mejilla hace cosquillas	Not everything in life is sadness even a teardrop running down your cheek tickles

Literary translation is fundamental to the program because it challenges students to think about the power of words, meaning, culture and context. PIO students learn that the syntax, grammar, vocabulary, rhythm, nuances and colloquialisms of both source and target language are vital components of a good translation. The process of learning these components of translation simultaneously heightens participants' sensitivity to language use and meaning.

The purpose of this paper is to unpack the components of the Poetry Inside Out program to more deeply understand the synergy between the parts in order to see the impact on the students we teach. In order to have a window into how this project affects students, and to write this paper, a number of different data were collected. Interviews were conducted with a representative sampling of students and Poetry Inside Out instructors. Student poems and translations were collected and reviewed. Teacher notes were collected from a number of classrooms, including the Poetry Inside Out workshop that I taught. As program director, I feel that it is especially important that I regularly teach or co-teach the workshop in order to learn directly from the students. The specific student poems and translations that appear in this paper were chosen because they demonstrate the various elements of the program.

THE BASICS

The Poetry Inside Out curriculum is built on four essential principles. These principles provide the foundation for a set of skills participants acquire as they move from novice to expert in creating their own literary works. Serving as a launching platform for the writer, the four principles provide appropriate experiences for transforming and enhancing their own compositions and publications.

The principles that guide our practice are: *Inspire, Imagine, Practice* and *Apply*.

- *Inspire*: Students are inspired through experience with many great poems in the original language.
- *Imagine:* PIO participants use imagination as an essential tool.

- *Practice:* Students learn that to become an expert requires practice – in this case practice in writing and translating.
- *Apply:* Everyone writes, translates, publishes and performs.

In practical terms these principles guide the program in the following ways: The principle of *Inspire* focuses on the importance of *inspiration* when creating and constructing anything. PIO students learn and understand that to become good at something, one needs to have a desire. Desire comes from being *inspired*. We *inspire* our students to write and translate wonderful poems through exposure to great poetry in its original language. But inspiration, while important, it is not enough – to be good at anything we need to *imagine* ourselves in the role. In this case we encourage our students to *imagine* themselves as poets and translators. We also teach kids that the *imagination* is an essential composing tool. All craft gets better through *practice*. In this case the *practice* is learning how to do a literary translation and write a poem that communicates the intended idea in the intended form. Finally, the ultimate goal of all *practice* is to *apply* what is learned in the appropriate venue. Learning makes sense to the learner when there is a clear purpose.

Implementation options.

Poetry Inside Out is structured around an extended workshop format. Students are invited to become apprentices to the craft of writing poetry and literary translation through participation in a series of carefully sequenced and scaffolded lessons. We begin by building students expertise in making literary translations; and then, using what they have learned from the process, they write their own poetry. Unlike other forms of translation, literary translation emphasises a kind of interpretation that is highly attentive to issues of context, rhythm, flow, form and function. More will be explained about this process after a brief discussion of how we work with teachers and schools.

Poetry Inside Out has different implementation options that include consideration of (a) who teaches the program, and (b) the length of the workshop in a given school year. In terms of who teaches – there are two choices; a PIO residency and "do-it-yourself." With the residency model, a PIO instructor works with the regular classroom teacher but takes the primary role in implementing the curriculum. With the "do-it-yourself" model, classroom teachers participate in our professional development in order to implement PIO themselves. Once trained, teachers become part of the PIO teacher network for support and exchange of ideas.

Given the complexities that schools face in terms of including other programs into an already full schedule, we designed two options for implementing Poetry Inside Out workshops. Option one is to implement one, PIO, 15-lesson workshop. This option includes implementing 15 consecutive, scaffolded lessons that are organised into three cycles. The second, and preferred option is to conduct three, 10 to 12-lesson workshops over the course of a school year, with short breaks in between each workshop session. The basic sequence is the same for both implementation options.

Workshop cycles.

Each PIO workshop is divided into three sequential cycles. Each cycle provides

foundational experiences for the subsequent cycle. Each workshop cycle is part of a system that in the end is meant to build students capacity to read, write, think, speak, imagine and create. The first cycle focuses on translation, the second on learning to write poetry while continuing to translate, and the third cycle is about applying everything students have learned in order to produce performances and/or exhibitions, and a publication of their combined works. The last cycle often includes revising existing work and adding other elements, as needed, such as illustrations or performance components.

Cycle one: We begin our workshop with translation because it affords students one of the closest possible engagements with text. When students translate, the process is so layered that they not only build the necessary skills to move the text from the source language to a new language; they also experience that poems have different characteristics and qualities. For example, the words a poet chooses communicate many concepts that minimally include: conveying feelings, emotions, opinions and taking stances. The language itself can be subtle, bold, aggressive, slang or very elegant. Clearly, imagination, creativity and discrimination are part of the writing process. PIO students figure this out as they translate the poems, because the very act of translating necessitates moving from the big to the little – looking at one word to looking at a whole sentence – considering one sentence to thinking about what the sentence means within a stanza. We give students experiences with different kinds of poetic form and structure without explicit instruction on these elements. We let the process of translation do its magic.

It is important to emphasise that work in the Poetry Inside Out is to teach students how to do translation. While it is helpful to know both languages when doing a translation, it is not a prerequisite. What we are teaching is the techniques of doing translation. This is a skill that is not dependent on, albeit facilitated by being bilingual. The act of doing literary translation uses various kinds of expertise that students possess that minimally includes knowledge of one language or the other. This need for so much varied knowledge about language, context, culture and more make many and varied opportunities for contributions.

Translation lessons include a set of repetitive practices. We begin by familiarising students with key elements such as: learning how to discuss text based on an initial reading where guessing at over-arching themes and meanings and the use of intuition is encouraged. A detail-oriented, word-by-word reading that yields literal translations follows the first step. Finally, the synthesis of these two steps: creating a translation that takes into account and blends both the themes and "feel" of the poem as well as the meanings of the words. Working initially with simple but insightful poems, students learn that doing a translation is akin to solving a riddle

Students work in small groups, following a translation protocol we developed by building both on good translation practices and on the work and principles of Reciprocal Teaching [2]. We call our protocol *Translation Circles*. Briefly, the protocol

[2] Reciprocal Teaching (RT) is a reading comprehension strategy developed by Annemarie Palinscar and Ann Brown (1984). Briefly, RT is a metacognitive strategy that teaches students to internalise a set of strategies that are typically used automatically by accomplished readers. The four strategies are to summarise, predict, clarify and question. With some modification, these same skills are part of what

includes first reading and guessing what the poem is about, using whatever resources are at hand: personal or peer knowledge of the language, and good contextual guesses based on a preliminary scan of the text. The second pass includes doing a literal translation as a group, using dictionaries and something we call a *Poet's Glossary* where necessary. Usually this will result in an awkward version of the poem. Thus, the next step it to create a translation that flows and is compatible with the author's intent. As the process progresses, students are unpacking meaning on at least two levels – looking for what the words mean and the overall message of the poem. As poems get more complex, the complexity of this phase of the work increases. In the final step, the group decides on a version they are happy with and are prepared to defend to the whole class.

The following example comes from an early lesson in the Poetry Inside Out workshop series. This particular poem was picked because of its transparent structure. Once a few words are translated, the form of the poem allows for easy guesses that will lead to a successful translation. Each subsequent poem that is used throughout the workshop strengthens the students' foundation through the practice of building the skills necessary to do literary translation.

We introduce students to poem through what we call *Poem Pages*. Each *Poem Page* has a brief author biography and a glossary to help the students with key words. The glossary words are chosen to serve as a bridge for constructing the meaning of the poem in the new language. Argentine poet Maria Elena Walsh wrote the poem. We tell students a little about her life and work in order to establish the context within which the poem was written. It is important for the students to know that Walsh, like the students themselves, began writing poetry at a very early age. So popular is her work now in Argentina that it would be difficult for most youngsters there to grow up without having read her poems. The point of talking about these aspects of this particular author's biography is to show the students a possible outcome of writing poetry. Biographies are adapted according to the goals and purposes of the lesson.

Nada más	**Nothing more**
Con esta moneda me voy a comprar un ramo de cielo y un metro de mar, un pico de estrella, un sol de verdad, un kilo de viento, y nada más.	With this coin I am going to buy a bunch of sky, a meter of ocean, a point of a star, the real sun, a kilo of wind, and nothing more.
POET'S GLOSSARY FOR NADA MÁS Comprar, v., Obtener algo con dinero, *buy, purchase* Moneda, nf., suelto, pieza de oro, plata, *coin, currency, change, piece of god, silver* Pico, nm., Parte puntiaguda que sobresale en la superficiepoint*, corner, point, part that sticks out* Ramo, nm., Conjunto o manojo de flores, branch, *bough, bunch, bouquet* Viento, nm., Aire atmosférico, *wind, atmospheric air, moving air*	

literary translators do. Thus, with the permission and blessing of Palinscar, we adapted this comprehension strategy to fit our purposes.

The carefully chosen words in the *Poet's Glossary* give the students clues that help them translate the poem. Additionally, for each word in the glossary, a number of synonyms or words that are similar in meaning are provided. This feature serves to inspire students' word choices both in the translation process and in the composition of their own poems. At this stage we remind students once again that translation is like solving a puzzle and every piece of information is another clue. As students move through their first pass, we also ask them to figure out other words, for example, by looking for onomatopoeias, cognates, or words that might be the same across languages such as "kilo" in this poem.

Translations are springboards for students to compose their own poems. When writing their poem in response to the translation experience, students choose to write in any language and then translate into the other. Following up on the translation of "Nada Más," a PIO student wrote the following piece:

With this quarter	**Con esta moneda**
With this quarter I will buy a suitcase full of Mexican ruins; a thimbleful of joy; a pocketful of voices; a wagon full of dreams, a teacup of nonsense, and nothing else. *Thamar León, 4th grade*	Con esta moneda voy a comprar un veliz lleno de ruinas mexicanas; una dedal lleno de alegría; un bolsillo lleno de voces; un furgón lleno de sueños, una tacita de tonterías, y nada más *Traducido por la autora*

In this example, the student uses the poem as a model but inserts beloved objects from her own experience to compose a new poem. She also makes a creative decision in the translation when she uses the Spanish word "moneda" for the English word "quarter". This simple example demonstrates how much thinking, creating and decision-making is involved in this lesson. More importantly, it is a foundational experience for future translation and composing. As students move though the process, the poems and the words get more sophisticated. We choose poems with a variety of poetic structures and conventions and intentionally use authors from many different countries and backgrounds, whose poetry is inspired by a broad range of experiences and sources. Topics include nature, politics, social issues, human feelings, and so on. That is the beauty of poetry – the subject matter is seemingly endless.

Part of the practice of learning to do literary translation is learning that there is no such thing as one translation for anything. We are very explicit about this idea. That is why defending a translation is part of our translation protocol. This is so important that we dedicate parts of many lessons to this topic. What follows are multiple translations of the same short poem. For the following exercise students worked with a poem by Cuban poet Dulce María Loynaz.

El sol …

El sol se ha rajado
y cae un chorro de oro
sobre mi corazón.

Dulce María Loynaz

The Sun …

The sun has broken
and a trickle of gold
has fallen in my heart.

Translated by Sophia Wong, 3rd grade

The Sun …

The sun has cracked
and a stream of gold
falls onto my heart.

Translated by Isabel Streiffer, 3rd grade

The Sun …

The sun split
and one spurt of gold
fell in my heart.

Translated by Abril López, 3rd grade

During a *Translation Circle* session, student groups are expected to "defend" their translations by explaining elements such as word choice, sequence and other decisions they made in terms of changing the poem from source language to a new language. Substantive discussions ensue about why one word served in lieu of another as participants build their understanding about composing and translating practices.

By the end of the first cycle of the workshop, students have learned something about translation. Discussions have emerged about context, syntax, meaning and fidelity to the original author. To reiterate, up to this point there has been no explicit instruction about composing poetry. Rather, students have worked with a variety of poems and have had some rudimentary experiences that they can build upon as they move to the next cycle of the workshop.

Cycle two: Part two of the workshop emphasises learning to write poems. The experience of translating great poetry – their own and others' – allows students to have an up-close experience with various forms and kinds of poetry. Even though we have not taught about the craft of writing poetry, the students already learned a lot through their translation experience. Building on what they know, we continue with practical lessons about basic poetic elements, such as line and stanza, repetition, refrain, and the way a poem is constructed. We also work with poetic forms, including couplets, quatrains, ballads, odes, pantoums, haikus, tankas, sonnets and others and the use of various forms of figurative language. Once again, we use renowned poets, other students' poems, and translation as key inspirational tools. During the second cycle, students do more of the translation work in small groups.

As the workshop progresses, translation continues to be an important part of the process. Because the emphasis shifts to learning to write poetry, we choose poems that illuminate poetic elements or devices we are trying to teach. In the following

example our purpose was figurative language, specifically metaphor. This poem by Mexican author Elias Nandino is excellent for teaching metaphor.

Sobre la mesa…	**On the table…**
Sobre la mesa un vaso se desmaya, rueda, cae. Al estrellarse contra el piso, una galaxia nace. *Elías Nandino*	On the table a glass faints, rolls, falls. As it crashes against the floor a galaxy is born. *Translated by Ulises Ramírez Rodríguez, PIO student*

Once the class completed reading, translating and discussing the poetic form, structure and style of the Nandino poem, students were instructed to draw on their experience to compose their own piece. Part of the assignment was for students to include at least one metaphor and to use a stanza structure. Prior to writing and translating the poem, there may or may not be a little mini lesson on metaphor. This would depend on the class and their knowledge of figurative language. Sixth-grader Thong Dinh, an English/Vietnamese bilingual student, wrote the following poem in response.

The fruit that grew

From a seed I arrived
Baby of an apple tree
Sleeping in my leafy bed
I grow
Inhaling fresh orchard air
A breeze comes by
Awakens me
Makes me shiver
Back and forth I go
Uh oh! The twig
Snaps!
I fall
roll
ready
to go on my own.

Thong Dinh

Throughout the entire PIO workshop, the basic pattern continues. Students read and translate a variety of poems aimed at increasing their exposure to form, function and structure. With each experience they write and translate their own poems.

Cycle three. The third and final part of the workshop cycle emphasises application. Participants apply what they have learned thus far to the production of a written and oral presentation of their work. Within the Poetry Inside Out curriculum, all classes

produce a volume of student work that includes original poems and translations. The Center for Art of the Translation produces a *Best of Poetry Inside Out anthology* that includes selections from all participating PIO classes. Students also perform their work in venues that include, at the simplest level, classroom presentations, and, in more ambitious efforts, school-wide exhibitions, cross-school poetry slams, back-to-school night presentations, and school-wide assemblies. During the last part of the workshop, students may choose to revise a previously composed piece, or they may create a new poem.

The last example of poetry in this paper is an example of a poem a student worked on, revised and was ultimately published in the 2009 Poetry Inside Out anthology *Pocketful of voices/Un bosillo de voces.* The protocol was the same. Students first translated this poem by Nicaraguan poet and civil rights activist Daisy Zamora. As the students translated the poem, they discussed the many complex social and political issues that are part of this piece.

La inmigrante	**The immigrant**
Se despierta extrañada desconociendo el cuarto. ¿Adónde se fue el padre, dónde la madre que hace un momento apenas la acompañaban? Se levanta y suspira. Este cuarto extranjero y la luz indiferente de una mañana cualquiera que la hiere. Desde la calle los ruidos de la vida entran Y el suelo queda estrujado como un pañuelo. *Daisy Zamora*	I woke up in an unfamiliar room. Where is my father? where is my mother? just a little while ago they were with me. I get up and exhale. This room is foreign to me and even the light is indifferent in this ordinary morning that is hurting me. From the street the sounds of a new life enter and the ground remains squeezed-out like a handkerchief. *Translated by PIO student Stephanie Contreras*

In response, this is Angel Vargas' poem on immigration:

People are afraid of cops

Jumping a fence
Just to get here
Paying $1000
For inglés sin barreras
And still not learning English
Saying "katsup" instead of "ketchup"
Answering the phone saying
Jallo, jallo, instead of hello
Eating chilaquiles with beans instead
Of instant oatmeal
Shopping at Mi Ranchito Market
And not Safeway

Going to a corner clothes store
Instead of Banana Republic

Angel Vargas, 7th grade

There is much to be learned from Angel's work about poetry, literary translation and what it means to be a an immigrant adolescent youth. Angel comes from the San Francisco Bay area in California. We are a border state. The Zamora poem surfaced a topic close to the hearts of all the students in this class. Zamora's laments, her sorrow, her feelings of disconnectedness were familiar to many of the students, because many members of their families, and in some cases the students themselves, have had direct experience with these issues.

For Angel Vargas, working with this poem sparked a reflection about his border crossing. The word-choices in this piece are very powerful, because they act as a bridge for understanding one person's lived experience. For example, the phrase "inglés sin barreras" refers to a computer program for learning English that targets recent immigrants. The translation of *inglés sin barreras* is *English without barriers* or *barricade* or *boundaries* – unquestionably a powerful play on words. The line – *"katsup" instead of "ketchup"* – references a lesson from the *Inglés sin barreras* program. Another powerful reference in the poem is the use of the word "jumping". The word *jumping,* in this case, means "to jump" across the border into the United Sates. At the border between Mexico and California, it is not uncommon for people to cross the border by literally climbing or jumping over the fence that divides the two countries. The $1000 mentioned in the poem refers to a fee paid to a Coyote. A Coyote is a person who facilitates the illegal crossing and charges a handsome fee for the service. His word-play with "Jallo" tells us that he still feels outside and different. The content, form and phrasing of this poem allows the reader to enter into Angel's life.

The writing of this poem represents the bringing together of many elements for Angel. He has learned a set of skills and practices that are part and parcel of doing literary translation and creating poems. Uniting those skills with his lived experience was the stuff that this great poem was made of.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We are learning so much from the students and teachers in the Poetry Inside Out project. Each implementation of a PIO workshop allows for deeper understanding of how students learn and why what they learn matters. Using PIO principles – *Inspire, Imagine, Practice* and *Apply* as a way to organise my reflections, I will conclude with some thoughts on what we are learning.

On inspiration. Poetry Inside Out students are teaching us with every workshop the importance of inspiration in doing anything. Writing poetry and doing literary translations is not easy. It is work that requires concentration and perseverance. Yet our students do this work with great enthusiasm. Why? Because they are inspired – inspired by great poems – from renowned poets and from their peers. Producing work that gets read inspires the students. Seeing themselves in a new light – in new ways – with bigger possibilities inspires them. This PIO student speaks for many.

> I feel different about myself. In PIO you get to express yourself more and you change by pieces. Translating poems is like forming a puzzle and once you are almost done it is like turning on a light. And then in your own life you start looking for the puzzles…looking for the way for me to be better…the puzzles are hiding and when you find them, and solve them, your life has more light, like the poems (4th grade PIO student).

The students via the work they produce, how they learn, and what engages their passion demonstrate the absolute importance of the role that desire, excitement and ambition play when engaging in any kind of work. Inspiration makes possible the unimagined.

On Imagination: Imagination and play are two of the most essential skills for learning, life and for creating anything (Vygotsky, 1978). The very act of imagining and playing opens up worlds of possibilities that might not otherwise be discovered. Volumes have been written on the topic of imagination. A round-table discussion that included four 4th-graders adds much to the on-going discussion (PIO student interviews, 2009). They had this to say:

> Student one: Your mind goes to the imagination, this weird place that helps you create and work harder.
>
> Student two: You imagine stuff out of your past, from the second grade, memories that you hoard, collect, set them aside and they (the memories) come back with your imagination.
>
> Student three: Sometimes if you use your imagination you can give more detail and more creativity. Your imagination showers you with ideas and colours. You breathe in your ideas – look and concentrate.
>
> Student four: This is how it happens…when you read some poems…a rainbow comes out of your head…you climb up to the top of the rainbow and slide down into your imagination.

Imagine classrooms everywhere that create conditions for kids to climb up rainbows.

On Practice. Building capacity in any craft takes practice. Poetry Inside Out lessons are carefully designed so that students have ample opportunity to encounter the same set of practices again and again. Discussion accompanies each phase so that participants build a meta-awareness of not only what they are learning, but how.

> I got more knowledge the more lessons we did. The lessons helped me understand what poetry is…poetry means describing objects, people, yourself, how they look and feel or might be feeling. After reading, writing and translating so many poems, I started asking myself, what does this mean? How do I write about this? What do I need to do? Working with so many poems, in so many ways helped (5th grade PIO student).

The more we implement this project, the more intensely we understand the value of giving time for real practice that allows for the building of expertise. Nothing replaces this valuable component.

Practising poetry: Students readily understand that learning to write poetry is at once

complex and simple. Poetry is a way to communicate feelings, ideas, points-of-view, exercise the imagination, play, and so much more. As one 5th-grader explained:

> Sometimes you feel something inside in your heart and then poetry comes and you can spread it out – like wave of emotions. Writing poetry is like sharing your mind with someone else that may have felt the same thing (PIO student interviews, 2009).

The process of learning to compose poetry includes learning a set of forms, functions and rules. Learning to write poetry can also include learning to change the form, break the rules, practise discretion. Breaking the rules, making the rules, amassing skills, all build students' capacity to communicate with clarity, as one 6th-grade PIO student explained: "When we started I didn't know anything about what it meant to write poetry or what it would be like to say things you really mean, but now I do." For PIO students learning to write poetry provides a vehicle for learning to write what they "really mean" through the practice of constantly questioning word choice versus intended message. A third-grade bilingual PIO student, who was in the process of learning about Haiku, wrote the following poem – still one of my all-time favorite contributions.

> Nada, nada
> Nada, nada, nada
> Nada[3]

This poem demonstrates a depth of understanding about form, function and communication. Poetry creates a way for kids to build new ways of seeing new worlds and themselves in those worlds. "When I can't feel something that I want to write about, I make up my own little world – a world where you are more than who you are" (6th-grade PIO Student).

Practising translation. "When I translate a poem I am looking at all the words and what they mean" (8th-grade PIO student, 2009). Looking at all the words, the context, the intention of author, and the flow of the particular language – these and more are all essential skills that our young poets and translators learn. PIO students learn what so many scholars in the field of translation tell us, and which is beautifully expressed by Daniel Weissbort (2006):

> Anything to do with human communication can be related to translation: all translations between human beings, whether from different languages and cultures, within the same language, between social groups, between sexes, between adults and children and so forth involve translation (p. 614).

Poetry Inside Out students, as Weissbort describes, come to know that almost everything we do requires translation in some form, whether we are reading a street sign, reading our friends, reading the world…we translate. Translation is about interpretation – moving something from one context and making it comprehensible in another. Sometimes it is a piece of writing, sometimes an idea, at other times ways we may translate the ways we are present in the world (for example, playing-with-friends versus being in school behaviour, making a point with a friend – taking a stance in a class)…it is all translation.

[3] "Nada" in Spanish means "nothing".

Learning about translation builds students awareness of the benefits and importance of working with other languages. As a 4th-grade student explained:

> Translation made me use words that I knew but did not say…made me think of other words with other people with different languages…made me use words that I didn't even know. Translation helped me learn how to say what I want to say…how to chose my words and say what I mean for the people who read my poems to understand (PIO student interviews, 2009).

What the students say about writing poetry and doing literary translation does not emerge unless students have many encounters with whatever it is that being learned. All artists, in any craft talk, about the importance of practice. Nothing worth doing happens in a single pass. Rather, many chances for revisiting, revising and revising – in short, practice – leads to excellence.

On apply. It is not new information to say that having a reason to do something makes the doing more compelling. We are simply seeing the truth of this. When PIO kids see their poems in print. They are inspired by their very own work. Nothing motivates a PIO student more than seeing their own or another student's work in a PIO anthology – especially impressive and inspirational to all is the work done by younger students.

Last year, a middle-school teacher organised her end-of-year exhibition around having her students demonstrate and teach about how they learned to write and translate poetry. Seeing parents sitting with their children pouring over the word of a Neruda ode or a Lorca poem was a delight to behold. Each – parent and child – left the experience transformed. The more we are able to build ways for kids to show off their brilliance, the more likelihood we have of pushing the expectations of what they can do higher and higher.

Learning to write poetry through exposure to and the translation of great poets, Poetry Inside Out students have multiple opportunities to practise a variety of literacy skills. These skills include writing to communicate and reading for understanding. The craft of translation is useful not only within this program – but also across the curricula as students learn the importance of translating science, math and social studies. Similarly, the core literacy skills developed in PIO have applications in every curriculum content area and in every-day life.

How do we do this? The formula is simple. We introduce students to a few tricks of the trade. We teach them how to translate through the introduction of a few basic protocols. And then we practise. We teach them how to write poetry by teaching the basic structure and form, and we play and practise those skills. Most importantly, through the poems we choose and the activities we use, we show students that we see them as smart, capable people able to learn seemingly complex and important things. This is the single most essential part of PIO that led to the production of the many wonderful poems in this paper. As a fifth-grade student working in a bilingual immersion school said, "When we saw what artists and Latinos wrote we thought we could do those things…we could be like them."

Learning that makes a difference in young peoples' lives must be engaging and

generative. This concept is not restricted to writing and translation – it is true for anything. Programs like Poetry Inside Out and the scores of other rigorous and mind-challenging programs prove Jerome Bruner's (1960) famous claim (to paraphrase somewhat) that anything can be taught to anyone, at any age, as long as it is taught in way that is intellectually honest. But, the material needs to be worthy of students' time and engagement. This is a basic formula: honest, rigorous, worthy, straightforward and the harder the better. When we raise the level of intellectual pursuit – students see themselves as more – more intellectual, more capable, more creative.

The poets and poems we choose for the PIO project are great works suitable for any adult. Students understand when they are given important work and it makes a difference. Our choice of content explicitly tells our students that we think well of them and that they are eminently capable of using their minds well – when the content is something worthy of their minds. Students see the Poetry Inside Out program as an intellectually sophisticated endeavour and by extension they come to see themselves as intellectually sophisticated. While this quality is not unique to PIO, it is a quality worth emulating. When students understand the importance of using their minds well – they do just that.

ENDING IN GRATITUDE

Although my name appears at the top of the page as author, in some senses that is misleading – all papers about how people learn and teach are in fact composed by the whole community of practice…in this case the Poetry Inside Out community. First and foremost, I want to acknowledge the young people we work with who shape our understanding in ways I have tried to articulate in this paper, and other ways too numerous to mention. Secondly, I want to thank and acknowledge the core teachers and creators who work with Poetry Inside out. The first to mention is the founding teacher, who is no longer with PIO, Michael P. Ray. We all build on the work he began. I also want to acknowledge and thank current teacher-poets-artists-translators Anita Sagástegui and John Oliver Simon who are seminal contributors to this piece. Their thoughts and ideas appear on virtually every page. Sarah Valor was a major contributor to the ideas expressed in this paper, as was Carlee Sheinfeld, a middle-school teacher who did much to build my conceptual understanding of implementing Poetry Inside Out. I am grateful to Anita Sagástegui, Ceci Lewis and Andrea Lalingenfelter for careful reads and editing. I am always grateful to Courtney Cazden, who is ever prompting me to write in order to share these great programs. Finally, gratitude to all of the staff at the Center for the Art of Translation, and most particularly, Olivia Sears, who had the vision to build a real place that fosters amazing work.

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