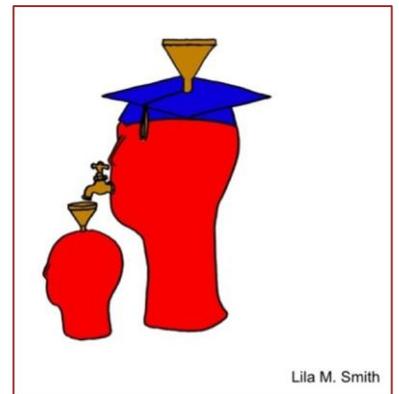


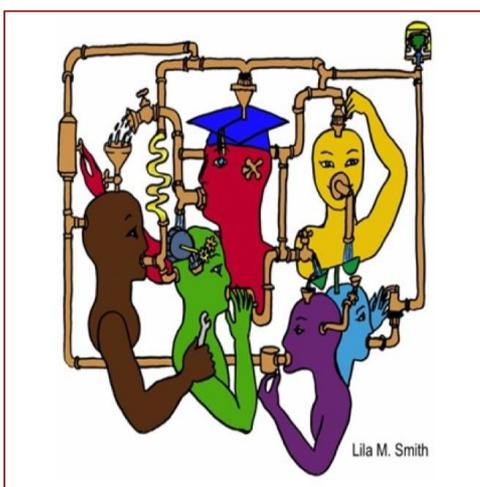
# MORE THAN WORDS

I start this small essay with pairing of key words: *multiculturalism and multicultural, inclusion and inclusive, cultural competency and learning aims.*

I tend to associate *multiculturalism, inclusion* and *cultural competency* with realms of policy making regarding, for example, a [multiculturalism](#) that attends to immigration numbers and settlement patterns; an [inclusion](#) framework that requires, in part, “development of accessibility guidelines and standards for the built environment, transportation, communication, medical diagnostic equipment, and information technology”; and an understanding of [cultural competency](#) as development of “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.” I tend, additionally, to link this vocabulary to *policy-making* entities: governments, corporations, large-scale issues-oriented organizations, educational systems endorsing high-stakes tests of teacher effectiveness and learner proficiency, and global-scale broadcasting/ publishing entities. I see the image at the right as reflecting how such policy is developed, enacted, assessed, and adjusted: Low input, top down, with feedback as ancillary, and pushback enacted via horizontal, inter-group hostility and blame-based finger-pointing.



The semantic discussions are not new – for you, and certainly not for me. They shaped my thinking about teaching during my 1980s shift from being a learner who’d experienced one year of culturally- and personally-complex learning in active classrooms, including those rooted in lectures, to becoming a graduate teaching assistant responsible for enacting diversity principles in classrooms with a broad range of learners with equally broad reasons for being in those courses.

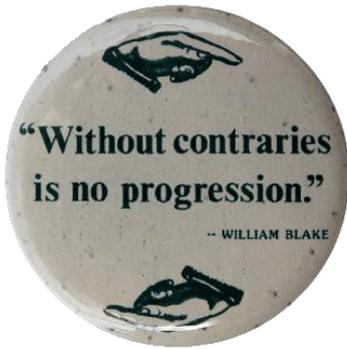


I made semantic – and personal and pedagogical – shifts because living with/in those words was a struggle for me-the-teacher-person aiming for robust interconnections of people in doing shared knowledge development work.

I opt for words to help me express philosophically what I understand visually in the image at the left:

- [Multicultural](#) as creation of places and practices through which multiple cultural and affinity groups may link together as allies to shape creative learning-living spaces, really study content – to see what / who is or is not present – and do this based on short- and long-term aims, some articulated at the start, some emerging in the work.
- [Inclusive](#) as people recognizing and acting to reach across boundaries of ability, age, class, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation and other personal, social and cultural identities to more thoroughly understand intricate dimensions of life experiences, and of creating robust cultures of learning through multidisciplinary queries and conversations.
- [Learning](#) twinned with [Teaching](#) as being about people who share a learning aim working together to broaden and deepen their knowledge by interacting in an ongoing basis, across multiple platforms, as co-responsible agents in studying, contemplating, questioning, and creating knowledge by drawing on multiple sources and perspectives.

## Semantics and Coming to *Embracing the Contraries*.



Peter Elbow's [argument](#) in "Embracing the Contraries in the Teaching Process" is that good teaching is challenging because it requires *an obligation to students and an obligation to knowledge, to society*.

The first view casts teachers as allies to students, demonstrating their commitment by assuming all learners capable of learning, and by designing activities that promote development and understanding of learning on the way to assessment. In the second, the teacher's commitment to society focuses on the furthering of knowledge.

Elbow's notion of Gatekeeper – as I heard and read him across several texts and conferences as I shaped a MILT Philosophy in that 1980s, US education landscape – is less about controlling access, and more about Stewardship, taking action to illuminate ideas, methods and conflicts within professions, fields, and aligned cultures across time in order to be part of moving forward into the new and necessary: New configurations, concepts, ideas, practices, paradigms, practitioners, and necessary ways of investigating and sharing ideas. His idea of teacher as Facilitator joins teachers with learners the work of *un-hiding* the curriculum and working together to *un-cover* rather than cover content.

Certainly, universities come with their own change-averse settlement patterns and gatekeepers at the borders. As certainly, universities are also home to people who foster change in and beyond the university by building public, personal, profession and pedagogical alliances

As current and future faculty, you've already illuminated many knotty contraries:

- At the level of *classroom practice*, teachers and disciplines advocating "the lecture" as a course default (often also experiencing this mode as one's own preferred learning mode) frequently draw on monocultural definitions of [rigor](#) to question whether teachers adapting "active learning" course design practices maintain standards. *Where and how do "the learners" show up in "the lecture"?*
- At the level of *teaching-learning scholarship*, researchers advocating to end debates about the merits of "traditional teaching" vs. "non-traditional teaching" recognize (a) that an imposed hierarchy erases aspects of good teaching and learning practice in both of these "camps," (b) that false debate obfuscates the stunning learning gains associated with active learning practices across student groups and disciplines, and (c) that new and future faculty often forego the route of building research-based teaching practices that support student learning when this conflicts with local tenure-granting practices. *What of the long history and scholarly record of everyday "non-traditional" teaching and learning?*
- At the level of institutional and cultural change, persons and institutions addressing the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and learning are advocating for assessment of the effectiveness of various learning practices for a broad range of learners in reaching specific learning aims – over evaluations focused primarily on rating the effectiveness of individual teachers – are faculty at liberal arts, comprehensive, two-year, *and* private research institutions who are also looking to hire new faculty ready to join in this pedagogical work. *Where's the community-guided research – on topics? on impacts of learning?*

### What are we going to do about that? What of MILT & the contraries to be embraced?

The first question is my grandmother's, always posed to me, as she had heard it from her grandmother – also a teacher. It's the question Alex and I posed to the dozen people in our orbit whom we asked the "What is...? query. Over winter break, eight taped the responses you'll find below this meta-essay.

This, too, informs the basic question we pose for you in the Module 2 discussion forum:

With two-eyed learning in mind – one eye on where you/we are, and one on where you/we want or ought to be – what are the contraries you investigate, the richness you seek, and the future you envision as you move toward putting into words the MILT principles and practices that will guide and animate your personal, public, pedagogical worlds?



Two-eyed BB | *Callitrope pitheas* | Wingspan: 2.0 to 2.4 in  
Family: Nymphalidae | Subfamily: Biblidinae | Tribe: Catagrammini  
Photos © Ryan G. Fessenden