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PLENARY SPEECH

Educating the global citizen or the global consumer?

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Abstract

In this paper I review three models of language that have dominated language learning and teaching in the last 40 years: the textual model, the information exchange model, and the multilingual model. I analyze each one and consider how it stacks up to instances of language use in a globalized world. I then propose moving beyond the metaphors of citizens and consumers, and consider language teaching as educating denizens of a global ecology that requires sensitivity to context, political awareness, ethical answerability and a good dose of situational cunning.

A few years ago I jokingly asked some American colleagues at a Graduate School of Education in Pennsylvania: 'What are you preparing school children to be: good citizens or good consumers?' I was surprised to hear them respond without a second of hesitation and in total seriousness: 'Good consumers, of course. Who knows what a good citizen is?'. Some readers might find this incident a little unbelievable. Were these colleagues not joking? Were they not making fun of my naive or politically tendentious question? I have often reflected upon their response, uttered in a casual manner as we were gathered informally at a colloquium during the coffee break. As a French immigrant to the U.S., I was making a strong distinction between citizens and consumers that Anglo-Saxons might not make and thus it is possible that I misunderstood their reaction. But after second thought, it was not as surprising as it first seemed.

What they were pointing out was the increasing difficulty of defining what it means to be an American citizen these days and the increasing political risks in doing so. Given the enormous divergences of opinion that the American public holds regarding basic cultural values and the many issues that divide the country, such as civil rights, freedom of speech, gun control, abortion rights, health care, immigration, right up to the interpretation of the nation's history and the meaning of its democratic institutions, the very prospect of teaching 'civics' in schools has become daunting. No wonder my colleagues felt it was safer to remain on the level of consumer practice: holding corporations to standards of fair trade, equitable prices, truth in advertising, consumer protection; exercising healthy choices of what and how much to buy, and balancing your budget. But they knew that consumer education is not just about consuming products; it's also about consuming news and information, as well as the invisible ideologies in which they are wrapped – the symbolic universe of signs and symbols that appeal less to our rationality as citizens than to our deepest desires and passions as consumers. It is

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also about consuming with critical discernment the new social media that are facilitating but also threatening our democratic dialogue.

Hearing my colleagues' response to my simple question, I suddenly realized how old-fashioned I was in even asking the question and how I had put my finger on a major challenge of our times. What form should citizenship take in a global economic order that requires less an obedience to state institutional laws and regulations in a participatory democracy than an embrace of the individual responsibility required in a global neoliberal economy? While my colleagues seemed to have abandoned all hope that the schools could help strengthen the institutional structures necessary for a national citizen's 'pursuit of happiness', they seemed to be counting on individuals' entrepreneurial spirit to achieve a global consumer's 'pursuit of success'.

But what does success mean? If by becoming 'good consumers' school children learn how to better consume brands and logos, and to distinguish real news from fake news, are they not at the same time being manipulated by mediatic forces and a digital technology far beyond their control? As language educators are exhorted to focus less on linguistic form and to focus more on meaning, they quickly come to realize that the global 'traffic in meaning' has become even more complex and unpredictable than what Marie Louise Pratt designated by that term 20 years ago (Pratt, 2002), i.e., the cultural translation that goes on in intercultural interactions and transactions. The proliferation of meanings that politicians and administrators have tried to harness under the names of diversity and inclusion, have not taken into account the need to respect our fundamental differences in values, knowledge, and social status (Bhabha, 1994; Stewart 2017; Kramsch & Hua, 2019; Morton, 2019).

In this paper, I want to trace the development of second/foreign language education from training the future citizen to training the future consumer and the issues raised by these two orientations that coexist today in a global economy. In each case, I discuss a concrete incident that highlights the challenges posed by globalization for the education of citizens, consumers, and ecological denizens. These incidents will be taken from instances of English language learning during study abroad in the U.S. (Incident 1) and of English literacy teaching in Germany (Incident 2). Although they both feature cases of learning to use English as a foreign language, they offer a picture that is somewhat different from the traditional 'beginning foreign language class' conducted in schools and colleges. I finally consider a new way of conceiving of language education for the denizens of a global multilingual ecology.

Language education for future national citizens – the textual model

In a stable society held together by national institutions and a bureaucratic apparatus, it makes sense to see the teaching of foreign languages, like any other subject in a school's curriculum, as preparing pupils to become well-rounded citizens, aware and accepting of their place in the social hierarchy, appreciative of their own language, culture, and values, dutifully attentive to the letter of the law, and respectful of historical traditions.[1] This view is reflected in the way some educational systems conceive of language, language learning, teachers, and learners.

Language. In this institutional perspective, language is seen as an historical artifact transmitted through written texts. Form, i.e., penmanship, spelling, grammatical and lexical accuracy are as important as meaning for the exact documentation of events and the preservation of legal truths. In language education, primacy is given to the written word, captured in such bureaucratic products as encyclopedias, reference grammars and dictionaries. In this focus on language (small and capital 'L'), language competence is seen as philological, historical, textual competence.

This view of language as 'text' to be mastered and controlled is seen in some parts of the world as outdated but it has not disappeared, even though it takes different forms. While the French *explication de textes* encapsulated the essence of such a structural, exegetic approach to literary texts, the memorization of conversational gambits and other formulaic utterances in the use of communication strategies reflects such an approach for the development of oral competence.

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Translations and multiple-choice tests assess the learner's ability to manipulate linguistic structures and the generic features of texts.

Language learning. The institutional tradition teaches the respect of texts and their authors. Language learning is seen as taking place along three dimensions: historical, geographical, and moral.

Because texts are seen as repositories of unquestioned historical wisdom, foreign language texts are dictated, transcribed, copied, and committed to memory. By learning a foreign language, learners enter not only a place on the map, but a historical speech community; they internalize this community's textual genres: the academic essay, the registration form, the job application, the statement of purpose, are all genres of success for the future national citizen.

Language learning is also viewed as a dialogue with linguistic systems from other geographical areas of the globe in order to better appreciate one's own. The search for equivalences from one language to another is a search for the comparability of symbols to capture a reality that one assumes to be translatable across languages. The French educational system still values translation as a pedagogic exercise, into and from the target language (*thèmes* and *versions*) to teach foreign languages. Translation exercises are still used in the teaching of some foreign languages in the U.S. and are making something of a comeback in the U.K. (see Cook, 2010).

Learning a foreign language, like learning the other subjects in the curriculum, is seen to have moral benefits. It is meant to broaden students' worldviews, foster their tolerance and appreciation of the diversity of the human experience, and enable them to gain valuable life lessons from others who speak and write in different languages.

The teacher. As the representative of the educational institution, the teacher is seen as a repository of knowledge, a mediator between learners and texts, a translator between the foreign culture and its speakers, and the native culture of the students in the class. Because of his/her age, her education, and her life experience, the teacher is seen as having a wisdom that she passes down to future generations, including the moral values instilled by the school system. Today, this respect extends to the internet and Wikipedia, whose authority is difficult for students to put into question because of the institutional legitimacy traditionally granted the printed word.

The learners. In this institutionalized view of language education, learners are seen as minds to be filled, bodies to be disciplined, moral actors to be educated. Learning grammar, spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary is seen as a way of disciplining the mind and the body to abide by a new way of thinking. Learners are expected to model their way of thinking, reasoning, and valuing on the way the teacher and the textbook are seen to do so.

This way of characterizing language education in the age of national citizenship might seem strange in our global times, but it is still the way languages are taught in many parts of the world, especially when the teacher is a non-native speaker employed as a civil servant in a national education system that teaches foreign languages in order to train citizens of their nation-state to be better citizens of the world. It creates problems, however, when language learners not only go for short sojourns abroad to perfect their knowledge of the language, but also decide to emigrate for five years or longer to study and pursue a career in a foreign country. In doing so, are they being trained as future citizens or as future consumers in a global knowledge economy?

In this paper, I consider a controversial incident that raises questions about this view of language education for the global citizen of the future.

Incident 1. A controversial assignment

The following recent case of academic literacy caused quite a bit of debate on the 'teach-net' listserv of the teaching faculty at the University of California, which has been admitting an increasing number of international students in recent years.[2] The instructor of the Economics 101 course, a required beginning course for some 700 undergraduate students majoring in economics, had given her students as their first assignment of the semester to write a short essay about some 'growth-enhancing strategy'

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employed in any economy, in any time period. The point was for them to think about the applicability of one economic growth-enhancing strategy to a very poor country today and to cite their sources. The essay, to be titled 'Problem set 1', was to be maximum one page or 400 words long. The essay was to be turned in by each student individually to their teaching assistants, who gave it an individual grade.

One Chinese student in the class had arrived in the U.S. from China at age 17, having learned English in China according to a text-based method similar to the one described above. Her English was good enough to be admitted to an American high school for one year before she applied and got admitted to the University of California. Her first course there was Economics 101. She dutifully searched the internet and based on an article she found there, she wrote an essay about Adolf Hitler's economic policies, i.e., how Hitler's growth-enhancing strategies helped Germany effectively deal with unemployment during the Great Depression through the development of the road/transportation system and through wage and price controls. The student specifically added:

> Hitler was … clear with his intention and announced his plans to reorganize the nation with his National Socialist principles, thus uplifting spirits and ensuring positive thoughts and less resistance to his plans. As long as prices remained stable and there were more jobs created to ensure efficiency in production, the economics could continue to grow.

And she concluded:

> If there is another poor country like Burundi, I would recommend a similar development. They would first need to increase building methods of travel and transportation, as that is where jobs are created and unemployment slashed. This in turn will create a rise in economics. This should be feasible as underdeveloped countries will not have more sophisticated structures. This will help create jobs and raise standards of living as that one implementation creates a domino effect on the other industries.

The teaching assistant felt uneasy about this essay and contacted the instructor who posted the following note on the teach-net listserv of the university, hoping to get advice from other faculty members:

> [The student] cites her source and does a fine job on the essay. But it struck me as odd that someone would write about Hitler, Nazi Germany, and how Hitler's National Socialist principles 'uplifted spirits and ensured positive thoughts.' It's all written as if Hitler was a great leader who did great things, with no mention of anything negative. The source she cites is from the 'Institute for Historical Review' which, according to Wikipedia is a center of the holocaust-denial movement. According to Wikipedia 'The Institute for Historical Review (IHR), founded in 1978, is an organization primarily devoted to publishing and promoting pseudo-historical books and essays that deny established facts concerning the Nazi genocide of Jews'.

The instructor further writes:

> [My]Choices.
>
> [1] Let it go. It's 3 points out of 500; she's 1 of 720 students. Perhaps she is simply naive and googled 'transportation growth-enhancing' and grabbed this hit.
>
> [2] Write her an email. And say what? Not the first thing that came to my mind, clearly. I haven't a clue whether she tripped on this and thought it looked legit, or if she is a holocaust-denier. I don't want to approach this as if she knew what she was doing. If she did, I can only imagine the arsenal she could deploy (starting with a publicity machine funded elsewhere) in response to what I say.
>
> [3] Is there a third choice?

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The Economics 101 instructor admitted that there was nothing on the site, aside from the content, that signalled that it might be a problematic site. Was it her responsibility to alert the student that even if Hitler's economic policies were successful, they are not a 'legitimate' example of 'growth-enhancing strategies' because of their national socialist origin? Or because of Hitler's later anti-semitic policies? Wasn't this going beyond the assigned task? The reactions of some of the respondents are instructive in this regard.

A university librarian pointed out that 'this is a good opportunity to teach this student, and others about evaluating sources according to academic standard. If we can't graduate students who can critically evaluate the sources of the information they use, what are we doing?' A professor of Public Policy suggested reminding the student that using such controversial sources is likely to be viewed 'with hostility and resentment by many…and that she might want to dissociate herself from them so people don't get the wrong idea'. A Japanese foreign language instructor strongly felt it was the 'obligation for university faculty to educate youth to contribute to world peace and thus to enlighten this student as to who started WWII'. A scientific response, a political response, a moral response. No one brought up the institutional difficulty of dealing with such sensitive matters in a class of 700 students with a rigorous syllabus in the first week of a 14-week semester. Clearly the conditions of possibility for raising such issues were close to nil. The student got an A and the issue was dropped.

This incident raises important questions regarding the use of the English language by non-native speakers in content courses that are supposed to transmit value-free scientific knowledge to students from a variety of national cultures. One could say that this English-speaking Chinese student conformed to the Economics 101 discourse required. Her essay was written in grammatically and lexically correct and idiomatic English and it showed mastery of the academic essay genre. The student did not plagiarize and she responded to the prompt accurately and comprehensively. In many ways one would call her performance 'successful'. But was it legitimate?

This student's essay showed evidence of either historical ignorance, or cultural insensitivity, or anti-semitic sentiments. Indeed, it has been shown that in Asia, ignorance of the Holocaust is widespread and that in some Asian countries Hitler and national socialism are the object of a particular admiration (Ives, 2019). Unlike in Germany, where Hitler's economic achievements in the 1930s are a well-known historical fact, in the U.S. anything related to Hitler and national socialism has become mythified as quintessentially evil. To what extent must Chinese learners of English who want to study economics in the U.S. learn not only about U.S. history and culture but also about American stereotypes in the public imagination? To what extent does becoming a citizen of the world obligate a Chinese student to learn about the local sensitivities of various groups within their host society, in addition to becoming fully proficient in International English? Forty years ago, foreign language education used to prepare students for the real world of everyday conversations and readings whose meanings were relatively predictable because they were embedded in a common general knowledge shared by teacher and students. In today's real world, teachers can no longer take any common knowledge between them and their students for granted. With the growing number of international students in their classes, they are faced with increasing tensions between accurate and legitimate knowledge, between knowledge and politics.

Language educators could argue that any introductory course to a discipline like Economics 101 should contain a discussion of the DISCOURSE of the discipline (its political, historical, moral dimensions) in addition to its content. And it is true that economics professors should discuss such incidents openly in their classes. But it is worth reflecting on the conditions of possibility of conveying such complex and sensitive knowledge in a curriculum as tightly packed as Economics 101 at a high-end research university. In order to accommodate the enormous numbers of applicants to a major in that field, a professor has to teach classes of more than 700 students with a strict syllabus and has only 14 weeks to impart to students enormous amounts of information, most of which gets tested via computerized testing. The system itself seems to preclude any possibility of discussing politics in an introductory class on economics.

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Language education for future consumers – the information exchange model

The changes brought about in the last 40 years by the rise of a multinational business class and the explosion of information-processing technologies have transformed English from just another foreign language into THE world language of trade and industry. The case of English, more than any other foreign language, is emblematic of the close link between language teaching and the clash of national interests and international power struggles taking place at the present time in the technological, economic and cultural sphere. Here again changes have occurred in our conception of language, language learning, teachers and learners.

Language. Language is no longer seen as primarily a mode of representation of some textual truth, but as a mode of information; what is to be exchanged is not historical knowledge, but social and cultural information. The emphasis is on spoken language, the focus on lexical knowledge and lexicalized grammar, on idiomatic phrases, procedural know how, fluency in production, and the skillful management of conversation. With the advent of the internet, the focus on the spoken modality has been supplemented by a focus on the digital modality – a form of expression that combines orality and literacy and, with networked computers, favors collaboration and interaction. Language is now seen as a social medium for the transmission and consumption of information, meaning is accessed not through the authority and integrity of the text, but through an individual speaker's linguistic choices in various contexts of use. This use of language, now called 'literacy', is the ability not just to read and write but to use language in various modalities (spoken, written, electronic) and in various social contexts in collaboration with others.

Language learning. The focus is here on learning and information exchange strategies that will give learners a sense of autonomy and self-regulation. Most important is learning to learn, i.e., learning to think and to represent knowledge to oneself and to others; learning to interact, i.e., take turns at talk, participate in group activities, initiate questions, take part in debate, and contribute ideas. One is reminded that these are precisely the 'usable skills' that the new capitalism now requires in the workplace. According to Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996), those are:

- understand and internalize the goals of the company
- self-monitor your efficiency and productivity
- develop a competitive spirit
- work in teams
- do not rely on anyone but yourself
- be ready to change jobs when the market conditions require it (see Gee et al., 1996).

These skills are seen as transferable to one's private life: They enable individuals to get things done in everyday life, to problem-solve, to pursue their own individual goals, to get others to collaborate with them in meeting their individual needs and, in the process, to achieve common goals.

Teachers and learners. No longer the source of all knowledge, teachers are seen now as experts in their own particular domain. They are expected to act as catalysts, facilitators, moderators of learning. Theirs is not a moral or epistemological responsibility, only a procedural one. They set up the conditions under which learners learn to learn, they facilitate students' discovery of strategies that meet their needs. In turn, learners are encouraged to show initiative, take charge of their own learning, monitor their progress, and be willing to take risks. They are expected to be motivated to learn and interact with others to solve problems or accomplish tasks that require collaboration and dialogue.

This information orientation of language education has been with us since the advent of communicative language teaching in the 70s and 80s. However, the geopolitical landscape changed in the late eighties with the onset of globalization (Kramsch, 2014).

- Communicative competence is no guarantee of social acceptability; the right sociolinguistics and pragmatics, even the right discourse skills will not always give you the attention you deserve if you are identified as different, foreign, or otherwise untrustworthy.

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- Exchanging information in a concise, true, sincere, and polite manner is not enough to be listened to with seriousness and respect.
- Symbolic aspects like: face, perception, trust, credibility, legitimacy, authority, and power have become salient features in the construction of symbolic reality on the global market of symbolic goods (e.g., visibility, popularity, prestige, status, desirability).

In addition, the world has become more multilingual in public institutions like the European Union, in immigration societies, and on social media. With multilingualism divergences in knowledge, interests and values have become more prominent even as the spread of global English has provided a common language to deal with these divergences. School educators have tried to appease their critics (Stewart, 2017) by embracing diversity and inclusion in an effort to bridge differences. But voices are being heard from ethnic groups marginalized by multinational corporations in the global economy (Park, 2019), and from non-Whites by Western historically white institutions (Stewart, 2017). These voices point out that the slogan of 'diversity' disregards their fundamental difference, which is not readily translatable in the discourse of neoliberal diversity.

Critical applied linguists, drawing on Halliday's distinction between GLOSSODIVERSITY and SEMIODIVERSITY, i.e., between diversity of languages and diversity of meanings (Halliday, 2002 cited in Pennycook, 2010, p. 130), are starting to distinguish multilingualism as the taken-for-granted translatability between linguistic systems, and multilingualism as the fundamentally problematic translatability of experience (Pennycook, 2004; Kramsch, 2006; Gramling, 2019; Kramsch & Hua, 2019; Park, 2019). Gramling goes so far as to name the first kind of multilingualism 'translational multilingualism' (2016, p. 31) – a form of multilingualism that, by assuming that the informational content of the message remains unaffected by the linguistic form in which it is expressed, is in fact, he argues, another kind of monolingualism.

I consider now a concrete example of these two forms of multilingualism and the challenges they present for the global consumer of the future.

Incident 2: A controversial literacy event

In 2009 Bonny Norton gave a plenary at the IATEFL conference in Cardiff (U.K.) that was subsequently published under the title 'Identity, Literacy, and English Language Teaching.' (Beaven, 2010).[3] This plenary was then translated into German under the title '*Identität, Literalität und das multilinguale Klassenzimmer*' [Identity, literacy, and the multilingual classroom] (Norton, 2013). In this article Norton reports on her work on English literacy practices in Uganda and she applies her signature concepts – INVESTMENT, IMAGINED COMMUNITIES, and IMAGINED IDENTITIES, borrowed from Bourdieu and Anderson respectively – to the teaching of English in Uganda. Jessica Fischer, the German translator of Norton's English text, retained the first-person narrator of the original paper, but she also retained Norton's concepts untranslated within a matrix of German, even though the published German translations of Bourdieu and Anderson were readily available – Bourdieu's French i*nvestissement* translated as German *Investition* (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 64) and Anderson's 'imagined community' translated as *vorgestellte Gemeinschaft* (Anderson, 1998). Norton writes in the German translation:

> Das *investment* eines Lerners in eine *imagined community* setzt ein *investment* in eine *imagined identity* voraus und kann eine beachtliche Wirkung auf Literalität und Sprachentwicklung haben (italics in the translation) [The investment of a learner in an imagined community presupposes an investment in an imagined identity and can have a remarkable effect on the development of language and literacy] (Norton, 2013, p. 127).

All of this poses the question: Why were the German terms not used to translate Norton's terms? Why were her English terms maintained?

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One answer might be that, since Norton had put her own spin on those terms, they no longer had the meanings intended by their original authors. But then, why refer to Bourdieu and Anderson at all? I would like to argue that, by retaining Norton's English terms without translating them into German, the translator reinforced the prestige of North American literacy research as the lingua franca of global social science with universal validity. This kind of neocolonialism is subtle and is promoted with the best of intentions. Indeed, it is part of what Brian Street called 'the hidden features of [English] academic writing': 'Hidden features of academic writing establish the fiction of a single, globalised society in which social processes and change are comparable in all locations, and may be understood from a single, bird's eye perspective.' (Street, 2009, p. 1). The German translator gave this article the enhanced prestige of English terms – one (Bourdieu) from the French original in an English translation, the other (Anderson) in the English original – from two prominent scholars with high disciplinary pedigrees. The English concepts were now applied to the teaching of German literacy (now called *Literalität*) at German schools, in particular to teach German or *Deutsch als Fremd/Zweitsprache* to migrants and refugees.

German educators have historically been called upon to teach immigrants the educated High German written culture that will gain them respectability in German society. This is the literate use of German that is taught by the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Goethe Institutes in Germany and around the world. This is the kind of literacy education that teaches not only how to read and write, but how to respect German law and institutions and how to abide by the cultural value of *Bildung* (literate education) in German society. Up to now, such a literate education did not use the term 'literacy'. In fact, the field of literacy research was so unknown among German-speaking educators that the Rosebrock and Bertschi-Kaufmann (2013) edited volume had to have the following explanation on its back cover:

> Mit dem Begriff 'Literacy' werden nicht nur die Fähigkeiten des Lesens und Schreibens bezeichnet, sondern auch Text- und Sinnverständnis, Erfahrungen mit der Lese- und Erzählkultur der jeweiligen Gesellschaft, Vertrautheit mit Literatur und anderen schriftbezogenen Medien (inkl. Internet) sowie Kompetenzen im Umgang mit der Schriftsprache. Literalität ist das zentrale Medium der Kommunikation. In Diskussion sind nicht nur die Defizite, sondern auch die Vielfalt der Praktiken, mit denen Schrift und Medien genutzt werden. Ethnographie, Lesesozialisationsforschung und Psychologie bemühen sich darum, sowohl die individuellen Entwicklungen als auch den sozial geprägten Gebrauch von Schrift zu erfassen.
>
> [The notion of 'literacy' refers not only to the ability to read and write, but also to understanding the meaning of texts, experiencing the reading and narrative culture of a given society, being familiar with its literature and other written media (including the internet) as well as competence in dealing with the written language. Literacy is the central medium of communication. It has to do not only with the deficits, but also with the diversity of practices that use writing and the media. Ethnography, reading socialization research, and psychology attempt to understand individual literacy development but also the use of written language in society (my translation).]

The new kind of literacy promoted by scholars such as Norton is now calling on immigrants to 'invest' in the German language and to claim the 'right to speak' and to participate in 'imagined communities' in that language. This kind of political activism is the direct outcome of Norton's experience with apartheid in South Africa and her work with literacy there, which she applied subsequently to immigrants in Canada (Norton, 2000) and is now transplanted to Europe to educate global citizen/consumer immigrants in Germany (Kramsch, 2013). But it is not clear which imagined community Norton-in-translation is encouraging these immigrants to participate in a global community of various media users that hardly uses literate academic German, but rather uses instead vernacular varieties permeated with English as a lingua franca, or German society, with its German cultural values and traditions, including the *gebildetes Deutsch* ('academic' German) of German language educators.

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When I asked a group of German undergraduates in Germany, who were themselves teaching German as a foreign language to migrants and refugees, what kind of German they were teaching them: *gebildetes Hochdeutsch* or the everyday German they could hear on the street, they unanimously responded: '*Hochdeutsch*, of course. We want to give them a chance at upward mobility in German society!' Some even said: 'We want them to be listened to with respect'. Evidently, they had different views on literacy than the average language teacher who just wants to give his/her students access to 'authentic' street language.

This example illustrates Gramling's 'translational multilingualism' that assumes the translatability of terms like LITERACY, AGENCY, or SUCCESS but risks ignoring less translatable differences between English-speaking and German-speaking societies. Bertschi-Kaufmann and Rosebrock (2013, p. 9) are well aware of this risk. In their introductory chapter, they write:

> Man darf aber fragen, wessen Schriftgebrauch und wessen Vorstellung von Schriftgebrauch in das Konzept Literalität aufgenommen werden soll: der konventionell-normativ, am Bildungsideal einer sozialen Gruppe (der bildungsbürgerlichen) orientierte Begriff, oder eine auf Alltagsfunktionalität und soziale Anschlussfähigkeit ausgerichtete und in diesem Sinne ihrerseits normative Vorstellung (sensu PISA und messtechnisch geprägt), oder jene sich mit der Beobachtung von Praktiken, von Funktionen und Funktionalisierungen in sozialen Kontexten und im Laufe individueller Schriftentwicklungen herausbildende Vorstellung. Diese dritte Art, Literalität zu fassen ist stark situativ orientiert, gebunden also an die literalen Situationen, die in ethnographischer Perspektive ausgeleuchtet werden und in anderer Weise in die Diskussion eingebracht werden als dies zum Beispiel für Ergebnisse literalitätsbezogener Leistungsmessung der Fall ist.
>
> [We may ask whose written language use and whose concept of written language use should be included in the concept of literacy: the conventional/normative concept, oriented toward the educational ideal of one social group (the educated middle class), or a concept oriented toward everyday functionality and socialization and in this sense also normative (according to PISA and its requirement of measurable outcomes), or a concept that focuses on the observation of practices, functions, and functionalizing processes in social contexts and in the course of individual literacy development. This third way of conceiving literacy is strongly situational, associated with literacy situations that are illuminated through an ethnographic approach and are discussed differently from the way literacy education outcomes are usually assessed (my translation).]

By juxtaposing in this edited volume the voices of twenty-one German and Swiss literacy scholars and six scholars from the U.K., U.S., and Canada, including Brian Street, Catherine Snow, and Bonny Norton, the editors lay out the stakes for the debate about the future of *Bildung,* or literacy education, in Germany. Since *Bildung* is also what is at stake in German language education, including the teaching of German as a second language to immigrants, those stakes could be formulated as follows: To what extent are language educators educating future German citizens, German consumers or German mobile global denizens of a global ecology? How much of language education must be assessed according to the normative forms of measurement historically associated with institutional schooling ever since the eighteenth century? To what extent must the goals of language education be functional, i.e., adapted to the global neoliberal economy? How can a third kind of situational literacy be developed?

I want now to pick up on Rosebrock and Bertschi-Kaufman's (2013) third way and explore what an ethnographic/ecological approach would look like for an education of future denizens of a global ecology.

Language education for future denizens of a global ecology – the multilingual model

The fate of the concept of 'literacy' across languages and educational traditions is symptomatic of the current crisis of Language itself. Neither the textual nor the informational/communicative approach to

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language competence are sufficient to help language learners find their place in today's global world, whether as citizens or as consumers. Both the textual and the informational/communicative approaches are predicated on standard national languages and homogenous national cultures. Both approaches have been reduced over the years to pedagogic formulas and stereotypical verbal routines. While 'textual competence' is well-suited to the NATIONAL need for law and order in the public sphere, and 'communicative/informational competence' is appropriate for the INTERNATIONAL demand for smooth economic transactions and exchanges of information, the ability to find your subject position in multilingual, changing and conflictual situations is of a different order.

Miscommunication might occur not because two interlocutors do not make perfect use of the foreign language, but because they don't share the same symbolic reality, or they may have different views of history or they resonate differently to current events. The more a language is used in a variety of contexts by native and non-native speakers who have nothing in common, the more they must be ready to negotiate, not only the completion of a task, but also the nature and the purpose of the task itself and its justification. The current disagreements between the Trump administration and European members of NATO are not about how much of its gross national product each country should pay as its 'fair share' to NATO, but the real purpose of the United States' current policy vis-à-vis its European allies.

They must also be prepared to negotiate the very norms of interaction and interpretation. For example, the multinational corporations' insistence on diversity in the workplace seeks to recruit workers and managers from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds but imposes on them Anglo-American conversational behaviors, such as aggressive turntaking and active topic management strategies which may go against their culturally ingrained habitus (Park, 2019).

Native and non-native speakers must further negotiate sometimes irreconcilable differences in worldviews that are just beneath the surface of such seemingly innocuous terms like 'literacy', 'agency', 'success', or even 'people'. The reason why such terms are so difficult to translate is because of the national ideologies they index. For example when U.S. politicians use the term 'people' as in 'we stand by the American people', or 'We support the Iranian people', they draw on an historical national identity that distinguishes 'people' (good) from 'governments' (bad). Such a concept of people could not be used in present-day Germany in its translation '*das deutsche Volk*' without evoking now highly discredited uses of the language of the Third Reich.

Such translations and negotiations of meaning are arduous and most of the time painful because they carry the weight of difficult periods in history. They are likely to have uncertain outcomes, not only because of disagreements or diversity of opinions but because of deep inequalities in symbolic power across languages. As we saw in Incident 2, English concepts such as LITERACY are eagerly adopted for the new perspectives they offer, but they are also received with ambivalence because of their power to displace other terms such as, in Germany, *Bildung* or *Mündigkeit* that index a different ideology.

In addition, language today is held hostage to the symbolic warfare that is being waged in the political and in the corporate spheres. Not only have 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' become standard practice, but language is being abused by politicians anxious to hang on to power. In the U.S., terms like 'state of emergency', or 'building a wall', or 'national security' have been emptied of their referential meaning and are being used as battle cries to silence dissent and crush opponents. In fact, the use of symbolic violence has become so great that one wonders how we can continue teaching for intercultural communicative competence without teaching how to identify and respond to such uses and abuses of power.

At this point, it is good to remember Dell Hymes's criticism of Jürgen Habermas' general theory of communicative competence, which Hymes found too idealistic in its reliance on rational, symmetrical dialogue to achieve consensus. He writes:

> Habermas brings the efforts of many Marxists in this century to come to terms with cultural hegemony into direct connection with language and communication, but occludes particular existence and concrete individuality. His ideal of consensus through unlimited turntaking,

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> whatever its difficulties as a theory of truth, is inadequate as a model of practical action, if the differential distribution of abilities in actual groups is not taken into account… If theory must start from ideal communicative intention, Moltmann's (1983) self-communicating God has the advantage of explicitly including suffering. (Hymes, 1987, p. 225)

Hymes is referring here to the Christian dogma of the Trinity – God the Father communicating with God the Son through the Holy Spirit that unites them. Jürgen Moltmann, German theologian at the University of Tübingen, is known for his view that God suffers with humanity, but also promises humanity a better future through the hope of Christ's resurrection – which is why he calls his form of theology a 'theology of hope' (Moltmann, 2009). By evoking Moltmann, Dell Hymes shows not only that the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) included an ethical commitment from the start, but that a theory of communicative competence

> will not be able to specify absolutely and in advance the character of communicative competence for a particular case, for that will be relative to the persons, activities and needs involved, and perhaps, to judgments that have an ethical and political dimension. (Hymes, 1987, p. 225)

This kind of contextual contingency leads me to propose that we consider language learners neither as citizens nor as consumers, but as denizens of a complex ecology, which can be explored only through ethnographic means. The term denizen, i.e., a foreigner allowed certain rights and obligations in his/her adopted country, has the advantage of underscoring the change in ethical responsibility that a global ecology (rather than a global economy) demands. In a global ecology, language learners are not so much responsible for their own success, as much as they are answerable to the wellbeing of others, present and future. Their agency is circumscribed by forces beyond their control and even beyond their individual intention. But their rules of language use, without which, as Hymes says: 'rules of grammar would be useless' (Hymes, 1972), have unpredictable consequences. In this regard, it might be useful to recount Mikhail Bakhtin's favorite story that illustrates well the conditions of possibility of such ecological denizens.

Bakhtin's Decameron story

In 'The politics of representation', the Bakhtin scholar and translator Michael Holquist tells about Bakhtin's lifelong affection for the first story of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 'How Ser Ciapelletto became Saint Ciapelletto'. The story is about an evil merchant who, 'having lied, cheated and indiscriminately fornicated all his life', falls ill in a foreign town where nobody knows him and he is about to die. He calls for a priest to make his last confession and manages to convince the priest that he has led an exemplary life. After the evil merchant's death, the priest tells everyone about his discovery of a secret saint. Soon pilgrimages are made to the merchant's tomb, and, before very long, miracles begin to occur on the site'. In light of Bakhtin's experience with censorship and exile, and his taste for carnival and comedy, Holquist concludes: 'This tale… serves to remind us that although the politics of representation are vexed, it is still a politics insofar as it is an ART OF THE POSSIBLE. Paraphrasing Stephen Daedalus, we may say that silence is not mandatory, exile may be overcome, as long as cunning reigns.' (Holquist, 1981, p. 182, my emphasis). Bakhtin, of course, knew a thing or two about cunning; while in exile he taught German to Soviet children during WWII by using, for lack of a textbook, the propaganda flyers that the German Luftwaffe dropped in the ditches and on the village squares of the Russian countryside.

This story illustrates the many paradoxes of language as symbolic power: the power of language to lie and cheat your way through life; the power of language to get your sins pardoned by God in the Catholic ritual of the confession; the power of language to manipulate public opinion through what Robert Darnton called 'the early internet' or rumor mill (Darnton, 2000). The evil merchant deceives the priest into believing he is a holy man and as a result his reputation as a saint is preserved after his death in the memories of the living. Is his soul condemned to eternal death for having lied to God in the person of the priest?

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Cunning works both ways. Seen from the perspective of his illocutionary acts, the merchant remains in death the same as he was in life – an impostor. However, seen from the perspective of his acts' perlocutionary effects, the merchant redeems the pain he has caused others through his lies and dishonest actions by performing miracles and healing people after his death. Who is cunning? The merchant, the priest, or the people who choose not to believe their own experience, but that of the gossipy priest? Or isn't it Boccaccio himself pulling together the disparate threads of an implausible narrative and persuading us to suspend disbelief, at least as long as is needed to let the truth sink in that in an ecological perspective causes and effects are not be found in a straight line but in the metamorphoses that literature can reveal? As Michael Holquist says, this is indeed a story about politics as an art of using the power of language to achieve not what conventional morality or politics would characterize as good or bad, but to exercise political acumen, i.e., cunning. Cunning, as Boccaccio shows us, is beyond good and bad. It is an 'art of the possible'.

Discussion: What does this art of the possible consist of?

In response to the challenges posed by language use in a global age, various suggestions have been made: from translanguaging (Wei, 2018), to translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), transmodal pedagogy (Kern, 2015), multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) transdisciplinarity (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Perrin & Kramsch, 2019), cultural translation (Kramsch & Hua, 2019), all the way to practical theories of language (Kramsch, 2015; Wei 2018) that advocate going beyond multilingualism as the juxtaposition of clearly delineated linguistic systems to multilingualism as a 'transformative, resemiotization process' (Wei, 2018, p. 11).[4] Translanguaging, for example, means for Li Wei 'transcending the traditional divides between linguistic and non-linguistic cognitive and semiotic systems' (p. 9) and foregrounding 'the different ways language users employ, create, and interpret different kinds of signs to communicate across contexts and participants, and perform their different subjectivities' (p. 10). And I have used the notion of 'symbolic competence' to characterize the ability to create, interpret, and reframe signs according to their symbolic value in contexts where symbolic power is contested and fought over on the market of linguistic exchanges (Kramsch, 2009, p. 201; Kramsch, 2011).

All these suggestions point to attempts to cross and even go beyond the boundaries between named languages. If, however, language itself and its use are under threat from globalizing ideologies and technologies, then we need to refocus our efforts on language as symbolic power and language use as the art of the possible. When Michael Holquist became President of the Modern Language Association, he took this opportunity to remind us of that educational imperative.

> What all the attempts now being made to improve language learning have in common is the primordial nature of our subject. As we argue about this or that approach, it is all too easy to forget that behind this technique or that, behind this particular language or that, there is the fundamental reality of language itself. The stakes are so high in all our debates because language is the means by which we think. It is well to study Chinese for business purposes or Arabic for political purposes; but, beyond making money or gaining intelligence, the real importance of language consists in its ineluctability in all our endeavors. It is possible to teach languages across curricula, because every subject – including the sciences – eventually will render the slice of the world it studies, no matter what it is, in words.' (Holquist, 2007, p. 4)

So what would teaching language use as the art of the possible entail? Here are some suggestions for language teachers desirous to educate the denizens of our global ecology. They respond to the need to teach the use of language AS POLITICAL ACTION IN A SITUATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT.

- Teach the HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT in which language is used. Do not leave it up to historians, sociologists, and political scientists. Read up on what these scholars

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have written both in English and in the foreign language in order to understand the larger global context in which these two languages are used.
- Teach INTERPRETIVE skills, not only for students to 'check their sources' in order to learn how to distinguish fact from fiction, real news from fake news, but for them to understand and construct the RELATIONS BETWEEN EVENTS IN CONTEXT.
- Teach INDEXICALITY (e.g., choice of words indexing social relations) and the performative value of grammar (e.g., the coercive power of indirect speech acts).
- Teach the SOCIAL/POLITICAL POWER of categorization (e.g., people vs. *das Volk* vs. *le people;* agency vs. *Mündigkeit* vs. *pouvoir d'agir;* freedom fighters vs. rebels vs. terrorists).
- Teach language CHOICE (e.g., when to use standard, when non-standard language; when to use which national language) in interaction with others in particular contexts.
- Reinstate the teaching of literary discourse as access to ways of using language beyond both the textual mode and the mode of information and into discourse stylistics.
- Reinstate the teaching of literary and non-literary translation as a way of slowing down the study of language and drawing attention to the cognitive and cultural differences encoded in language as discourse.
- When evaluating what your students have learned (in relation to both language and content), resist any attempt to eliminate the ethical and political dimensions of language in the name of objective, value-free testing.
- Find out your room for manoeuver within your institution and exercise cunning in deciding what to teach and how.

These suggestions are bound to strike some language teachers as provocative, others as stating the obvious, yet others as impossibly utopian. They all point to the need to supplement language ACQUISITION with language STUDY, learning HOW TO with learning WHY and WHAT FOR.

Indeed, with the global spread of English as a lingua franca and the advances made by Google Translate, it is more urgent than ever that the denizens of a global ecology understand the symbolic power of language to represent, construct, and enact the social and political realities they live by, and to understand culture as the symbolic dimension of our social lives.

Conclusion

After tracing the various orientations that the teaching and learning of foreign languages has taken over the last 50 years from a focus on the textual to the communicative intercultural to the multilingual, we have to face the fact that language itself is now under siege and made to serve powerful political and economic interests. Our ecological times call for a greater attention given not to citizens or consumers, but to denizens of a language ecology that demands sensitization to the workings of language as symbolic power and an ability to respond to its abuses.[5] It is well-known that these denizens are often not the language's inheritors, but its adopted practitioners.

Endnotes

[1] For a discussion of such an educational habitus, see Pierre Bourdieu (1991). For readers who might be familiar with the Confucian textual tradition, this description might seem different from 'Western' pedagogic traditions that are supposed to encourage students to question text and authority. However, it should not be forgotten that questioning text and authority has not always been a feature of Western education. What Bourdieu described in 1991 is still the norm in many schools in parts of the world today, including France and the U.S.

[2] Of the one million foreign students in the U.S. one-third are from China (Li Yuan. Entrepreneurs wary about direction of China. *New York Times* Feb. 24, 2019, A1). All international students who apply to the University of California at Berkeley must have a score of at least 7.0 on the IELTS or 570 on the pencil and paper TOEFL test. All students entering the University of California as freshmen must demonstrate their command of the English language by satisfying the Entry Level Writing Requirement. They can satisfy this requirement either by taking a standardized exam or completing an English

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Composition course with a grade of C or higher. The university does not offer remedial English courses to improve international undergraduate students' spoken English. This controversial episode was first presented in Kramsch & Narcy-Combes (2017). It is here re-visited in a different argumentative context.

[3] This controversial episode was first presented in Kramsch (2019). It is re-interpreted here in light of the argument made in this paper.

[4] Readers might wonder why so many 'translanguaging'-type terms have been suggested. It is true that in recent years, there has been a proliferation of 'trans-' concepts (Perrin & Kramsch, 2019), e.g., translingual, transcultural, transnational, transdisciplinary. While the prefix 'inter-' denoted a link or bridge between two stable entities, the prefix 'trans-' indexes the desire to go beyond the dichotomy altogether and to find a hybrid entity that will be more than just the sum of its parts.

[5] One reader rightly points out that this whole discussion focuses on 'language use', and specifically on 'language use in a global, multilingual world', not just on 'language' as in 'foreign language learning'. While it is sometimes useful for linguists to make this distinction, language teachers who teach for communicative competence by definition teach 'language use', not just language structures as part of a linguistic system. And one could argue that even when a teacher teaches exclusively linguistic structures, he/she is also engaging in language use of a pedagogic kind and enacting a particular academic culture. Hence the impossibility of separating language from language use and language from culture in communicative language teaching.

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