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 **ICC**  
the international language association

# ICC JOURNAL Volume 4 Issue 3 Winter 2022

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## From the Editor

Well, it's that time of the year again. Welcome to our Winter issue.

For Christmas break reading we have some great articles, teaching tips, webinars and reviews to help prepare your minds and hearts for the new year. In an important article about business language training in Germany Matilde Monetti stresses the importance of involving trade unions and other professional organisations to support in-company language training initiatives. In complete contrast, Esa Hartmann explores a new approach to help children and adults improve their plurilingual skills. In an article based on her webinar for ICC Languages she opens a translingual fairy story reader in French and German and shows how working with it can improve knowledge of both languages. Chahrazad Mouhoubi-Messadh contributes a really useful study of student anxiety and dissatisfaction in class and how teachers can help and, picking up on one major cause of dissatisfaction, culture shock, Francis Brassard applies the lessons of Zen Buddhism and Hinduism to show how we can not only embrace culture shock but benefit from it. A fascinating and challenging piece of research.

Mona Moldoveanu Pologea offers practical advice on how to grow your language school by developing a successful online profile. As EUROLTA's newest training school, her ROLANG foreign language training school in Bucharest, Romania has enjoyed great success. She explains how in our Teaching Tips. On the other hand, Valeria Di Marco Sims shows how learning languages online can be really successful and offers practical tips to make the most of it.

Entertaining and innovative, as always, in his webinar called Digital Twins, Geoff Tranter opens up a new area of using twin cities and their institutions as a basis for language exchanges between schools and colleges in the country of the language your students are learning and your own students. Geoff's online language practice activities based on authentic materials are both motivating and practical. In her webinar, Ursula Stickler of Britain's Open University examines the way in which online teaching has changed the profession and will continue to do so.

Finally, a very interesting book review by Anastasia Hanukaev explains new classroom developments in language learning.

As always, ICC-Languages is delighted to hear from you and to print in our ICC Journal your articles as keynotes or teaching tips and reviews of books and teaching materials you have found useful. We are here for you as practising teachers and researchers. Enjoy this issue and feel free to recommend it to your friends and colleagues. Get in touch with me direct at [barrytomalin@aol.com](mailto:barrytomalin@aol.com).

We wish you a Happy Christmas break and a very Happy New Year.

## **ICC-Languages and EUROLTA news**

**Ellinor Haase, Chair, ICC-Languages, and Myriam Fischer-Callus, Director, Euroлта**

ICC is looking forward to its 2023 annual conference, hopefully once again face-to-face. The final date hasn't been confirmed yet but is likely to be on a Saturday in the first or second week of May 2023. Likely venues, to be confirmed, are Belgrade in Serbia or, failing that, Athens in Greece. More information and updates will be available on the ICC website ([www.icc-languages.eu/conference](http://www.icc-languages.eu/conference)). The conference will be on site, or hybrid, depending on the conference venue's facilities.

The theme of the conference is also under discussion. A number of suggestions were made including, 'The Integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century Skills in the Language Learning Classroom' and 'Well-being in Language Learning'.

A new initiative in ICC-Languages is the introduction of a Think-Tank to discuss key policy issues, led by Geoff Tranter of the University of Dortmund in Germany. The first Think-Tank was on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2022. The second Think-Tank will take place online on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2023 and we expect the theme of our May 2023 annual conference to be finally decided then.

ICC-Languages expressed its appreciation for the work of Birgit Schrader-Voelzke concerning EUROLTA administration and part of the accountancy, and Lillian Tinnefeld-Yeh in ICC membership and the website and the ICC Journal as well as webinars administration and publicity. ICC-Languages is also hiring another person to look after accountancy and the issue of certificates of completion for the EUROLTA course.

### **EUROLTA**

Speaking of EUROLTA (European Certificate in Language Teaching for Adults), its courses have now been advertised online in social media and in professional publishing outlets, such as the EL Gazette (English Language Gazette) with growing

success. It began its latest online programme on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and subscription to the course is free for Ukrainian teachers.

The EUROLTA course is part time and contains eight modules, delivered on Saturday from 0900 – 1800 CET. The course is aimed at all language teachers not just one specific language, such as English, and covers language analysis, intercultural understanding, language learning and teaching, planning courses and evaluating success and self-assessment and professional development. The course lasts 120 hours, 80 hours of which is devoted online live sessions with a tutor and 40 hours of reading, lesson planning and completing writing assignments.

A new online INTENSIVE EUROLTA course will begin on March 23 2023 and a special EUROLTA for Refugees begins in February 2023. You can see more details about EUROLTA at [www.icc-languages.eu/eurolta](http://www.icc-languages.eu/eurolta).

Let us also congratulate our newest EUROLTA member, ROLANG school in Bucharest, Romania. You can read an article by the Principal, Dr. Mona Moldoveanu Pologea on *How to Grow your own Language School* on page ...

Happy Christmas and a very Happy New Year to all our EUROLTA schools, teachers, students and to our colleagues.

## KEYNOTE ARTICLE 1

# Reflecting practice: Supporting work-related German development by low-literate migrant workers at work and through work

By **Matilde Grünhage-Monetti**

Language for Work Network [matilde.monetti@unitybox.de](mailto:matilde.monetti@unitybox.de)

This article makes the case for supporting work-related second language (L2) development by adult migrant workers and employees in the context of where the language is used; in the workplace. It stresses the necessity of cooperating with workplace actors and it reflects aspects of current practice in Germany. In modern workplaces communication and language have become key employability skills. Since the majority of migrants are adults of working age upon arrival in the country of immigration, their integration into the local labour market has top priority for individuals and for the economies of the receiving countries. There is evidence that most migrants in Europe have lower employment rates and a greater tendency to be overqualified for their jobs than non-migrants. Insufficient L2 skills are among the main barriers towards finding a suitable job, matching one's qualifications and potentials. But acquiring the necessary L2 skills is a long process and adult migrants need access to work as soon as possible to make a living for themselves and their families. Supporting L2 development at work and through work seems to be an effective way to improve the employment outcomes of migrants, for their own benefit and for the benefit of the economy and the society. This acquisition model, in line with modern social learning theories, is based on the concept that language learning and participation are intertwined and not linear processes taking place one after the other.

Setting up workplace-based L2 provision either in form of courses or coaching or mentoring requires cooperation with workplace actors. In Germany there are no established and structural organisations managing cooperation between employers

and L2 providers. But other important players like trade unions and work councils are showing interest in cooperating with L2 providers in order to set up L2 learning provision at work. The article hopes to encourage the readers to explore the situation in their own country, and try new ways of cooperation with workplace actors in order to make the workplace a (language) learning space.

## **1. INTRODUCTION Setting the scene**

This article makes the case for supporting work-related second language development by migrant workers and employees through the workplace and the working environment. It stresses the necessity of cooperating with workplace actors. Due to the lack of structural contacts with employers and language providers we have investigated the possibility of getting support from the works councils (woco) of the German trade unions, important and influential people both within companies and in German industry. In this article we reflect on the process and results of building links with the wocos of one German trade union, responsible for workers and employees in the food, beverages and catering industries.

## **2.BACKGROUND**

Sociopolitical transformations of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have had a tremendous impact on issues of language training for specific purposes, work-related language use, language learning and teaching. First, established linguistic disciplines are being challenged by the expansion of globalisation, migration and displacement of populations and the revolution in online communication through ITCs (Interactive Telephonic Communications) including the Internet, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Other factors include deterritorialisation (changes in territory, including interconnected spaces) and the transnational circulation of capital, commodities, labour and people –, and finally technology itself (Harvey 2005).

Secondly, learning and teaching an additional language for professional or vocational purposes has become a very differentiated cross-cutting field. Next to the traditional “foreign language” training for professional, specific purposes, the issue of work-related second language (L2) development by adult migrants is gaining momentum and becoming more and more important across Europe, as stated in

French and German legislation (Assemblée Nationale 2004 and Bundesministerium für Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz und Bundesamt für Justiz 2016). By L2 we mean the language or languages of the country to which migrant workers have relocated. Thirdly, migration statistics give a clear message and point out the growing relevance of the focus of proficiency in L2 on adults and work, as the following data regarding Germany show.

The majority of migrants upon arrival are adults of working age. In Germany for example out of 13,56 million people with direct migration experience living in the country in 2020, 23% were between 18 and 23 years old and 43% between 25 and 65 years of age; 18,1% were younger than 10 and 13,1% were between 10 and 18 (bpb: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung).

Finding work is a top priority for them. Finding work and particularly “good” work depends first of all from their legal status and employment rights (McKay et al 2009, quoted by Stirling 2015: 6). The OECD lists L2 proficiency as a third factor. As one of the main obstacles to labour market integration by migrants, the OECD names insufficient skills in the language of the country of residence, immediately after legal restrictions and before poor professional networks, cultural asymmetry, unfamiliarity with labour market processes and lack of recognised qualifications or experience (OECD 2006: 37).

In the modern world of work, command of the official language(s) of the country where one lives and works has become a fundamental constituent of employability for all job seekers, migrants and non-migrants, higher- and lower-skilled workers. Not all migrants upon arrival are fluent in the second language and not all have good literacy skills. Most low-literate adult migrants end up in what Braddell and Miller call the low-pay, low-skilled-work, low-language trap (Braddell, Miller 2013). In most European countries support for the second language usually stops when adults find work. Low-literate migrants can find only low-skilled, risky, unattractive jobs requiring little communication. Even if they had the opportunity to attend a L2 course on arrival, they usually do not pursue their L2 studies once they start work (ibidem).



Since their networks are usually restricted to members of their own community and/or other migrants' communities (Punlinx, Van Avermaet 2017), both work and private life offer little possibility to improve their L2. Their lack of learning skills hinders them from attending further L2 courses or using self-study materials. They remain trapped in low-paid, low-skilled, low-language requirement jobs. Despite paying taxes in the county of residence and thus contributing to the educational system, they hardly profit from it or do not profit from it at all.

Also, a large number of higher-skilled migrants with working experience in their country of origin find employment in less qualified jobs in the country they have migrated to, if their L2 skills are not up to the standards required by their original profession in the county of immigration. In Germany migrant teachers, accountants, electronic engineers, marketing managers, etc. are often employed in lower-paid, lower-socially recognised sectors or in helpers' positions. Men work as riders, security-staff, or in industrial production. Women often end up in the cleaning sectors or as vendors and salespeople, or as helpers in care homes for the elderly, as colleagues who teach in work-related courses report.

The gap between potential and real employment outcomes by migrants is not only a sign of lack of inclusivity, with severe consequences for the individual migrants and their families. It is also means a loss and disadvantage for the economy of the immigration countries to which they have immigrated, which are unable to profit from available skills. In a broad-based comparative study, in which he investigated the employment outcomes of migrants in 24 European countries including the UK, Stirling comes to the conclusion that most migrant groups in Europe have lower employment rates, and a greater tendency to be overqualified for their jobs, than non-migrants. This affects particularly higher qualified migrants. *“On the one hand, gender dynamics, discrimination, access to networks and soft-skill deficiencies act as downward pressures on migrant employment outcomes, especially in the high-skill jobs market”* (Stirling 2015: 28). Such misallocation of skills is a pressing issue, that should be addressed, particularly in the context of growing skills gaps in many European economies (Stirling 2015).

## 2.

### 3. WHY L2 DEVELOPMENT AT AND THROUGH WORK?

The Language for Work Network (LfW) has been looking at the issue of misallocation of skills, focusing on how to support the development of work-related L2 by migrant workers and employees, in particular directly in the workplace. The LfW Network and its website (<https://languageforwork.ecml.at>) is an initiative of the European Centre of Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) (<https://www.ecml.at>). It has emerged from a long-standing commitment of the ECML to migrant language education, going back to the beginning of the century with the Odysseus project – Investigating and responding to the language needs of migrant workers (2000-2003). Ten years later it was followed by the project entitled Language for Work 1 – Creating a European learning network for professionals (2012-15) and then Language for Work 2 – Investigating and disseminating innovative practice (2016-18).

The LfW Network focuses on L2 developments at and through work out of the conviction that work is central to the life of adults (migrants and non-migrants) and communication and language are central to modern work success. Since adults tend to learn what they perceive as meaningful to them and to their life goals (Illeris 2003), it makes sense to support L2 development in the context in which it is used, making it part of everyday work activity - not as a separate event.

For low-literate workers, learning at and through work is considered the last chance to improve their education, secure their job and possibly make progress (Baethge, Baethge-Kinsky 2004). This applies also to low-literate migrant L2 learners. The language is learnt in and for the context in which it is used and is of immediate relevance. The learning tasks must be based on the learners' sociocultural experience. This matches the learning habits of students with limited formal education. It may enhance their motivation and increase the prospects of successful pedagogical intervention (DeCapua 2016).

Also, experienced learners profit from workplace-based support for their L2 development, making it more targeted towards their professional or vocational needs and tuned to the social environment they interacted with.

There is evidence that language training and social participation are intertwined, interdependent processes, that build on each other and are not sequential. First you learn the language of the country of immigration, for example in a course, and then you can participate at work, in social life, etc. (Van Avermaet 2019)

According to LfW, work-related L2 skills are the skills migrants need

- to find suitable employment, including language skills for Job-search, CV writing, job applications, interviews, etc. This area is usually covered by existing pre-employment provision;
- to participate and contribute positively as an employee, including language skills for job-specific tasks, health and safety, team working, quality management, customer care, employment rights and duties, responsibilities and processes;
- to progress at work and develop one's career, including language skills for formal workplace training, informal on-the-job learning, further vocational education and training outside the workplace

(Language for work – a quick guide. How to help adult migrants develop work-related language skills. 2019: 4

<https://languageforwork.ecml.at/ResourceCentre/QuickGuide/Languageforwork/tabid/5408/Default.aspx>)

Work-related L2 skills are specific to

- social norms around work – i.e. general expectations around behaviours, ways of communicating, etc. in the context of the world of work;
- legislation and regulation, e.g. health and safety law, quality standards;
- the communicative demands of the particular field of work – i.e. language skills required for e.g. engineering, health and social care, retail, IT, etc.
- social norms in a particular workplace – i.e. ways of communicating, behavioural expectations, etc.
- the communicative demands of the individual job itself – which will always evolve as circumstances around the job change (ibidem).

LfW builds on the understanding of language as more than a formal system of vocabulary and grammar to be taught in a classroom or online. The language we use

in any context is shaped by social norms and power relationships and therefore not just the business language but also the business environment matters.

#### 4. REFLECTING NEW PRACTICES

Such an approach requires cooperation between educationalists and workplace actors. One of the issues is how to outreach to companies? Education and business have different functional, social systems with their own aims and goals, priorities, power relations, logic and dynamics, etc. In Germany there is established cooperation between vocational training providers and business, but not on the issue of work-related language training either regarding foreign languages or L2. There may be temporary cooperation between language education and business in specific, projects with a clear closing date, but ongoing cooperation pathways and procedures are rare. It has so far proved difficult for L2 providers, practitioners and researchers to establish regular cooperation with employers, beyond individual projects. However, employers and management are not the only workplace actors that matter in work-related training and further education.

In Germany there is a well-established system of workers' representation. Trade unions have a long history reaching back to the German revolution in 1848. They are recognised social partners playing an important role in German economy and society. The most important labour organisation is the German Confederation of Trade Unions (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, or *DGB*), which is the umbrella association of eight single trade unions for individual economic sectors, representing just under 6 million workers as of 2021

(<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/3266/umfrage/mitgliedszahlen-des-dgb>).

The works council, *Betriebsrat*, is a body for co-determination and workers' participation (*Mitbestimmung*). It represents the interests of the employee vis-à-vis the employer and participates in operational decisions. The initiative to establish a works council (woco) is voluntary and is the responsibility of the workforce of any company of more than 5 permanent members.

All fundamental issues concerning the woco are regulated by the works council constitution act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*, *BetrVG*), which is often much more progressive than what is actually put into practice. In fact, according to the works

council constitution act, the woco is obliged to support the integration of migrant employees and prevent discrimination. As to further vocational education and training (VET) the woco has a say in identifying training needs and measures and in choosing the beneficiaries.

It is therefore astonishing, that despite these progressive legal opportunities and the massive presence of migrants in German workplaces, the woco has so far played a marginal role in promoting workplace-based L2 development, although there is evidence of its positive contribution to the integration of adult refugees, who remained in Germany after the so called “summer of migration” in 2015, as often referred to in the media.

The reasons for this lack of engagement are numerous and depend both on the situation and attitudes of the workers’ representatives and language educators (providers and teachers). The woco sees its primary tasks as negotiating and delivering better work conditions for their colleagues, including better pay and better safety. Particularly in the manufacturing industry, many members have average formal education. Vocational training and further education issues are less visible but urgently needed by them and their co-workers. Besides that, there is a specific attitude regarding migrants and L2. The majority of workers’ representatives consider the acquisition of the language in which one lives and work as a “debt” owed by the migrants (*Bringschuld*) and their primary responsibility. This attitude reflects the current frame of mind and expectations of the majority society. In this, the woco represents a cross section of society. Learning L2 is considered an intrapersonal matter. The widespread saying that integration is a two-way street does not seem to apply to linguistic integration.

Some responsibility for this wide-spread everyday thinking lies with language educationalists as well. Despite all the social learning theories, which have been circulating since the 90s, regarding language acquisition as well (Ortega 2009), language learning is still seen as an intrapersonal, at most interpersonal process involving teacher and learner and not as a social interaction process taking place between learner and his/her material and immaterial environment (Illeris 2009).

In recent years, the awareness of the role of communication and language at work has been growing, particularly in sectors greatly dependent on an immigrant workforce, such as health and social care, logistics, cleaning and some branches of manufacturing. In an act in 2016, the German federal government officially recognised knowledge of the German language as an important prerequisite for integration into the labour market ([https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/deuf\\_v](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/deuf_v)), yet not as a vocational, professional competence, as the French law does (Assemblée Nationale 2004).

Drawing on innovative and progressive projects like Language for Work 1 and 2, providers of German as L2 have been developing and implementing tailored, work-related German L2 offers in different workplaces, mainly within national and international projects. They have also carried out train-the-trainer programmes, in order to prepare teachers to work with companies.

The constraints of project work and the lack of structural contacts between workplace actors and language providers have often hindered the dissemination of such examples of good practice so that these offers are well known in the professional community, but much less so in the business world by employers and wocos.

A growing number of companies has been recently reporting that their attempt to set up in-company work-related German provision for their migrant employees has not been successful. Either the courses have not started at all because they haven't managed to find the right provider and teacher. Or the courses have started but have soon run into the sand because both content and methodology did not meet the requirements of the employer and the needs of the learners.

Finally, awareness of the need to support the development of work-related L2 is increasing among the wocos too for various reasons. A growing number of them have a migration background, are children of immigrants or have themselves direct migration experience. They experience or have experienced themselves what it means to learn a language in order to function at work, or they have witnessed the challenges and struggles of their parents. This makes them particularly sensitive to

the issue. They also feel the consequences of the much complained about (skilled) labour shortage which is affecting Germany. Being an ageing society with a strong economy greatly dependent on exports, Germany is more and more dependent on its migrant workforce, not only in skilled positions but also in manual jobs. Wocos experience it every day on the shopfloor. The existence of the woco institution itself is at stake without the inclusion and participation of migrants. These have to be empowered also linguistically in order to run for membership of and positions of responsibility in the wocos themselves!

## **5. CASE STUDY**

A turn in the situation and a leap forward took place in spring 2022, when the author was asked to give a one-day workshop on how to set-up in-company work-related German provision for a group of workers' representatives from the industrial bakeries and catering industry. The request came from the Bildungszentrum Oberjosbach (BZO), the federal training centre of the Food, Beverages and Catering Trade Union (NGG: Nahrung – Genuss – Gasstätte) (<https://www.ngg.net>). Two more one-day workshops followed for two further target groups within the same trade union: one for workers' representatives of the meat processing industry and one for system gastronomy. System gastronomy differs from classic and individual gastronomy through standardised structures and processes. Examples of system gastronomy are chains like McDonald's or canteens providing food in hospitals, schools, nurseries, petrol stations, etc.

The aim of the three workshops was to make the wocos acquainted with the existing provision which claims to address the requirements of a specific workplace and meet the needs of the workers-learners. Well aware that the majority of the workshop's participants are not academicians, the workshops were very interactive, with short inputs by the trainer and longer activities carried out by the participants. The heart of the workshop was an exemplary needs analysis, which is the prerequisite of any tailored provision.

In small group from the same branch, the participants were asked to focus on a real existing migrant colleague, identify the tasks he / she has to carry out in order to do

his / her job, exercise his / her rights and duties as an employee. For each identified task they had to identify what the colleague had to do in the language and which language skills were required to do so successfully. In 30 minute group-work sessions the trainees absorbed an impressive amount of information.

The following examples reinforce the necessity for providers or teachers to carry out a sound analysis of the requirements of the specific workplace in question- a needs analysis. At the same time, it shows the impact of extra-linguistic factors like noise, stress and dialect on understanding.

One group from an industrial bakery focused on a colleague working as an operator in charge of the disposal of raw materials and discarded products from the baking process (*Teigentsorger*). The group concentrated on a few specific tasks, managing the change of shifts at the plant, avoiding accidents and providing work equipment for the plant.

The list of the language requirements was particularly interesting. It included understanding and implementing health and safety regulations, understanding and implementing hygiene training, understanding instructions (also on the phone), answering and speaking on the phone, formulating questions, coping with dialect, managing background noises and stress and communicating with the woco.

Another group focused on the tasks and language requirements of a plant operator (*Anlageführer*), identifying the following tasks: operating machines; shift handover; reporting faults and malfunctions, writing sick-leave messages and completing forms and complying with safety regulations in the workplace, including understanding social-sight warning signs indicating possible danger and hazards.

As language requirements corresponding to the skills listed above, the group identified reading and filling in documents and forms, speaking to colleagues and supervisors and speaking on the phone with the bakery manager.

A group of workers' representatives of system gastronomy produced the list of tasks below for colleagues working in the kitchen.



- Producing food
- Doing the preparation for food production
- Washing up
- Storing goods
- Going on sick-leave
- Planning holiday leave
- Interactions with colleagues and woco representatives.

The following language requirements were also listed.

- Reading and understanding recipes
- Reading and understanding instructions relating to hygiene and dangerous materials (Gefahrstoffe)
- Reading and understanding explanations;
- Reading and understanding delivery bills/notes
- Reading labels
- Understanding explanations of rules concerning rights and duties:
- Understanding explanations re rules about the company's holiday planning
- Understanding notices and their communication partners.

These examples show what precious sources of information for identifying language requirements workers' representatives are. For a sound needs analysis their perspective is indispensable to successfully integrating the perceptions of the employer, managers and learners.

The second workshop with workers' representatives of the meat processing industry was very challenging, confronting the author with the contradictions of complex situations.

In slaughterhouses and large meat processing companies, the hardest jobs like slaughtering, cutting, stuffing, packing and crate-washing are done by migrants, predominantly men from South-Eastern Europe. Many of them have low formal education and plan to stay in Germany for a couple of years, earn enough money to go back home and start a better life in Romania, Bulgaria, etc. Until over a year ago they were employed by external firms (*Fremdfirmen*). They worked mainly in national

and language homogenous groups. They were trained for the job, in safety and hygiene in their own language. They usually live together in shared accommodation and are picked up and brought back in company buses. Counselling on labour law is now also provided in the migrant worker's native language.

Engaged trade unionists and a priest had been denouncing the situation for years, with no legal consequences and little public notice. This scandalous situation achieved considerable coverage in the press and media across Germany and abroad in 2020 because of large-scale Covid pandemics in the compound where the migrant workers lived and consequently in the company. The politicians had to react. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs intervened. The system of employment through external companies was prohibited and the migrant workers had to be employed directly by the German company. As the new law came into force on January, the 1st 2021, a company of 300 employees for example leaped up to 600 with the integration of employees provided by the external firm. As a result, from one day to the next, the woco had to represent the interests of workers trapped in a very complex situation. Their legal status had changed, but not their concrete working and living conditions. Most migrant workers do not speak German and many German colleagues do not want to work with them. In addition, many workers' representatives have an ambivalent attitude towards them.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The objective difficulties in finding effective ways of supporting the acquisition of the German language, which are a consequence of complex structural issues and discriminations in Germany and in the migrant's country of origin were explained by the simplistic statement, *These people do not want to learn*. The consequence of many-layered institutionalised levels of discrimination were personalised and reduced to an individual choice, such as, *They don't want to learn German*.

This sentence was repeated during the workshop several times. Only a couple of participants took a position against it. The majority seemed to agree with it or kept their mouths shut. I had to intervene and point out what was happening in a workshop on language and communication. The language used in such a sentence

as *These people* is the language of power, despoiling people of their individuality, and reducing them to a faceless mass without a history: a first step towards dehumanisation, discrimination and racism.

This experience confronted the author with the contradictions and complexity of work-related L2 learning and learners. The difficulties are clearly observable. Many workers are not motivated to make the effort to learn a new language if this does not match with their life plan. In particular for low-literate people, this can be a huge effort, requiring a lot of psychological energy, recalling unpleasant memories of failure and suffering from negative emotions. Offering a L2 course alone, without changing the organisation of the work is not enough. As unjust as it was, the former method of organisation, using the native language of the workers functioned. At least to a certain extent. The wocos reported of extremely high turnover, lack of social partnership and identification with the company, and disproportionate plaster consumption!

But... a couple of days after the workshop the author received a telephone call from the woco of a sausage-producing company in Northern Germany, happy to have found what they had been seeking for years, a tailored-made L2 provision for their workers. Since August 2022 two parallel courses below B1 CEFR level have been running on Saturday mornings, flanked by coaching opportunities for a couple of learners needing German for specific purposes. The provider is the Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bielefeld, who offered a few weeks' course free of charge, as a sort of appetizer. Since then the courses are paid for by the company and take place during the free time of the learners, just after the disco, as a young participant said. As the title of one of the famous dramatist William Shakespeare's plays goes, *All's well that ends well*.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the last few years, L2 in-company provision has been constantly increasing in different learning arrangements: not only courses, but also L2 coaching and L2 mentoring. Most of the provision was financed by projects under the umbrella of a federal programme called *Integration through Qualification* (IQ), sponsored by the

German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund (ESF). The current funding period expires at the end of 2022. The new one has different foci and does not foresee the financial support for work-related L2 provision. The federal government is of the opinion that in-company work-related courses can be provided by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF*) (<https://www.bamf.de>).

Indeed, BAMF supports financially work-related courses (*Berufsbezogene Sprachkurse, BSK*). Originally, they were designed for job-seekers, but now they can be offered in companies as well at modest cost. Unfortunately, the structural conditions do not match the reality of workplaces. A CEFR B1 entry level is required, the amount of hours the learners have to subscribe to is high (300 hours). In that time, they cannot take more than 15 days holiday. This is unrealistic. Objections by L2 providers and researchers have not been heard. Trade unions and employers could help and negotiate more realistic conditions with the decision-makers in the ministry.

In the initial phase, some financial support has proved attractive, as a sort of bait for potential learners. For bigger companies the fees for teaching or coaching and for needs analysis are not an issue but for small companies they can be a barrier. The real costs that employers fear are the costs of the working hours of the learners if the provision takes place in paid working time. This is a goal for the trade unions. Some sort of financial facilitation for companies who support L2 development at the workplace, like tax reductions, could be a solution. However, this cannot be negotiated by educationalists. Also in this respect, we need the cooperation and support of employers and trade unions.

Hopefully, new opportunities will arise. In the meantime, Dott. Silvia Miglio, and the author have been developing two-hours “bite-size” workshops for workers’ representatives to be offered online. We have so far developed and carried out two of them with great success for wocos of NGG and ver.di (*Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft, United Services Union*). This was possible because a current training project of the two trade unions became aware of us and our engagement and know-how in the field of setting up work-related L2 provision in companies. This project “Mentoren. Bilden. Zukunft trains workers’ representatives to become “VET scouts”.

The title plays with the word *Bilden* which means “educate, train” and “build up”. It aims at training workers’ representatives as mentors to identify vocational and educational needs of their co-workers, and to help employers setting up VET provision. The scope is enabling individuals and companies to face future challenges – build the future – through better knowledge and education.

As author of this article and academic coordinator of the project, I would like to conclude this article with a plea to you, the reader. I am certainly aware that the situation of migrants, the role of trade unions, the labour market’s structures and the self-image of employers, etc. are different in other countries. The German experience cannot be implemented one-to-one in a different context. Nevertheless, I would like to encourage colleagues to reflect on and identify issues in common. The inclusion and participation of migrants is a global challenge across Europe. Inclusion and participation need a common language. The workplace offers opportunities for L2 learning. In order to exploit them, we need cooperation with workplace actors. They are probably new partners for many educationalists. But it is worth trying if we understand learning and in particular language learning, as participation and workplaces as learning environments.

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## KEYNOTE 2

### **Intercultural Encounters in Translingual Picture books: literary and pedagogical perspectives**

**By Esa Christine Hartmann**

*This article was presented as an ICC-Languages webinar on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2022 but was not recorded.*

Today, many pedagogical aspects of intercultural learning in multilingual contexts of language acquisition can be explored through children's literature and, more specifically, through multilingual picture books. Indeed, bilingual picture books that combine two languages – for example, French and German –, but also two semiotic systems or modes – the visual illustrations and the verbal text – represent a valuable medium for translingual and multimodal language and literacy acquisition. The pedagogical approaches that apply to the reading of multilingual picture books include: language awareness, linguistic mediation, metalinguistic awareness, multiliteracies acquisition, as well as intercultural teaching and learning.

In this paper I would like to focus on the last and most important pedagogical approach: intercultural teaching and learning in the multicultural context of language acquisition. To do this I'll focus on a translingual picture book that alternates between French and German throughout the narration and addresses an actual socio-political theme: migration and the fateful lives of refugees in Western society. *Der Schrei. Le Loup Migrant* was written in French and illustrated by Patrick Seiler (with the partial German translation by Sybille Maurer) and published in 2019 by Kidikunst in Strasbourg. *Der Schrei* (German) translates into *The Scream* and the *Le Loup Migrant* (French) is *the Migrant Wolf*.

The analysis of this cross-over picture book that addresses both child and adult readers in German and French allows us to explore how translingual picture books can foster integrated, multimodal, and translingual learning, as well as the development of intercultural competence.

This paper explains the conceptual shifts in modern multilingualism research that make translingual picture books a valuable tool for language, literacy, and intercultural acquisition in multilingual learning contexts. It goes on to present and analyse the different aspects of the translingual picture book, *Der Schrei. Le loup Migrant* to discuss translingual, multimodal, and intercultural learning. Finally, it summarises the pedagogical advantages of translingual picture books in intercultural teaching and learning.

## Conceptual shifts

Four main concepts are of great interest for the pedagogical analysis of translingual picture books in relation to language teaching and learning and multicultural research.

They are:

- The multilingual turn
- The intercultural turn
- The trans turn
- The multimodal turn.

All of them illustrate fascinating changes in the conception of language teaching and learning in multilingual contexts and may challenge, inspire and renew our teaching styles.

First, the multilingual turn acknowledges the evolution of the teaching and learning context in a growing multicultural and multilingual society, triggered by socio-economic and geographic phenomena such as globalisation and migration. Therefore, language teaching and learning has evolved from a monolingual perspective to a multilingual perspective, adapting to a society in which multilingualism, rather than monolingualism, is the norm.

In this context, the language learners as social actors have also changed: monolingual speakers who learn foreign languages have mostly become emergent multilingual speakers learning an additional language.

Second, the intercultural turn. Today, language teaching and learning always implies the teaching and learning of cultures, since language is now conceptualised as an



expression of culture. Accordingly, today, teaching and learning languages means facing multicultural contexts in a society that is characterised by superdiversity, as a consequence of globalisation and migration. Intercultural teaching therefore means not only introducing learners to a new target culture – in our case, this would mean introducing French learners to a German target culture or vice versa – but also opening them up to a variety of other, extra-European cultures, histories and civilisations that might actually be part of the source cultures of a culturally diverse learning community.

Third, the trans turn represents the most important conceptual shift, since it justifies the pedagogical use of translingual picture books. The trans turn illustrates a radicalisation of the multilingual turn, since it deconstructs the very concept of language itself, as a static system of linguistic elements that are socially constructed. This abstract concept of language is replaced by the individual speaking practice of multilingual learners as social actors: this actual speaking practice is often characterised by language alternation and mixing, called translanguaging. While the multilingual perspective perceives linguistic acquisition as an addition of separate languages, the translingual perspective allows cross-linguistic or translingual teaching and learning, since the borders between languages no longer exist within the linguistic repertoires of multilingual speakers. Consequently, the reading of translingual picture books, alternating and mixing two languages throughout the story, becomes a valuable pedagogical tool of integrated and translingual learning in two or more languages.

Last, the multimodal turn also explains the pedagogical value of translingual picture books. The multimodal turn indicates the evolution of the concept of language and text, which, due to the development of new technologies, is no longer apprehended in its sole verbal dimension, but includes various semiotic systems or modes, such as visual, audio, gestural, and digital elements. Today, reading in the digital world means being able to decode a multimedia text, made of verbal, visual, audio, and digital elements. This multimedia character of language and texts is conceptualised as multimodality. Consequently, literacy acquisition became the acquisition of multiliteracies, mostly combining visual, multilingual, and digital literacy.

## What are translingual picture books?

Translingual picture books are a form of bilingual picture book. They are mainly defined in contrast to dual language picture book. Picture books incorporate two languages into a single title and can thus be qualified as a translingual picture book. The pages contain both languages in the same space creating a dual language picture book with parallel versions in German and French,

Dual language picture books may have two complete language versions placed on top of each other or next to each other. According to the mirror principle, the version on the left-hand page often represents the original text, while the text on the right-hand page is a complete translation.

Translingual picture books, on the other hand, are characterised by language changes and language mixing within the narration itself. In most cases, language change is typographically marked; different colours of the font corresponding to different languages, German in grey and French in black.

Language alternation and language mixing can take four different forms, which we can identify as follows. The first principle of language alternation we can identify is narrative language alternation. Here, different narrative sequences are often arbitrarily written in one language or another.

Second, we can detect language alternation at the discourse level, which distinguishes narration in one language from passages of direct speech in the other language.

Third, we have the dialogical language alternation, which is based on the principle of inter-comprehension: Each character speaks his or her own language.

Last, we encounter the phenomenon of language mixing, meaning a language change within the same sentence.

Let us now enter the narrative universe of the translingual picture book. *Der Schrei. Le loup migrant*. As we saw above, the translingual title combines German and French

and can be translated as *The Scream. The Migrant Wolf*. The German part of the title, *Der Schrei / The Scream* in English, alludes to an important cultural intertext. In fact, the first thing we notice is an artistic and aesthetic intertextuality, for the title of *The Scream* is an allusion to the expressionist work of art by the Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch, which bears the same title. The illustrations of this picture book are also coloured in the expressionist style which was the hallmark of Munch's painting.

On the other hand, the French part of the title: *Le loup migrant / The migrant wolf* alludes to another cultural and literary heritage, the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* (*Rotkäppchen* in German and *Le petit chaperon rouge* in French). The classic figure of the terrible wolf with its sharp teeth is evoked in a quite humorous way at the beginning of the picture book, in French and German. Here is the French with a translation (mine) into English.

*Je suis tout poilu, j'ai les dents pointues  
Je les aiguise chaque jour, pour mieux effrayer  
Je les brosse aussi...*

*I'm all hairy, I have sharp teeth  
I sharpen them every day to scare better,  
I even brush them...*

However, the frightening wolf of the fairy tale becomes a suffering figure, like in Edward Munch's expressionist painting, since he becomes a migrant wolf, a refugee, an outcast lost in a nowhere land outside society.

Desperately, in this new world, without the right papers, it is simply impossible to exist. This loss of identity faced by the anonymous migrant without papers, without ID, is illustrated by the grey figures of the migrants sitting in front of the tree in the illustration.

### **Multimodal literacy**

The interplay of image and text in this picture book promotes a multimodal way of reading: text and illustrations have to be decoded in a complementary and trans-

semiotic way, which leads to the acquisition of multimodal literacy. In this example, linguistic and visual signs are integrated in the illustration, so we can speak of a linguistic landscape that develops the narrative on both the textual and visual side, a concept we describe as Multimodal literacy, which implies the decoding of a combination of textual and visual signs.

## **Collage**

Collage has already been identified by researchers as a subversive technique in postmodern picture books.

Collage transforms illustration into a linguistic landscape that develops a secondary narrative discourse and can subversively critique elements of society through the views of the main character, such as the migrant wolf in *Der Schrei*. Multimodal literacy as trans semiotic reading is also addressed, in that collage establishes a visual intertextuality that visually connects literature and geography, and more specifically, relating to the problems of immigration, the narrative context of migration to the geographic map of the Arctic Ocean.

In this example, the collage of a geographic gives the migration experience a spatial but also historical and cultural dimension. It evokes the migration experience as crossing the Mediterranean between the African and the European continent, thus developing a secondary visual narrative that parallels the translingual text.

This example also shows that visual intertextuality also promotes intercultural aesthetics, as the illustration here seems inspired by the famous Japanese painting *The Great Wave* by Hokusai. Acquiring visual literacy thus means decoding visual narratives that have a cultural background. This activity fosters intercultural learning.

Visual intertextuality can also connect literature with history and thus address critical literacy. Through the collage, in *Le Loup Migrant* contemporary migration flows from Africa are linked to the historical slave trade and its associated racial theory. This visual palimpsest adds thematic and narrative depth to the picture book story and encourages critical thinking and reflection on historical events and contexts.

As we have seen, the collage technique generates a double narrative discourse. The semiotic and semantic interaction of the two narrative discourses – the visual and the textual – stimulates critical reflection within the multimodal reading process.

Translingual reading also means encountering challenging words that allude to foreign cultures. In the translingual sentence that shows code-mixing beginning with a spatial indication in German and continuing with the description of the wolf who becomes a storyteller.

*Abends, um den Baum herum / il raconte les histoires de sa forêt perdue : On l'écoute comme un griot !*

The word *griot* is actually West African and designates a storyteller in the oral tradition, who, in the evening, in the shade of a tree, tells stories to the inhabitants of the African village. A scene in *Le Loup Migrant* shows how this African tradition persists among the refugees in the migrant camp. The figure of the griot, the storyteller, also introduces a metanarrative or reflexive dimension of the picture book story, since the storytelling wolf becomes a narrative avatar of the storytelling adult who reads the picture book aloud to the listening child. Translingual learning therefore means intercultural learning, since the reader is here confronted with an African tradition, suggested by the word griot.

### **Pedagogical advantages**

Finally, we would like to briefly summarise the pedagogical advantages of translingual picture books. As we have seen, translingual picture books promote four different forms of literacy.

First, **multilingual literacy** through literacy acquisition in two languages. Translingual picture books increase the linguistic sensitivity of bilingual learners through the aesthetic and poetic effects of language alternation and language mixing.

Second, translingual picture books foster the development of **multimodal literacy** in two semiotic systems by combining **visual** and **textual** elements. In this process,

collage techniques can produce a secondary visual narrative that makes the intersemiotic reading process challenging.

Third, we consider translingual picture books as holistic works of art that promote **literary** and **aesthetic literacy**, which enhance the confrontation with a cultural heritage.

Challenging intertexts such as, in our case, the fairy tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* by the Brothers Grimm, the expressionist painting *The Scream* by Edvard Munch, and the Japanese painting *The Big Wave* by Hokusai constitute the aesthetic and cultural background of this picture book story.

This rich palimpsest shows that *Der Schrei. Le loup migrant* is indeed a cross-over picture book that challenges both children and adult readers.

Fourth, translingual picture books can also foster critical literacy.

As we have seen in the example of the migrant wolf, the collage of historical documents about the slave trade and theory of race whose echoes still run through the current discourse on migration can convey critical discourses that awaken young readers' critical, intercultural and socio-political awareness.

Last, the two languages employed in this translingual picture book story broaden the readers' cultural horizons and open up new possibilities for **intercultural learning**. Lexical challenges that embrace otherness, such as the West African word *Griot* for storyteller, induce a reflexive and metanarrative way of reading and show the linguistic and cultural complexity of translingual picture books.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this article has been to show to what extent the linguistic, literary, aesthetic, and cultural potential of translingual picture books can contribute to an innovative pedagogical approach for holistic, creative and joyful language learning and teaching in multilingual and multicultural contexts. In a world where plurilingualism is

increasingly important translingual stories can be an important stimulus to developing plurilinguistic and multicultural awareness and skills.

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## **KEYNOTE 3**

# **The Debilitating Effects of Anxiety on Cognitive Processes and Students' Attention**

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Research into the role of anxiety in language learning has gained considerable attention primarily within the framework of educational psychology. Anxiety has been demonstrated as an interfering factor in different learning processes. As a significant affective variable, anxiety can minimise attention and have debilitating effects on the cognitive processes used in language learning: input, processing, and output. Within this conception, this paper presents some aspects of my teaching of EFL undergraduates to explain anxiety interference on cognitive processes.

### **1. Conceptual Foundations of Language Anxiety**

As an abstract psychological construct, anxiety is being investigated through different approaches relying primarily on data from questionnaires, self-reports, and interviews. There has been a large amount of research to assess the impact of anxiety on academic performance using behavioural measures. Researchers felt the necessity of distinguishing momentary anxiety from a more permanent predisposition to be anxious. The literature on language anxiety deals with anxiety on the basis of three major approaches: the trait approach, the state approach and the situation – specific approach:

#### **1.1 The Trait Approach**

Trait anxiety is a permanent disposition to be anxious, upset, and apprehensive. This “lasting trait” may be defined as an individual’s likelihood of becoming anxious in any situation (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991a). Trait anxiety has a limited impact on the language learning process.

#### **1.2 The State Approach**

State anxiety refers to the moment-to-moment experience of anxiety as an emotional state of feeling nervous that can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity (MacIntyre 1999). Such a type of anxiety is experienced at a particular moment in reaction to a situation. Individuals who are prone to experiencing anxiety in general as a trait show



greater elevations of state anxiety in stressful situations (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991a).

### **1.3 The Situation-Specific Approach**

Respondents are tested for their anxiety reactions in a well-defined situation such as speaking, writing examinations, or participating in the classroom. Furthermore, individuals are allowed to make attributions of anxiety to particular sources. An example of the situation-specific anxiety perspective can be seen in Horwitz et al's (1986) study in which they developed the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) based on the analysis of potential sources of anxiety in language classrooms. In discussing the interference of speaking anxiety in cognitive processes, I will consider the situation-specific approach. The relevance of students' anxiety as an educational problem has led some researchers to think of anxiety which affects language learning as a distinct type of anxiety. In presenting their theory, Horwitz et al. (1986) integrated three related anxieties to their conceptualisation of foreign language anxiety. These include communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

## **2. Anxiety Research and Educational Psychology**

The specific ways in which language anxiety operates has been widely influenced by psychology. With regard to anxiety research in educational psychology, Tobias (1979) was one of the first to propose a theoretical model of the effects of anxiety on learning from instruction. In addition, and consistent with Tobias' (1979, 1986) framework, Eysenck (1979) offered a re-conceptualisation of anxiety in terms of cognitive interference.

### **2.1 Tobias' Processing Theory**

Tobias separated learning from instruction given in the classroom and divided it into three stages: input, processing, and output. It should be noted that Tobias (1979, 1986) borrowed the terms "stages", "input", "processing" and "output" from descriptions of the computer processing of information. According to him, the "input section" describes the presentation of instructional material to students. The "processing section" encompasses all operations performed by students to register, organise, stock, and

retrieve instructional input. Finally, the “output section” denotes the students’ performance when L2 material is produced in the form of either spoken or written messages. Tobias (1979, 1986) suggested that anxious students divide their attention between the demands of the task and the preoccupation with concerns and negative self-references. Tobias’ (1979) theory helps to explain the interaction between anxiety and attention. Those intrusive thoughts associated with anxiety can impair the ability of an individual to process information at each of the learning stages because self-related cognition consumes the cognitive resources that would otherwise be allocated to the task at hand (MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b).

Although learning is a continuous process, Tobias (1979) made a distinction between the different learning stages cited earlier in order to isolate and explain the effects of anxiety. If anxiety is aroused during the input stage, internal reactions may distract the individual’s attention and fewer stimuli may be encoded. Anxiety at the processing stage may have considerable effects on L2 comprehension and learning may suffer if the meaning of novel items is not recognised. Within this assumption, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) proposed that if the task is relatively simple, anxiety may have little effect on processing. The more difficult the task becomes, relative to ability, the greater the effect of anxiety on processing. Finally, anxiety arousal at the output stage may lead to ineffective retrieval of vocabulary, inappropriate use of grammar rules, or an inability to respond at all.

## **2.2 Eynsenck Re-conceptualisation of Anxiety**

Eynsenck suggested that anxiety arousal is associated with distracting, self-related cognition such as self-evaluation, worry over potential failure and concern over the opinion of others. As a result, the anxious person has his/her attention divided between “task-related cognition” and “self-related cognition”, making cognitive performance less efficient. In specific tasks, anxiety reduces concentration and impairs relevant decision making. The processing system can be affected negatively by anxiety. For anxious students, divided attention can lead to forgetfulness and loss of ability to focus keenly on tasks. Eynsenck (1979) further postulated that anxious students are aware of this interference and attempt to compensate by increased effort. Some studies (Horwitz et al. 1986, Price 1991) reported that anxious language students study more than relaxed language students but their achievement does not reflect that effort.

Horwitz et al. (1986) claimed that students can be anxious when their compulsive effort does not lead to improved grades.

### **3. Effects of Anxiety on the Cognitive Processes**

#### **3.1. Anxiety at the Input Stage**

This represents the fear experienced by foreign language students when they are initially presented with a new word, a phrase, or a sentence in the foreign language (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994 b). In L2 learning, difficulties may arise if the language is spoken too quickly or if written material appears in the form of complex sentences. Anxious students may worry about misunderstanding linguistic structures or about inferring meaning from context because of the potential for embarrassing errors (MacIntyre 1995). Anxious students may recover from missing the input by asking for repetition.

Horwitz et al. (1986) reported that counsellors at the Learning Skills Centre found that anxiety centers mainly around speaking and listening. Anxious students found difficulties in sound discrimination and understanding structures of the target language messages. Tsui (1996) also investigated anxiety at the input stage. In an action research project, many teachers attributed the lack of students' participation to failing to understand their teachers' instructions and questions.

#### **3.2 Anxiety at the Processing Stage**

Anxiety at the intake stage represents the apprehension experienced by students attempting to organise and store input. During this stage, anxiety can influence both the speed and accuracy of learning (MacIntyre 1999). In particular, high levels of processing anxiety may reduce a student's ability to understand messages or to learn new vocabulary items in the foreign language (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994 b). In L2 contexts, the time taken to understand a message or learn new vocabulary items can be affected by anxiety arousal at this stage. Thus, the way anxiety affects processing is linked to input anxiety as well. When students are worried, anxiety may take the

form of preoccupation with future communication or the fear of misunderstanding something (MacIntyre 1999).

### **3.3. Anxiety at the Output Stage**

Anxiety at this stage denotes the worry experienced when students are required to demonstrate their ability to produce previously learned material. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994 b), high levels of anxiety at this stage might hinder students' ability to speak or to write in the foreign language. Performance at the output stage can be measured by test scores, verbal production, and the qualities of free speech. In a study extending Tobias' research model by investigating the effect of anxiety on input and output in both native and second languages, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) observed significant correlations between anxiety and second language performance at both the input and output stages.

## **4. Instances of Anxiety Interference on Cognitive Processes**

### **4.1 Incomprehensible Input Anxiety**

The fact that anxious students fear they will not understand all language input is consistent with communication apprehension (Horwitz et al 1986). Incomprehensible input is one of the major sources of anxiety when learners fail to understand target language messages. Students experienced anxiety at the input stage when the material presented to them was not well understood or remained ambiguous. Fear of incomprehension represented a generator of anxiety. Some students were frustrated when asked to speak because they did not understand some of their teacher's questions. They explained their anxiety by the fact that they had to concentrate on understanding the questions and on how to answer them, and how to express themselves correctly, including grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary choice.

### **4.2 Failure Anxiety**

This is a concept that I use to refer to anxiety when students are overly concerned about their performance or fail to speak in class. As predicted in the literature, adults can experience apprehension because they may fail to present themselves in the foreign language as easily as they can in their native language. The individual's self-

concept as a competent communicator can be challenged by any performance in the foreign language and lead to anxiety (Horwitz et al.1986). Some of my students revealed anxiety over being unable to perform properly in speaking classes. They spoke about vocabulary problems and attributed their limited self-expression to shyness to repeat the same answers. The frustration of not being able to communicate effectively seemed a recurrent aspect with many of the students as well.

Previous research findings have hypothesised that some language learners may choose not to communicate in a situation because they judge their capabilities in the new language to be so poor that not communicating is perceived as more rewarding than doing so (Foss and Reitzel 1988). Some of my students felt worried whenever they failed to express themselves fully in speaking classes. Interestingly, a significant relationship was found between **fear of negative evaluation** and **failure anxiety**. Other students feared negative reactions on the part of their classmates. From their comments, it was clear that when learners perceive failure in any performance, they can be afraid of speaking and avoid participating altogether. Having only a short time before speaking contributed to increase anxiety. The students' frustration about time was reflected in **speaking in a disorganised fashion, forgetfulness**, and **lack of concentration**. The majority felt confused when the teacher gave insufficient time before speaking.

Anxiety arousal, which manifests itself as worry, forgetfulness, and lack of concentration, is associated with **worry over potential failure** and concern over the opinion of others. As described in the literature, having only a short time to formulate answers or to focus on some learning tasks can lead to **divided attention** (Tobias 1979, MacIntyre and Gardner 1994b). The result is that anxiety may reduce concentration and impair relevant decision making for anxious students. It is important to note that my students were convinced that if they had more time to think of the questions, to select necessary vocabulary and to organise their ideas, they could perform better and feel more at ease in speaking.

## **Conclusion**

To summarise, anxiety arousal can have negative effects at any stage of the cognitive processes. Research in Educational Psychology has proved to be reasonably effective in understanding some of the complex anxiety interferences in skills learning.

Knowledge gained from psychological theories and models provided a background to understanding some of the negative effects of anxiety on cognitive processes. Instances of my teaching experience of EFL speaking to undergraduates lend support to the theories discussed earlier. It would be interesting to consider anxiety interference with reference to other language skills at both levels of language study, comprehension and production.

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## **KEYNOTE 4**

# **Understanding and Embracing Culture Shock: A Contribution from Religious Studies**

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The experience of culture shock could be very traumatic. Being confronted with a foreign environment that requires us to relearn our most basic habits, to find new landmarks and to rebuild our social network may be too much to handle, especially if it must be done in a relatively short period of time. This is so because our adaptation to a new milieu is possible only if we have undergone some sort of mental transformation. The experience of such a transformation, the conditions leading to its occurrence, its structure and dynamic are important topics of many religious and spiritual discourses. The purpose of this article is therefore to explore what those discourses can tell us about the experience of culture shock as well as what they could suggest as means and strategies to overcome and embrace it.

### **Introduction**

Culture shock could be defined as a usually negative reaction or set of reactions on account of being exposed to a foreign environment. That environment is physical when we are moving from one type of climate to another or when we must get used to new kinds of food. Any experience that excites our five senses beyond the usual measure, for example, strong odours, loud noises, and frequent or longer bodily contacts, are subsumed into the category of the physical environment. A new environment is also psychological when we feel unpleasant emotions. An individual who comes from a culture where personal distances are important would, for instance, feel uneasy in a social environment in which people are more intimate in the way they address or even touch each other. That second type of environment could include differences in values connected to punctuality and our sense of time, whether we favour competition over cooperation or prefer changes and progress over tradition and customs, just to name some of the factors that characterise a culture. Finally, the psychological environment is semiotic when it relates to the different codes of verbal and non-verbal communication people are using to convey

and share information. Not being able to find an exit in a busy train station because we cannot read the signs or to drive in a city where the names of the streets are in an alphabet we do not understand could be a real source of frustration and anxiety. Even if we possess some degree of fluency in the language of our new environment, we may not be able to understand its regional variations, the images it uses to express ideas and feelings, all the connotations of the words we happen to know, etc. Being the only person not laughing at a joke is often very embarrassing. And if it happens too often, we run the risk of becoming the laughingstock of the group. More generally, if we are from a low-context culture, we could have a hard time following the conversation of people from a high-context culture.

Concerning the nature of the negative reactions associated with culture shock, we can add to the feeling of frustration and embarrassment that of boredom, apathy, and many other sentiments and attitudes that are usually passive or internal. More active or aggressive reactions are usually anger, hostility, loss of temper and confrontation. Both types of reactions are normally spontaneous expressions of a mental state that has come about on account of the accumulation of many negative experiences. Whether that state of mind is due to homesickness, depression, a disposition for withdrawal and helplessness, a loss of motivation or a lack of self-confidence, we are always dealing with a condition that has acquired a certain momentum, a gravity that makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to regain control over our lives. We have the impression that this state of mind is sucking up all our energies, that we are stuck in moving sand or dragged into an emotional black hole. In some cases, people have entertained suicidal or fatalistic thoughts. At this point, the term "culture shock" is a misnomer: we are rather dealing with a deep-seated and silent urge to reject whatever triggers our passive as well as active reactions to a foreign environment. We know of the existence of such a mental state, not only because of our negative reactions, but also by the fact that we have developed a new sensitivity to the external world. We are like people in love who have become hypersensitive to the speech, intonation and body language of the desired person. Only this time, everything in our new environment, even what should be, in normal circumstances, quite insignificant is causing us mental pain and suffering.



An environment that is qualified as suffering, a state of mind that is controlling our behaviour and the way we react to the world, all this is reminiscent of what is being dealt with in many religious traditions, especially those whose purpose is to help us, on the one hand, by identifying and making sense of the cause of our painful experiences, and on the other hand, by offering solutions to our existential problems. For example, if we entertain a suspicious attitude towards other people, if we lack compassion for the suffering of others, the Tibetan Buddhists are prescribing a meditation in which we must visualise each and everyone, even our enemies, as our own mother. Based on the doctrine of rebirth, it is believed that every human being has been once our real mother. Therefore, the positive feelings and attitude we usually have for our mother should be extended to all people without exception. In a similar way, the Naikan therapy aims, through exercises in self-reflection, at reinterpreting one's experiences, especially those involving our mother, and at reconnecting people with their social environment. This therapy, which is based on a Buddhist understanding of the human psyche and relationships, is prescribed to individuals who have broken their connections with the members of their family, their colleagues, etc. It is therefore meant for people who have somewhat become isolated island in their respective environments, a state of being that is very much akin to what the experience of culture shock is about.

Thus, because of the similarity between the mental condition associated with culture shock and the types of mental state religious discourses are trying to understand and transform, I would like to explore in the present article how religions and spirituality shed light on this phenomenon which is affecting so many people who decided to go out of their comfort zone. That decision is already praiseworthy. But, to paraphrase what the 8<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist philosopher Śāntideva articulated in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra (Introduction to the Path of Awakening)*, we can say that the resolution to attain a goal must be sustained by adequate and efficient instruments, if we want to progress towards that goal. An awareness of what prevents us from moving forward, of what makes us even regret our initial decision, or of the mechanism by which we end up in a situation of inhibition of action, is such an instrument. I hope that a better understanding of the causes of culture shock, through an analysis of accounts of religious and spiritual experiences, will assist those who are willing to immerse themselves in a new culture and are not afraid to

be transformed by such an experience. This analysis should also allow us to devise strategies to avoid or minimise the negative effects of culture shock as well as providing a rationale for the existing ones.

### **The Inhibition of Action**

Let's begin our analysis with what is probably the most popular story in Hindu religious literature. I am referring here to the tale of Arjuna's conversation with Lord Kṛṣṇa, an episode of the epic of the *Mahābhārata* that gave rise to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, one of the sacred texts of modern Hinduism. In this relatively short text, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is an avatar of the god Viṣṇu, is revealing to Arjuna the true nature of reality, the cause of suffering and, most importantly, the secret of the three great paths leading to emancipation. Those paths are considered today to be the pillars of Hindu spirituality. They are the path of knowledge (*jñāna yoga*), the path of devotion (*bhakti yoga*) and the path of action (*karma yoga*). What ought to interest us at this point is not so much what those paths are, but rather the circumstances that led Lord Kṛṣṇa to reveal them. Indeed, it will be an analysis of those circumstances that is going to be our starting point for understanding the structure of the experience of culture shock, a structure that is, I believe, common to all experiences of mental transformation.

At the very beginning of *Bhagavad-Gītā*, we are told that two armies are facing each other in a place called *Kurukṣetra*, the field of Kuru. This field, which has probably been in North India, is also described as the field of religious duties or virtues (*dharmakṣetra*), thus signifying that the battle that is about to take place will also occur at a mental level. Just when Arjuna was supposed to give the signal for the battle to start, this great warrior, whose entire life has been a preparation for this crucial event, hesitated. Instead of doing what everyone on the battlefield was expecting him to do, in an unprecedented move, he asked Lord Kṛṣṇa, his charioteer, to bring the chariot to the middle of the field of Kuru between the two armies. Then, as Arjuna saw his friends and relatives facing each other, ready to engage in battle, he became overcome by grief and despair. Thereupon he said to Lord Kṛṣṇa, "When I see all my kinsmen, Kṛṣṇa, who have come here on this battlefield, life goes from my limbs and my mouth dries up, a trembling overcomes my body, and my hair shudders in horror. My great bow Gāṇḍīva slips from my grip,

and the skin of my flesh is burning. I am no longer able to stand, because my mind is whirling and wandering” (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, Chapter 1, verses 28–30). Believing that he was about to commit a grave sin, Arjuna then refused to fight, that which is supposed to be his ultimate duty as a warrior. He subsequently threw away his bow and arrows to sink into the seat of the chariot, his mind consumed with grief (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, Chapter 1, verse 47).

What Arjuna has been going through in the middle of *Kurukṣetra* is an experience of inhibition of action. Because he is at a point where he no longer knows what to do, this experience is also characterised by a situation of information deficit. According to Henri Laborit, a French surgeon and neurobiologist who researched, among other things, organic reactions to aggressiveness and shock, the experience of inhibition of action, if it remains unresolved it brings about physiological reactions of the kind described in the story of Arjuna, reactions that could also be associated with the experience of culture shock.

There are usually two basic ways to come out of a state of inhibition of action. Either we aggressively act against what is perceived as the cause of our predicament or we flee from it. Regarding the first solution, Laborit showed that, when two rats are put in a situation of inhibition of action, if they start fighting each other, they do not develop any physiological symptoms or incur any organic lesions. If expressing our aggression is impossible, there remains the possibility of fleeing the environment, causing the inhibition of action. Fleeing usually means running away for most sentient organisms, but for us, human beings, it can occur mentally on account of our ability to imagine alternative realities or to fantasise. In the worst-case scenario, such an escape is made possible by consuming alcohol, drugs or by developing a mental disorder like schizophrenia or a bipolar personality. However, the state of crisis induced by the experience of inhibition of action is not always negative. Indeed, without it, Arjuna would have never been in a situation where a new way of understanding reality and its corresponding mode of action were revealed to him. Let’s analyse further the structure of the experience of inhibition of action with the hope of identifying its cause and, by extension, that of culture shock.

## THE NOTION OF AUTOMATISM

Most people today are familiar with the term *karma*. This Sanskrit word common to the major spiritual traditions and philosophies of India has found its way into the English vocabulary to informally serve as a synonym for one's destiny or fate. Etymologically speaking, the term only means "action." However, since Eastern philosophies do not clearly distinguish between a passive event and an active one, the concept of *karma* also includes the result of an action. This is partly because those philosophies do not make a difference, ontologically speaking, between an active subject and an object being acted upon. People in the West, who have been influenced by the body-mind duality of Descartes, may have difficulties conceiving of a reality where the subject is, so to speak, fused with its environment. This is unfortunate as it is precisely this non-dual conception of the interaction between people and their milieu that is going to help us understand the underlying structure of the experience of culture shock and the reason why it affects us in a negative way.

In fact, the Indian conception of *karma* is not entirely foreign to us. With the advent of modern warfare and the computer revolution, we are quite familiar with the system of automatic control known as cybernetics. It is a system or an operator that performs an action in a given environment and whose responses—this is usually called *feedback*—are perceived and assimilated by that operator. In other words, the operator is informed and transformed by the feedback of its actions and, consequently, any subsequent action performed by that operator will be different from the preceding ones. Let's simplify this explanation by replacing the term *karma* by the more familiar notion of automatism.

An automatism is an action that is done because it brings about a gratification. The more our action is successful in satisfying a desire, the more it becomes entrenched in our memory. This process of reinforcing an automatism is also correlated with a diminution of our awareness of that automatism. We no longer need to think about how to perform an action or a series of actions. For example, when we drive a car, we become "oblivious" to the various actions required to run that car. This allows us to focus all our attention on the road, the traffic and the signs indicating where we are and where to go. The Hungarian-British polymath Michael

Polanyi would say that we have a subsidiary awareness of our actions of driving while we are focally aware of the road or the traffic (Polanyi, 1975). To some extent, an automatism is a measure of our degree of intimacy with an environment. To be intimate means to be connected or in relation with something. Two dancers who mutually coordinate their movements are, from this point of view, intimate until they are not stepping on each other's toes.

Stepping on someone's toes or, more generally speaking, making a mistake has its benefits. It forces the focal awareness to reemerge. In fact, any crisis, including the experience of inhibition of action, compels us to reactivate our higher cognitive abilities. Failures and mistakes thus allow us to step back from the environment with which we are engaged, to have a fresh look at its components, to see what has been overlooked, and to come up with a new understanding of that environment. Such an understanding should make it possible to re-engage with the problematic environment by acting, it is hoped, in a satisfactory way. In other words, we are strongly invited to be creative again. In this context, to have an open mind simply means to be able to welcome a crisis. This is the reason why the experience of inhibition of action is at the center of all paths of spiritual transformation. In fact, an important part of any spiritual discourse is to induce, through their descriptions of our realities, a state of inhibition of action.

Thus, by forcing a very negative and unfavourable interpretation of the world we enjoy, such discourses are trying to bring about a disconnection with its components, be it physical things like money and coveted articles, or intangible objects like ideas, feelings and ambitions. Although those discourses turn us, figuratively speaking, into orphans, they do so with the hope that we will decide to meet the challenge of realising a more satisfying way of re-engaging with the world. That new way, also being the result of a new state of mind, will also develop its own automatisms. Thus, if we become a Buddha or reach *mokṣa* (liberation) or *nirvāṇa* (extinction of the fire of desires), our actions are no longer an emanation of our egoistic and calculating states of mind, but rather an outflow of compassion, altruism and love for all sentient beings, respect and awe for the natural world and even, a sense of deep gratitude towards whatever or whoever has given us life. Put

differently, we have learned to embrace an environment which was once the source of our existential crisis.

Before suggesting some concrete applications of the methods and techniques used by various spiritual traditions to the problem of culture shock, that which allows us to move from one comfort zone to another by going through, to use a Christian image, the eye of a needle, it might be worthwhile having a closer look at the dynamics of the experience of mental transformation. We should thereby identify another principle related to that experience of transition. The identification of this principle should, in turn, make it easier to create new means of coming out of a situation of culture shock, of navigating the agitated waters of intercultural communication without sinking into a swirling vortex of negative emotions.

### **The Dynamic of Mental Transformation: Its Existential Dimension**

When D. T. Suzuki, one of the first Japanese scholars to popularise Buddhism in the West, tried to make sense of the experience of awakening, especially the one that is aimed at in Zen Buddhism, he came up with the following sequence of psychological events: “accumulation, saturation, and explosion” (Suzuki, 1970). These are the three phases of *satori*, the name given to the Zen experience of mental transformation. The first event, accumulation, may involve an experience of enthusiasm or even euphoria as it corresponds to the encounter with something new. A Buddhist aspirant would be, for example, highly motivated in starting his new life, especially when he has desired it and, after going through a strict selection process, has been accepted by a monastery. The emotion here is comparable to that of a student who has been admitted to a new school or hired to do a dream job. As a less emotionally engaging, but nevertheless exciting experience, we have the learning of a new language or skill. The initial stage of the event of accumulation corresponds to the honeymoon phase of Oberg’s four-phase model to explain the process of cultural adjustment. In the case of Oberg’s model, this first phase is followed by a period of negotiation with the new environment. It is a period when excitement gives way to frustration, anger and even anxiety on account of a repetition of negative experiences in that environment. Because we are dealing with a slow process of accumulation, we could say that Oberg’s second phase is still part of the first event of Suzuki’s model of mental transformation.

Suzuki's second event, called saturation, is precisely the experience of inhibition of action. It is a moment when, as described above, we feel cornered, helpless, full of doubts about our initial decision and our ability to resolve problems. To better understand the emotional significance of this second event, I would like to refer to the experience of Huston Smith, a historian of religions who went through the harsh life of a Buddhist monk living in a Zen monastery. When recalling his attempt to solve a *kōan* he said that he became furious and felt sick, wondering how it is even possible to treat a human being in this way. A *kōan* is a riddle like *"You know when two hands clap, there is a sound. What is then the sound of one hand clapping?"* The efforts to solve such a riddle are an important part of Zen training. As Huston Smith was about to confront his Zen master with the intention of giving up his training, the master invited him to step back from his experience, to objectively look at its components, to deconstruct his mental state of mind by asking in a very gentle voice: *"What is sickness? What is health? Put them both aside and go forward"* (*Hinduism and Buddhism*, 1996). Just by saying these words, the Zen master induced in Huston Smith a state of total tranquility and peace. The latter was now full of energy. He was convinced that he was fully capable of solving the *kōan*, that is, to bring his spiritual training to its conclusion. According to Suzuki's model, the Zen master triggered in Huston Smith an experience of explosion, a sudden opening of the mind to a new way of conceiving his situation. For Oberg, that would be the phase of adjustment in which the foreign culture begins to make sense and where we regain a sense of confidence in our ability to deal with it.

Smith was trying without success to solve the *kōan* using logic and rational arguments, an approach that the Zen master qualified as a philosopher's disease. I would like to cite Victor Sōgen Hori, a Zen monk and scholar of Buddhism, who wrote,

*At the extremity of his great doubt, there will come an interesting moment. This moment is hard to describe but on reflection afterward we might say that there comes a point when the monk realises that he himself and the way he is reacting to his inability to penetrate the kōan are themselves the activity of the kōan working within him. The kōan no longer appears as an inert object in the spotlight of consciousness but has become part of the searching movement of*

*the illuminating spotlight itself. His seeking to penetrate the kōan, he realises, is itself the action of the kōan that has invaded his consciousness. It has become part of the very consciousness that seeks to penetrate itself. He himself is the kōan. Realisation of this is the response to the kōan* (Hori, 1994).

In the context of Zen Buddhism, the resolution of a *kōan* is meant to dissolve the duality between a person and its environment. As the experience of inhibition of action is intensifying this sense of disconnection from our environment, we can assume that the belief in selfhood is a sign of a latent state of maladaptation. Ideally, we should be unaware of our own self when acting in harmony with the environment. Moreover, our actions should mostly consist of efficient automatisms. We should be, as Csikszentmihalyi put it, experiencing a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) or be in the “zone,” that is, a mental state of total focus on the present moment.

The models explaining the dynamic of mental transformation presented so far have focused on the existential dimension of this experience of transition. This dimension especially highlights our emotional responses, reactions, and mental states related to the experience of being confronted by a new environment. It is also because my description of the mechanism by which we come out of a situation of inhibition of action was limited to the experience of intimacy—or lack thereof—that I refer to it in terms of what pertains to our human existence in the here and now. However, we know that religious and spiritual experiences leave by-products in the form of discourses, rituals, human behavior, and attitudes as well as artefacts. These by-products usually transcend the present moment to become part of a collective memory and the cultural landscape of a group of people. In the case of culture shock, individuals have accumulated know-how and best practices that can be shared. Others have written books containing, it is hoped, valid generalisations about a culture, practices specific to a nation. What emerges from those encounters and explorations of new milieus is a body of knowledge that I qualify as the ontological dimension of the dynamic of mental transformation. I have chosen the term “ontology” here because I assume that people who produce and share that knowledge believe that it is fundamentally true and, consequently, are committed to it as something real. The next section of this article will therefore look at the cognitive aspect of the experience of transition in order to show how it is related to the



existential dimension and, more importantly, how it reveals another principle with the help of which we can use the experience of culture shock to overcome and embrace culture shock itself.

### **The Dynamic of Mental Transformation: Its Ontological Dimension**

If the existential dimension of the dynamic of mental transformation is associated with our experience of intimacy with the environment, the ontological dimension rests on our sense of detachment from it. Indeed, the moment we become aware of the existence of a reality as something distinct from us, be it an object, an event, or a system, a space is being created between us and that reality. The more encompassing our awareness of what we observe is, the deeper is this sense of detachment. It is also at this moment that an insight or an idea appears like a flash in the mind that makes it possible, for example, to anticipate the evolution of the observed reality or to see how its components are interrelated. Such an experience of knowing does not occur in the context of an intimate relationship with the environment. If this insight does not occur simultaneously, the sense of detachment gives us the necessary autonomy to search for new ways to combine the existing elements and, most importantly, to look for additional information. It is in this sense that I said that the experience of inhibition of action is an invitation to be creative. That is also why I associated that experience with an information deficit. The experience of inhibition of action reveals a gap in our mental structure. But what exactly is the nature of that gap?

At this point, we may assume that our knowledge of a foreign environment is going to prevent any clashes with that environment. But unfortunately, it is not the case. Knowing something does not automatically transform us into efficient actors. On the contrary, if our knowledge is a mental object that we hold in our mind, it is more likely to inhibit our actions. Just try to think about the process of walking while walking: you are going to stop walking. A more precise description is to say that we are focally aware of what should be the "object" of our subsidiary awareness. For example, thinking about the rules of grammar of a language while conversing in that language. This is so because both the experience of intimacy and detachment exclude each other. It is like a forest and its trees. We must decide between knowing about the forest, a decision that prevents us from acting on the trees, or individually

focusing on the trees and lose sight of the forest. We cannot simultaneously know an object and engage with it. Or can we?

I believe that there is a way to connect the experience of knowing with that of engaging in actions. We do not need to have both experiences simultaneously, but like breathing in and out, they could occur in sequence. Similarly, with our current knowledge, we can dive into the troubled waters of a foreign environment and emerge from it with a new knowledge to dive again and so forth. However, for this sequence to run its course, we have, firstly, to be ready to give up the pleasant sensation caused by the experience of detachment and, secondly, be able to withstand the sense of insecurity and uneasiness caused by our attempt to transform our objective knowledge into efficient actions or automatisms. In other words, we must embrace the experience of inhibition of action in order to overcome the experience of inhibition of action.

This statement may sound a bit paradoxical, but it makes perfect sense when viewed in the light of the Zen experience of *satori* described above. Even if we are dealing with conventional knowledge, we nevertheless need, as just mentioned, to fuse with that knowledge, to destroy the duality between it, as an objective reality, and us, as subjective actors. It is this process of integration of general ideas about a new environment that allows us to develop, in a relatively short period of time, the automatisms necessary to function in that environment. We know that we have perfectly integrated a valid generalisation when it is no longer perceived by our focal awareness or, more precisely, when we see *through* it and not just look *at* it. This process is like the one we may experience when trying to use a microscope for the first time. It starts with a period of trial and error when we have problems finding how to look through the eyepiece to get a clear picture of the object on the stage. During that time, we cannot help paying attention to the eyepiece, the tube, or any other parts of the microscope. But once we get a clear picture, we no longer see those parts; our attention has locked on the magnified object. At this moment, we can say that we have acquired a new “sense organ” and so it is with good knowledge or a valid generalisation that we have managed to internalise.

To some extent, adding a new sense in the form of a cognitive tool that enables us to see an environment in a more subtle or refined way, a mental instrument that makes it easier to navigate through that environment, is tantamount to expanding ourselves or pushing further the range of our intimacy, thereby increasing our autonomy. How the acquisition of a new sense is accomplished with concrete examples, will be discussed briefly in the next section dealing with the instrumental dimension of the dynamic of mental transformation. Here also, we will see that this third dimension is closely related to the two previous dimensions. Indeed, as alluded to above, the whole process of mental transformation can be reduced to an attempt at incarnating an idea into a structure so that the actions of that structure are in harmony with its environment. The idea (ontological dimension), the actions (instrumental dimension) and the experience of intimacy (existential dimension) are all fused when that structure is harmoniously interacting with its milieu. It is only when there is a glitch in this harmonious interaction that the three dimensions emerge as though they were separate entities. This is the way by which a mind tries to regain the harmony it had with its milieu and, by the same token, its original unity.

### **The Dynamic of Mental Transformation: Its Instrumental Dimension**

To show how the methods and techniques used by various spiritual traditions may be adapted to help us deal with culture shock, it would be sufficient to consider what I described earlier as the three main pillars of Hindu spirituality, namely, the path of knowledge (*jñāna yoga*), the path of devotion (*bhakti yoga*) and the path of action (*karma yoga*). When considering these three paths from the point of view of their structure and dynamic, they pretty much include most of the means used by other spiritual traditions whose purpose is chiefly to bring about a cognitive and affective transformation of the mind. If someone would like to explore further the possible adaptation of spiritual techniques for the development of secular psychological therapies, to analyse the exact relation between a given religious discourse—with its view of the human body and the mind—and a specific course of actions, that person would probably have to be less inclusive. However, for the purpose of the present article dealing with the problem of culture shock, the generalisations offered by the three yogas of Hinduism should be adequate to inspire the creation of strategies and

activities useful to navigate the stormy waters of foreign environments and intercultural communication.

### **The Path of Knowledge (*jñāna yoga*)**

The basic activity of the yoga of knowledge consists in focusing our attention on a view which is, by definition, encompassing the whole of our interaction with the objective world. For example, the view that everything is an illusion or suffering. It is like imagining and focusing on the fact that there is a screen on which the film we are watching is projected. The immediate consequence of this activity is the emergence of a sense of detachment from the objects that normally affect our emotional state or trigger our reactions. If that experience of aloofness is cultivated for a relatively long time, it brings about a stoic attitude towards the events we are witnessing. Thus, an abstract idea or a view, which we mentally hold onto, becomes an instrument for regulating our emotional states. In the context of culture shock, that view could be the purpose underlying our decision to move to a foreign milieu. When we constantly remind ourselves of that purpose, we are doing exactly what practitioners of the yoga of knowledge are doing every time they remind themselves that the objects of their experience are not truly existing or that they are illusions, a mental practice that should lead the yoga practitioner to spiritual liberation.

There is another strategy put forward by the yoga of knowledge to regulate our emotional states. Instead of holding on to an abstract thought, practitioners mentally deconstruct the objects that trigger their reactions. For instance, if we are attracted to beautiful bodies, we can release ourselves from that emotional entanglement by imagining how such bodies are just sacks containing stinking fluids, bones and flesh. Similarly, any situation that is causing a negative emotional response may be deconstructed into its elements. At this point, it is not necessary to understand the cause of that situation: what counts is the sense of being disconnected from it as a result of this deconstruction activity. To some extent, it is counterproductive to try to make sense of the situation while we are still emotionally entangled in it. Referring again to the Zen practice of solving a *kōan*, the first attempts are always limited to reshuffling the elements we already know. We need to add new elements to be able to find a solution. If, in the case of Zen, new elements present themselves at the experience of explosion, in normal circumstances, it is

possible to allow for an inflow of new information by just letting go of trying to understand at all costs.

In the context of culture shock, the idea of letting go gives us a simple activity that is highly beneficial to increase our intimacy with a foreign environment. It consists in taking walks in the streets or a neighbourhood of the city where we have just moved to. The key is to explore without a purpose. This allows us to see the objects, signs, etc. of our environment without our mind limiting our field of perception by paying attention to the things that only fulfill a purpose. As we are discovering new things without much thinking about them—we allow ourselves to see them as they are—, there is even something refreshing about this mindless exploration. The French have a nice word to describe that aimless idling and dawdling: they called it *flânerie*. Observing the waves of the sea or the leaves of a tree has the same refreshing effect. Moreover, *flânerie* allows us to collect information that could be useful at a critical moment, for example, the location of a specialised shop, or a shortcut to a dental clinic. The exercise is likely to be punctuated by little discoveries that are slowly building up to a comprehensive map of our new milieu.

### **The path of devotion (*bhakti yoga*)**

If the aim of the path of knowledge is to create a distance between us, as subjects of experience, and the world, as consisting of objects triggering emotional reactions, the aim of the path of devotion is to eliminate that distance. From a cognitive point of view, we are dealing with almost the same dynamic because, as we focus our attention on one single object, we forget all the other objects. Here the metaphor used to illustrate the dynamic of this second path is the experience of falling in love. Like in the case of the yoga of knowledge, it is believed that the realisation of an all-encompassing reality can be achieved by being totally absorbed in a single object. In Hinduism, the objects worthy of our total attention are usually the gods of its pantheon. It is also important to mention that, in the context of the path of devotion, emotions are not our enemies. On the contrary, they provide us with the necessary energy to intensify our attention and the emotional “glue” to hold to the object of devotion. Liberation does not come as the outcome of a stoic attitude towards everything, but by cultivating a passion towards a single thing.

One obvious application of the yoga of devotion to the problem of culture shock is to be very much interested in, if not passionate about one element of a new environment, for example, its customs, its cuisine, its arts, or its language. Cultivating a passion for one of the many constituents of a foreign environment will bring about many benefits. We will inevitably encounter people, locals or foreigners, sharing the same interests and we will forge new friendships, etc. If an entire new culture can be intimidating at first, cultivating an interest in one of its elements offers a point of entry into that culture as well as the possibility of becoming more intimate with it. Of course, we can decide to pursue many interests related to the new environment but it seems that the more we focus on one activity, the richer is our experience of that environment. And it is that rich experience and the network of relationships on which it is based, or from which it emanates, that will be our lifebuoy, if one day the waters of our adopted milieu become too difficult to navigate.

### **The path of action (*karma yoga*)**

The third path leading to a spiritual emancipation presupposes the existence of a system of laws that defines our individual duties or, as the Hindus call it, one's *dharma*. In ancient Hindu society, those duties were determined by one's caste, stage of life, and gender. For example, a member of the warrior caste, at a time when they were expected to raise a family, would have a set of duties different from that of the wife of a priest responsible for the performance of Vedic sacrifices. We should know what our duties are and act accordingly as a responsibility towards the other members of our group. To fulfil our duties is usually difficult as it can clash with our desires. We may neglect them in the hope that there will not be too many negative repercussions. Because submitting to a set of laws appears to be exclusively beneficial for the community, we may assume that it is quite frustrating from the point of view of our individual autonomy. What appears to be a social system where the logic of Dr Spock of Star Trek prevails, where "*the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few,*" it has, however, a silver lining for the individual. Indeed, by strictly adhering to our *dharma*, we completely bypass the experience of anxiety that could result from having to decide what to do in any given situation. Such experience is exactly what happened to Arjuna who questioned the validity of his duties as a warrior when he realised that he had to fight against the

members of his family. From a very pragmatic perspective, the aim of Lord Kṛṣṇa's sermon in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is to enjoin Arjuna to fight, to perform his duty and he should do so without worry, doubt, or fear about the consequences of his actions.

It is this attitude of total submission to a code of law or conduct, which is also at the heart of the code of behavior (*bushidō*) of the medieval Japanese warrior (*samurai*), that has been set as a goal of the yoga of action. Like the previous yoga, it should bring about the realisation and assimilation of a universal reality which is, in the present case, legal. It goes without saying that such an extreme attitude is very problematic within an ethical system having at its centre the dignity of a person as it is in Christianity and in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights created in 1948. Be that as it may, the yoga of action can still be an inspiration for defining strategies that could help us cope with culture shock. Indeed, the idea of a system of laws or duties can be transposed into a routine of activity. Such a routine could include study, physical training, leisure, *flânerie*, cleaning, etc. What is important is to adhere to the routine, no matter our mental disposition. *Age, quod agis*, in the sense of “*Do not be concerned with any other matter than the task in hand*” as Pope St. John XXIII would say. In this way, we surf through the day on the waves that we have previously decided to engage with. Like when riding a bicycle, so long as we move forward, we do not fall.

There is another way with which the path of action can help us navigate the difficult waters of a new environment. I just mentioned that this yoga enjoined us to do our duties without thinking of the consequences of our actions. Again, without pushing that attitude to its extreme, we can still inject some degree of indifference regarding the effects of our actions in a foreign environment. As we are bound to make a *faux pas* more than once, we can always remind ourselves that we have acted in good faith or to the best of our knowledge. Instead of brooding over things that have not achieved what we expected, we should be able to move on without regrets. Being ready to apologise for our mistakes, not trying to justify ourselves constantly, is usually a good way to move on and not accumulate the dust of remorse and guilt that is likely to bring us to a loss of confidence, to an experience of inhibition of action.

## CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I would like to highlight the importance of learning the language, that is used in the environment where we have settled down, to tackle the effects of culture shock. Without any knowledge of that language, we are likely to find ourselves isolated. As mentioned earlier, this situation has its merits. Indeed, on account of having a strong feeling of being apart from our adopted milieu, we are likely to develop our observation skills as well as our ability to make guesses. However, such a vantage point has its disadvantages as well. We are constantly in a situation of inhibition of action since we have not yet acquired the necessary automatisms that should allow us to interact successfully with that milieu. In other words, we have not extended our mental structure—which combined knowing and doing as one single reality—far enough to achieve intimacy with a new environment.

Learning the language used in the new environment is the first step to extend ourselves, to put into place intimate connections or develop automatisms. Indeed, by just being able to understand the signs used in such public places as train stations, we are in a better position to move around or to find our way. We can even start building mental maps of those places, a skill that is already a sign of having acquired a higher degree of intimacy with a new milieu. With a greater knowledge of that language—which could be, at this point, still passive—we certainly enhance the quality of our *flânerie* or exploratory strolls. And when we feel confident enough to engage in simple conversations with the locals, we penetrate even deeper into the realities with which we are now interacting. In short, knowing a foreign language is equivalent to acquiring a new “sense organ” like the assimilation of a skill related to the use of an instrument.

There is another reason why learning a new language may be an advantage when trying to understand and embrace culture shock. Like the acquisition and mastery of a skill, the process we must go through is very similar to Suzuki’s three stages of mental transformation or Oberg’s four phases of cultural adjustment. Indeed, the first encounter with a new language could trigger some excitement. Being able to repeat basic phrases provides us with joy and enthusiasm. But as we progress in our endeavour, we start experiencing some fatigue. We could be frustrated at seeing that the efforts put into our study is not producing the expected



results. Many people, if they are not under some obligation to learn the new language, give up at this point. Having reached a bottleneck or the state of inhibition of action, they do not dare to move on. However, those who persevere will experience a moment of explosion where, even if their knowledge is still rudimentary, they gain a sense of self-confidence in using their newly acquired language skills. That sense of self-confidence also allows them to venture into new territories without the fear of making mistakes. That explosion setting us at a new level of competency will also have its limits. After a while we will reach a plateau and, if satisfied with that level of competency, we may never move beyond it. If not, we will go through this process of accumulation, saturation and explosion once again to reach a new level of fluency.

Thus, while learning a new language, we can also cultivate an awareness of the process we are likely to go through in our experience of culture shock. The acquisition of another language, or any other skill for that matter, reveals to us the important landmarks of a journey through the unknown waters of a foreign environment. Not only are we finding directions, avoiding adverse currents and dangerous vortices, but are also learning to navigate our own ship, control the way it responds to difficult manoeuvres, produce optimal conditions for a better performance, etc. In short, by trying to be more intimate with our new environment, we gain in autonomy by knowing more about ourselves.

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# TEACHING TIPS

## How to grow your language school

**Dr. Mona Moldoveanu Pologea**

The owners of foreign language schools in Europe are, in most cases, teachers who have learned to do things better, who have learned to have a different perspective on teaching methodology, or who know how to build strong teams. However, which of these factors are the most important in increasing the number of students in the school, and what can foreign language schools do to develop themselves and become more prosperous? From the experience of managing the Romanian language school for foreigners in Bucharest (Romania), we have selected a list of criteria that define the success of a school.

### **1) Deliver top-notch language courses: work on delivering a high-quality language programme!**

What defines a quality language learning programme? Several criteria, such as:

- teachers who are linguists and who respect a high standard of teaching (compliance with the CEFR is mandatory)
- course materials of very good quality: textbooks, grammar books, etc.
- additional course materials that bring up the idea of the game: students learn more easily through games (flashcards, images, online games, board games)
- teachers who promote dialogue and who understand that the ability to speak is very important and emphasise conversation during the course
- usage of authentic materials during your class (videos and songs are also important)
- a pleasant environment (cozy classrooms, etc.)
- a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom

### **2) Deliver high-quality customer service!**

What defines high-quality customer service? Several things, such as:

- promptness in contacting students and facilitating the course registration process
- adaptation to the needs of each student
- solving all students' problems related to course logistics or other related issues (e.g. accommodation, airport transfer, or tourist recommendations)

### **3) Broaden your social media strategy!**

- Create the school page on the most important social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) and post authentic content at least twice a week!
- The content posted must be grammatically correct and reflect the daily activity carried out, along with the enthusiasm of those who work at the foreign language centre.
- Classroom photos are as important as videos.
- Creating events for each course category is also relevant for your students (e.g. free class, A1, A2, B1 level course, etc.).
- Run Facebook Ads for a specific event at crucial time frames! You can include the keywords and hashtags visitors use to find information about your language school.
- Create quality content and post it for free, for example, flashcards with the most important verbs, adverbs or common expressions, etc.!
- The social media page should not only be a page that sells something to your students but should also provide free, relevant content that students can learn from outside class.

### **4) Build a portfolio of testimonials**

Your students' opinion of you is the best advertising. You do not have to pay so much advertising for your school if you have 5-star testimonials on the internet. In the case of our school, over 200 reviews on Google and Facebook, all five stars, have convinced students that we deserve their full attention and that only with us will they find the quality of teaching they are looking for!

Always respond publicly to testimonials on social media platforms and write a private "thank you" e-mail to the student when someone writes you a positive comment!

### **5) Build a strong team: recruit good teachers and office coordinators!**

Your teachers and course coordinators are your school's ambassadors! Make sure each of them is friendly, prompt, enthusiastic, and ready to meet all your students' needs!

Improve your language teachers' skills (by organising training courses, online meetings, workshops, etc.), as well as the quality and effectiveness of your language teaching practices.

### **6) Teach a free one-time group class**

A demo lesson is always welcome. Our school's tradition is to end the year with a demo lesson and start the Next Year with another demo lesson. This event will help

students better understand how the course will run, what methods you use, and how difficult the language you teach is, and they will have a clearer picture of your school's products and services!

### **7) Offer vouchers and promotions on your courses during the winter holidays!**

December is the month of gifts, so it would be nice for your customers to buy vouchers for their friends. If you also sell products, for example, textbooks and grammar books, it's nice to offer a discount on these in December!

### **8) Be active in mass media!**

Write articles about new products, services, and special events (e.g. free courses or summer school). In our case, in our 14 years of existence, we have appeared in the mass media (e.g. newspapers dedicated to foreigners and Romanian journals) more than 65 times and more than 8 times on Romanian television and radio stations.

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Dr. Mona Moldoveanu Pologea is the owner of ROLANG School in Bucharest, dedicated exclusively to teaching the Romanian language to foreigners.

ROLANG School was founded in 2009 and has about 1000 students per year. The school provides a wide range of Romanian language programs: class courses at all levels, one-to-one lessons, summer school, online courses, Romanian for business, citizenship, and tourism, cultural integration, and immersion classes.

ROLANG won the "Language school of the year" international award in 2017, 2018, and 2019, offered by the "iStudy Global Awards" (UK) and the "Top 100 of Romania" trophy (2022), a prestigious ranking that takes into account customers' reviews and the popularity of companies.

ROLANG School has become the first language centre in Romania to offer the internationally recognised teacher training program EUROLTA (European Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults). The EUROLTA certificate is developed, issued, and recognized by the ICC, a network of leading institutions of adult education in Europe and around the world.

Starting in 2023, ROLANG School will organise the EUROLTA course in Romania for all language teachers and will train better language teachers for tomorrow.

# Five Reasons Why Learning Languages Online is Beneficial

**Valeria Di Marco Sims**  
The Languages Corner

The concept of traditional education has radically changed, especially during the pandemic and with the rise of new technologies. Despite the fact that we have access to all sorts of online courses and classes, the scepticism surrounding online learning still remains, especially when it comes to language learning.

Here are **5 reasons** why a language learner should opt for a remote experience.

- 1) **It's flexible.** When you have work and family commitments, it's hard to squeeze in language learning on top of your regular responsibilities. Online learning allows you to set your schedule and begin your learning journey from the comfort of your home/office.
- 2) **It's accessible.** Virtual language learning is possible wherever there is an internet connection, literally almost anywhere in the world. This means you save time and money by cutting down on your commute to a physical location, which allows you to better focus on your education.
- 3) **It's quality learning.** The times of only being limited to teachers in your local region are long gone as there is now a larger pool of educators available online. With the click of a button, you have the opportunity to be connected to a plethora of professionals, who can teach you a language just like you were in a physical classroom.
- 4) **It's a customizable learning experience.** In addition to having access to very diverse material such as videos, photos, and e-books, online lessons incorporate smaller groups, are often tailor-made, and take into account the student's learning pace.
- 5) **It's more cost-effective.** Online learning allows better budget management, both for the learner, who doesn't have to commute to a physical location, and the school, which doesn't have to invest in several resources.

Although online learning might not be for everyone and there is still uncertainty out there about leaving behind the conventional classroom, there is no reason to shy away from this alternative. The remote experience has proven to be a valuable opportunity to maximize learning time and boost cognitive development.

## WEBINARS

### **'Digital Twins' – A Project to Enhance Language Learning and International Understanding**

**Geoff Tranter**

Dortmund University, Germany

*This webinar was delivered on September 22 2022. The presentation is available on [www.icc-languages.eu/webinars](http://www.icc-languages.eu/webinars).*

The aim of the webinar was to look at twin towns as a resource for languages that has not yet been fully exploited. Twinning was very popular 5-60 years ago but has lost popularity since. However, many towns still have the evidence in signs around the cities announcing who they are twinned with. Dortmund in Germany is twinned with Leeds in the UK but the name has changed from 'twins' and they now describe themselves as 'partner' cities. Out of interest, the oldest city partnership in the world is between Le Mans in France and Paderborn in Germany, dating from 836 AD. The two cities signed a formal partner city agreement in 1967. In the USA partner or twin towns tend to use the term 'sister' as in 'sister cities'. The city with the most partner agreements is Coventry, in the UK. There is obviously a wide opportunity for town twinning if the local community wants to do so.

Partner towns are an untapped resource in language teaching but if you want to find out how many twin towns and sister cities there are and which towns have agreements with which you can find the list at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lists-of-twin-towns-and-sister-cities>. It lists twins by continent and by country and also there is a *Charter of European Rural Communities* you can access, showing that towns are not the only places covered.

Many people wonder what is the point of twin cities. One of the advantages is commercial links. However, twin and sister cities are not low maintenance. They require commitment and the active involvement of interested parties to maintain the connection and create and run the events to sustain it. The aim is to underline the things the cities have in common. In some cities, schools are twinned with schools in partner towns. It allows for exchanges for educational purposes but also encourages getting to know people from other areas through online connection and visits. Even

after leaving school and starting their careers many still keep in contact with people who they met in the twin city when they visited. It's all about meeting people through exchanges between twin cities. Here are activities using authentic material about twin cities that you can try in class.

### **Activity 1 Compare institutions**

The fact that we can now communicate easily online has revolutionised our opportunities for international contact since travelling has become more difficult since Brexit and the onset of the pandemic. As Chair of the Leeds Anglo-German Club, I tried to find other ways of bringing people together via Zoom. Once every month or so we have an evening together. We put people into groups so they can talk together and we also suggest topics they can discuss in English or German, as they choose. One example was the comparison of Leeds and Dortmund town halls. We asked them to do some research and answer these questions.

1. What is its purpose/function?
2. Who works there?
3. What happens there?
4. How old is it?

Then a person from Dortmund would talk about Leeds and a person from Leeds would talk about Dortmund.

Also, both cities have a Peace Square. Again, in break-out groups, students can discuss where each Peace Square is in the city, why it is there and any other interesting details about it. Once again students in each breakout room discuss and then say what they have learned to the whole group.

### **Activity 2 Match idioms**

Another very enjoyable and stimulating activity is to exchange idioms and match them to idioms in their native language. You can see examples in the webinar slides in the presentation.



### **Activity 3 Share feedback**

At the end of the meeting participants are invited to fill in a tablet onscreen to say what they thought of the meeting they have just attended and to suggest discussion topics for future online meetings.

One of the problems with this kind of information exchange activity is that it requires research. If, however, you can go online you can find the information you need. For example, teachers in Dortmund and Leeds universities can use the [www.leeds-dortmund.eu](http://www.leeds-dortmund.eu) website which lists the cultural and historical features of the two cities. The links take you to explanations in both languages and also to videos of each city.

### **Activity 4 Compare cities**

A classroom activity could be to compare pictures of each partner city and get students to look at and read about the partner city and work in pairs to do these tasks.

1. Choose a photograph of the twin city.
2. Read the accompanying text.
3. Underline or note down any important or interesting details.
4. Say whether you would want to visit that place and explain why or why not.
5. Present your findings to the rest of the class.
6. Decide as a class which of the various buildings you would include in a tour if you were visiting your twin city.

### **Activity 5 Discuss your city**

A variation could be to discuss your own city.

1. Choose a photo of the city.
2. Discuss with your partner what you know.
3. Check with the information on the website.
4. Decide if what you learn is interesting enough for visitors from your twin city.
5. Tell the class which photo you have chosen and why you would include it in the programme.
6. Draft an email to visitors coming to your city and explain the programme.

In doing these tasks the students are practising their language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing emails and letters. And it is not impossible that one day they will find themselves inviting and working with foreign visitors to their city for real.

### **Activity 6 Museums and art gallery videos**

Another activity could be the museums and art galleries in your city. Using photographs or a video from the museum students work in pairs and choose the museum they want to present.

1. Discuss what is shown in the museum.
2. Watch the museum video (if there is one) and check for information on the website.
3. Decide whether the museum is interesting for your twin city.
4. Present your ideas to the class.
5. Write a mail to the twin city partner and recommend they watch the video. Write a brief explanation of what the video shows.

### **Activity 7 Compare the history**

Comparing the history of the twin cities is also a useful activity and you can do this as a simple classroom activity by creating timelines.

1. The students work in pairs or small groups.
2. They take the history of their city and divide it into up to 12 historical events which they think make it special.
3. They create a table with 12 squares on their computers and fill in the dates and information.
4. They compare the timelines of their city and the twin city. What are the differences and the similarities?
5. They can also prepare a summary of the video describing their twin city so that those speaking the foreign language can follow the video better.

### **Activity 8 Prepare a commentary**

A useful exercise is to take a tourist video of your city and prepare a commentary using the language of your twin city. There are a number of ways students can do this: for example, using the interactive whiteboard, sitting in a classroom with individual computer places or maybe make use of hybrid classroom arrangements where students can work at home if they need to. Students can bring their own notebooks to

class or do the assignment at home and bring the results to class to show and compare.

### **Results and Conclusion**

What are the results of these activities? Obviously, increasing awareness of international connections is important as is the use of authentic materials in authentic settings bringing people together and increasing cultural awareness. These activities help establish or re-establish contacts between the twin cities and enrich language courses by students doing real activities while increasing their reading, listening, speaking, writing and mediation skills.

## **After COVID: How online language teaching has changed the profession**

**Dr Ursula Stickler**

*This webinar was delivered on November 24 2022. The presentation is available on [www.icc-languages.eu/webinars](http://www.icc-languages.eu/webinars).*

This presentation focuses on Ursula Stickler's work at the Open University in the UK and what she observed happening to the process of language learning before, during and after the worst of the COVID pandemic, particularly at the height of the crisis when the country had to go into lockdown and lots of language teachers had to move their language teaching online.

She began by discussing Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and emergency training. The term Emergency Remote Teaching was coined by Hodges et al. (2020) to describe the rapid and unprepared move of teaching into blended, distance or online mode. There is a difference between emergency teaching where you have to respond to the lack of a face-to-face option while supporting the continuation of study and planned online teaching. Many academic organisations and even government agencies had to invest in short-term options and in staff training, including investment in laptops and online software packages for teachers, as happened in Greece, for example. The alternative is a planned strategic move from face-to-face teaching to an online or mixed method hybrid teaching approach. This involves building a learning community as you can't expect students to adapt automatically to a different method of teaching and studying. Planned online teaching also

involves supporting experiential active learning and investment in long term infrastructure and staff development. It is important to make a distinction between short term training and the building of online skills for teachers in the long term. As an example of ERT, The Open University ran online training webinars for teachers in the UK, and some academics worked with the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) to deliver webinars for training teachers across Europe in three languages, English, French and German and had 2,800 participants.

In preparation for the online training the ECML asked participants what they would do once they returned to face-to-face teaching after the pandemic. The responses varied from 'no change' to 'everything change' with some teachers saying they would always put homework tasks online. Many respondents felt that students would not accept going back to face-to-face teaching as it was before. Students who had become familiar with online tools would not accept traditional teaching and pedagogy, being fed knowledge by the teacher. There was also a recognition that the pedagogy had to adapt, integrating new technical elements but also integrating new pedagogy. In particular, the adoption of an online pedagogy would allow a flipped classroom, allowing the students to work on projects and submit them online allowing more time in the classroom to discuss and integrate the new knowledge. Also, some teachers felt online teaching was more democratic as students could participate in a different way to the way they would in face-to-face teaching. Working online they could write together and speak together more easily than they might in class.

At the end of 2020 Ursula together with an international research team set up another questionnaire asking teachers from 15 countries how they saw their future as language teachers following the pandemic. The questionnaire specifically asked for their perspective ten years into the future, what would happen to their teaching and how technology would impact their technical skills, what qualifications they might need and how they would evaluate the success of their teaching. If you think about the impact of online translation, evaluation is going to be a big question in the future. The questionnaire was distributed in seven different languages and received 109 responses.

### **The five types of language teacher**

Analysing the responses Ursula Stickler identified five vignettes of language teachers

- The Visionary
- The Traditionalist
- The Designer
- The Mediator
- The Critical Voice.

The Visionary embraces new technology with enthusiasm, especially the use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and virtual reality and the opportunity to learn from the learners.

The Traditionalist values the human face of language teaching and the need to focus on emotional support for the students but also focuses on grammar and accuracy in the teaching of language. Traditionalists believe that online teaching may be necessary at certain times but cannot replace face-to-face teaching.

The Designer focuses on materials creation, and is excited by the opportunities afforded by online learning, particularly in using gamification activities to motivate students and support learning.

The Designer tends to occupy a more backstage role in the classroom and so does the Mediator. Mediators see themselves as facilitators and help organise the content and management of language learning. They are especially interested, for example, in 'tandem learning', setting up exchanges with a language class in a different country or brokering links between individuals as 'tandem speakers.' A good example is linking an English student learning German with a German student learning English. Basically, they support each other in helping the learner learn their mother tongue. The Mediator may be the person who arranges this. They are the curators of learning. The OER (Open Education Resources) and the OEP (Open Educational Practices) both catalogue and recommend online tools for language learning.

The fifth Vignette is the Critical Voice. The Critical Voice teacher goes beyond the teaching of language and culture to explore world social issues, including the impact and implications of new technologies. Their aim is to encourage critical thinking about issues and developing their students' social and critical awareness and independent thinking.

It is also important to recognise that some teachers fall into none of these categories as they experienced difficulty as a result of the pandemic in having to adopt new teaching methods using online technologies which they were not trained in, accompanied by a lack of equipment and software.

A problem many language teachers had right from the start is how to engage students in a hybrid learning situation with students face-to-face in the same class. In Ursula Stickler's opinion you need two tutors, one dealing with the face-to-face students and the students online and the other focusing just on the students online, monitoring and offering support. For hybrid teaching or meetings, the OU used a 360-degree camera so online students were fully aware of the face-to-face students and the students in the class also knew that colleagues were watching online. The second tutor didn't need to be a professional, just someone who could follow the online transmission and make sure everything was running smoothly and that the communication reached the remote participants as well.

### **Epistemological changes in language teaching**

Epistemological changes as well as surface changes have been essential as a result of the changes to online teaching. There are immediate changes, planned and envisaged changes and epistemological changes for sustainability. In other words, knowledge transmitted online is done differently from the way it has been done in face-to-face teaching. Also, in ethno-epistemologies concepts may be seen differently in different languages. For example, in Indo-European languages the perception of the future is what is before you (in spatial metaphors) whereas in Chinese the future is very much seen as something hidden behind you, as we don't know what is going to happen. How does that affect language teaching? We are helping our students learn how use language to construct meaning and experience.



In an online environment you are using different techniques to convey information to the techniques you would face to face. In face-to-face teaching teachers use body language, gestures, a whiteboard to write on and visual aids. If you are teaching online you still have to present knowledge, help students create understanding, understand cultural difference and overcome technical problems but you do it by different means.

### **Managing student engagement online**

One of the problems of online teaching is helping students maintain concentration. You have a limited screen and a limited area. Adult students' concentration online is about twenty minutes so you have to switch tasks and tools very often and if students are expected to sit and watch for one or two hours they are likely to lose focus and get bored. Solutions for resolving this issue include shorter classes, which may involve changes in the curriculum, and in the classroom, creating opportunities for moving around in class and doing practical activities, especially in classes with younger students.

Another problem is that students often join the course online with no visuals and sometimes not even their names so even limited interaction is not possible. An eye-tracking experiment conducted by the OU showed that in an online tutorial, participants registered names and listened to what they had to say. However, it is true that many teachers feel the lack of visual clues, the lack of immediacy, the lack of feedback and the lack of personality in the classroom are disadvantages of online learning. One possibility is to reward students who keep their cameras on during the session by awarding a prize, such as an attractive visual or a recording of a popular song.

Users of online learning resources propose focusing on the use of multiple ways of reinforcing and supporting absorption of what is being taught. The deliberate use of visuals and angles to direct the gaze of students can help concentration and feedback using text, voice and icons is useful, especially for shy learners. Using emoticons and other visual aids onscreen and giving opportunities for students to do things online are all ways of keeping interest alive and improving motivation.

### **The role of the textbook**

The use of a coursebook in face-to-face classes is also a problem. It cannot be used onscreen. Language teaching publishers are very conscious of this problem and are producing supplementary online materials and are now exploring the possibility of producing online 'textbooks'. One of the problems they face is that the standard of production of professional online entertainment videos by NETFLIX and other entertainment organisations is now so advanced that producing a small language practice video clip is no longer enough.

### **Conclusion**

What will language teaching be like in 2030? Will we go back to our old ways? The development of online education will not go away. It will change our approach towards language learning and our methodology. Teachers will have to learn new skills, mastering new online tools as they are developed. As language teachers we are cultural mediators, technological experts, as well as being language experts and qualified teachers. Our challenge is to master the new technologies and use them to motivate our students to learn

language online and prepare them for face-to-face interaction when they deal with native language speakers online and in the flesh.

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## REVIEW

### **Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Goes to the Classroom**

**Authors:** Florencia G. Henshaw and Maris D. Hawkins  
**Published by:** Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis (2022)  
**Reviewed by:** Anastasia Hanukaev

The book aims to overcome one of the main challenges in language teacher education, which is, as stated by the authors, to find materials that ‘clearly articulate the common ground among theoretical concepts, research findings, and classroom practices.’ The book is inspired by the need to support teachers in developing materials which would be informed by core principles of second language acquisition (SLA). *Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Goes to the Classroom* is thus designed with both practising and pre-service teachers in mind and genuinely bridges the gap between theory, research, and classroom practice.

The fundamentals of the process of acquiring a second language that inform proficiency-based instruction are discussed from diverse perspectives: e.g., material selection, course design, assessment practices. Written by two highly experienced language teachers and educators<sup>1</sup>, the book offers a reflective approach along with many real-world examples easily applicable to the classroom. The authors advocate a proficiency-based approach which foregrounds the development of communicative ability in the target language. The book consistently demonstrates the links between SLA theory, research, and practice, which makes it a valuable resource for language teacher educators and teacher students.

Another strength of the book is its reader-friendly format which will appeal to anyone who possesses only a basic knowledge of the theory of SLA but is interested in knowing more about how to teach language in a manner that puts forward communicative ability in the target language. The book does not contain complex terminology and monotonous language, rather, it is written in a way that is easy to read and enjoyable. It will thus be a perfect start in the marathon of language

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Florencia G. Henshaw is the Director of Advanced Spanish at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Maris D. Hawkins teaches Spanish at the Capitol Hill Day School in Washington, D.C.

teaching – inspiring and not tiresome. Consider the way the authors provide the definition of language acquisition: *‘the (mostly) implicit process of building a linguistic system by making form-meaning connections from the input. Basically, acquisition is what happens to you while you’re busy understanding messages’* (p. 3). Indeed, their definition of this concept is simple and accessible. The authors further explain:

*Why did we say “mostly” implicit? That’s the best common ground we can find among a very complex discussion involving theoretical constructs that we won’t get into (e.g., consciousness, awareness, etc.). We’re trying to keep it simple here! What you should know is that it is a process we cannot consciously control (p. 4).*

The book is organised into three Sections. Each section is further sub-divided into two chapters. Chapter 1 (*Guiding Principles*) opens with the foundations of what is viewed to be the fundamentals of SLA instruction. These include important definitions and important insights into the process of SLA, such as, among others, acquisition, communication, and first versus second language acquisition. Chapter 2 in Section I discusses *Goals and Assessment* and examines, among other aspects, understanding proficiency levels, considerations for planning for proficiency through performance, and intercultural communication goals.

The rest of the book is organised around the three ways of looking at the communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational (the ACTFL modes of communication). Section II considers the input-based communication mode, which is interpretive communication. Within it, Chapter 3 examines characteristics of input, sources of input, comprehension checks, and structured input activities. Chapter 4 covers aspects related to reading, listening, and viewing, for example, how to engage with oral versus written texts, how to select texts, how to help students to apply various reading and listening strategies etc.

Section III covers output-based modes: presentational and interpersonal communication. Chapter 5 addresses the concept of output, which is seen as *‘producing the target language in order to express meaning’* (p. 135). The issues of the role of output in the classroom and scaffolding the process of producing output

are discussed in the chapter. Chapter 6 focuses on interaction and the main characteristics of interpersonal communication and its role in the classroom.

In the main text of each chapter, there are three sub-sections, entitled as follows: *What do I need to know? What does it look like in the classroom? Now that you know.* *What do I need to know* is the section where the most important theoretical concepts are discussed. A text-box called *In case you were wondering* provides answers to some questions that the authors predict their readers may have. Each chapter also contains boxes titled *Pre-test* (introductory True or False statements aimed at engaging the readers' prior knowledge) and *In a nutshell* (invitations to readers to summarise their own takeaways from each chapter).

The most valuable section for teachers as the intended audience is *What does it look like in the classroom?* It provides suggestions and ideas for teachers and covers the main questions about the classroom application of the principles discussed in the section *What do I need to know*. This sub-section is full of concrete examples which are ready-to-go or might be adapted easily.

The last sub-section (*Now that you know*) gives readers the opportunity to recap everything they have learned in the chapter and apply issues regarding the content of each chapter in the form of reflection questions (*Discussion and Expansion Questions*) and activities (*Observation and Application Activities*).

The book closes with an Epilogue entitled *Reality check*. The authors thoughtfully address the main concerns ('what-ifs') which readers might have when attempting to put the principles of the book into action. Questions such as '*What if your colleagues seem resistant to changing how they teach or assess students?*' or '*What if students don't seem to be making much progress?*' are answered here.

Additional online resources can be found on the publisher's website

(<https://hackettpublishing.com/modern-languages/common-ground-second-language-acquisition-theory-goes-to-the-classroom>). These include articles and books, blog posts, podcasts, online databases, and other resources that support the issues covered in the book.

Summing up, three words that characterise this intelligently written book are clarity, focus, and expertise. In many ways, this book will provide many insights for teachers of all languages. Moreover, it will be particularly useful for teacher students as they do not always see how to apply all the controversial theories in SLA in their future practice. Thus, one of the main contributions of the book is that it offers a teaching-focused perspective on the process of SLA, which is here not presented as an area full of controversies and complex definitions, but an inspiring field of knowledge that can inform pedagogical decisions in a coherent manner.



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