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## **Dialogue, participation and heteroglossic languaging: New perspectives on language and learning**

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### **1. Introduction**

Today, we see how globalization with its cultural flows and technology with its new developments constantly creates new types of contexts and new kinds of language practices. Thus it would not be unreasonable to say that *language itself* is changing. Also, these large-scale changes create new environments for learning languages, and, these environments, potentially, will influence how we conceptualize *learning itself*. Thus, as the contexts and usages change, it is possible that the theoretical basis of language learning needs to be rethought. Further, this gives us a reason for rethinking the pedagogical practices of language education. This paper discusses the two central concepts of second and foreign language learning research - 'language' and 'learning' - and the potential consequences of how their reconceptualisation might influence practices of language education and pedagogy.

To redefine 'learning', we need to transcend the traditional dichotomy between social and cognitive descriptions that have been typical for second language acquisition research. In recent years, we have testified a movement from the strict cognitivism of the early SLA towards socially-oriented arguments, some of which have turned out to be exclusively social in their position. As an alternative to these polarized views, language learning will be regarded here as a *social-cum-cognitive* process: as an activity in which the social and the cognitive are involved and intertwine. A holistic view is argued for in which cognition is not placed "internally", in the learner's brain, but is extended to "external" activity in the social and physical environment. Here, I will draw on arguments coming from the following sources: Vygotskian and neo-Vygotskian views (e.g., Lantolf 2000; Lantolf & Thorne 2006), systemic psychology (Järvillehto 1994; 2006), distributed views on cognition (Cowley 2004, 2006; Steffensen 2009), ecological views (Gibson 1970; van Lier 2004, 2007) and the Bakhtin Circle dialogism and neo-dialogism (Linell, 2009; Dufva 2010; Dufva et al. 2011).

It will be argued that learning is distributed cognitive activity. This is to say that the *individualist* notion of learning is rejected and argue that learning occurs in collaboration and *mediated* by other people and/or by different tools and artefacts of the social world<sup>1</sup>. As language - or linguistic resources - are being *shared* in the activities people *participate* in, they are also constantly *recycled*. What is important to note is that this process is not seen as *transfer of information* from “outside” to “inside”. Learning is not regarded as an *acquisition of abstract forms* but as linguistic resources being *appropriated* by persons participating in a certain activity.

The reconceptualization of 'language' below draws upon the recent debates in which the traditional 20<sup>th</sup> century concepts have been dismantled and deconstructed (see also, e.g. Makoni & Pennycook, eds. 2007). However, I will focus in particular on the dialogically oriented views of language and the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia. It will be argued that to forefront the dynamicity and relationality of language, language learning should be regarded as appropriating different situated practices, or, *heteroglossic languaging*.

## **2. Learning: a social-cum-cognitive and mediated process**

To see learning as a social-cum-cognitive - or distributed - process rejects the Cartesian interpretation in which cognitive refers to “internal” actions and social to “external” ones. The view challenges both the cognitivism of early SLA (second language acquisition) studies but also those contemporary socially-based arguments that fail to give account of the individual person and his cognizing. Cognitivism that was characteristic for the traditional SLA studies was influenced - to a high degree - by Chomskyan thought and rationalist philosophy and turned away from the arguments that included the social world (social interaction, societal circumstances). The new social focus, however, has frequently resulted in a neglect of considering the cognitive aspects (for a closer discussion, see Dufva 2010). Here, I will aim at showing that both aspects can be included to form a new, non-Cartesian and holistic viewpoint on learning.

To see mind and observable activity as inherently connected is not a new idea at all: it was strongly present L.S. Vygotsky's work and the sociocultural tradition that followed. Pointing out that one needs to study the history and development of cognitive phenomena in order to understand them, Vygotsky himself aimed at showing that human mind is social in origin and that 'higher cognitive faculties' for intellect, reasoning and learning are essentially collective in origin. The social world, with its artefacts, tools and patterns of social action that has developed

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<sup>1</sup>The view that is discussed here does not exclude the aspect of language as an embodied and material process, and that this is not strictly speaking a social world but a material however. For the sake of brevity, the argument of the material basis will not be developed here.

over time as a collective effort of mankind is the natural environment of each infant and, respectively, each child develops his intellect and reasoning in social and collaborative activity. Therefore the social world cannot genuinely to be described as “external”: it is also the cognitive world - or cognitive workspace - we each are born into and continue to operate in.

If we go on using words such as 'social' and 'cognitive' they are not to be understood in their Cartesian sense. ‘Social’ does not refer to explicit interaction with other people or to the societal sphere as “external” context, but is also a feature that characterizes human activity that is traditionally understood as cognitive or psychological. As Lantolf (2004:30-31) notes, sociocultural theory is not a theory of the social or of the cultural aspects but, actually, a theory of mind.

Therefore, it is seen as unhelpful to continue the reductionist arguments of either cognitivism, or the radical extremist views of socially oriented paradigms. Between cognitive and social worlds there exists a reciprocal relationship that was also a central theme in Voloshinov's philosophy of sign. Voloshinov (1974:33-41) argues that *outer signs*, inherently connected with ideology, need to be “engulfed” by *inner signs*. There is an interplay between the inner and the outer signs: outer signs gain their life force by becoming inner signs when appropriated by persons while these inner signs are returned to the outer dialogue when uttered. Drawing upon these arguments, language learning can be seen as process of *recycling* of the socially and culturally available linguistic resources (see also Dufva et al. 2011).

When analysed dialogically, linguistic signs have two aspects: while being “ideological” as to their content, they need to have materiality in order to be *mediated*. As Voloshinov (1973: 26; 90-91) observes, human consciousness needs ‘gesture, inner word, outcry’ to become manifest. Thus language needs to be spoken, written, signed or mediated by using other potential means of expression, that is, by different *mediational* means. If we use the Vygotskian sociocultural formulations, the language environments involve *symbolic artefacts*, language itself being the prime example, but also *material artefacts*: books, pens, paper, computers. Regarded in this light, language learning is a mediated process in which different *mediational means* are at use: these include textbooks, classroom interaction, teacher-directed talk but also the various resources that language learners are exposed to - such as gaming or watching television - in out-of-school contexts.

As this view of learning does not regard *mediation* as transfer of information from “outside” to inside, it is natural to go on with the argument that the environment is not an “external” scene but part of the learning process itself. We could say that the environment is part of the *cognitive working space* of the person(s) involved.

### 3. **Learning: a systemic, ecological, and distributed process**

Where does learning occur, then? It was commonplace to understand the cognitive processes as happening in the individual's mind and/or language being stored and processed in its linguistic

components as the rationalist Chomskyan argumentation had it. Today, many researchers implicitly identify learning with social interaction and do not go beyond describing what happens there. Both positions base their arguments on the interpretation of social and cognitive as external and internal, and are, as I would like to argue, led astray in this. If we consider where cognizing happens, or where language learning occurs, we should not look into the black box of the (internal) mind, nor seek direct equivalents in the human brain nor identify cognizing with the behaviours in social interaction.

The views expressed within early sociocultural and dialogical perspectives, by thinkers such as Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Vygotsky, do provide some of the philosophical and psychological starting points. These views find support from other, more contemporary lines of thought. These make it possible to re-examine various issues and aspects of learning – e.g. how memory works - that were previously given a cognitivist analysis and remodel these in the frameworks such as systemic psychology (Järvilehto, 1998), ecological psychology (Gibson, 1970; van Lier, 2004) or distributed cognition (Cowley (2006; Steffensen 2009) that go beyond the individual and/or his brain.

These views suggest a need to extend the research focus beyond the individual, something that was recognised already, and importantly, by Vygotsky. The importance of other people is present in Vygotsky's notion of learning - “first external, then internal” -, in the notion that learners have a “zone of proximal development” on which they proceed, supported by others - parents, teachers and peers. The perspective is also present in the concept of *scaffolding* that draws upon Vygotskian thinking, but is developed by Jerome Bruner. As neither Vygotsky nor the contemporary research sharing this perspective assumes a Cartesian separation between mind and activity, it is clear that we do not talk about giving “input” to learners. Rather, we talk about “sharing” resources with them. As Suni (2008) has shown in her study of conversation between native and non-native speakers, native speakers can share their linguistic resources with non-natives in the joint cognitive working space that is created in talk.

Further, Järvilehto (2012) argues that the organism and its environment should not be regarded in terms of *two* systems but *one*. In not separating environment from the mental activity of the organism, Järvilehto's views provide a theoretical basis for understanding memory - and at the same time, of some aspects of language learning. In Järvilehto (1994:154-155) the metaphor of memory as an internal storage is challenged. His argument is that the processes of remembering should be studied by regarding not only the ways in which the organism itself is organized but expand the perspective to include the environments of both present and past. Memory, then, does not refer to a place, location, or storage, but rather, *remembering*, the ability to operate in the *present* environment relying on the environments in one's *past*. When we learn something new, there is a change in the organization of the organism-environment -system.

If we accept Järvilehto's (1994) argument, the metaphor of “internal language storage” with its “mental representations” should be rejected. Instead, “mental knowledge” can be considered as

*action potential*. This view may sound radical at first: against the classic cognitivist assumption of language learning as “internalisation” - acquisition of rules and items – learning now is seen as a process in which the persons develop in their “skillful linguistic action” (Cowley 2012), their potential to detect different linguistic resources present and their ability to act upon these as affordances (van Lier 2004). Today, we have not fully-developed ideas of how to reconceptualise the mental knowledge of language - and thus also the persons’ language proficiency. Still, a tentative argument can be presented that language proficiency is not to be modeled as internal, individual (semi)permanent knowledge of rules and items. Rather, the theoretical arguments seem to suggest that it might be regarded as processual knowledge which consists of essentially situated and dynamic skills that allow learners to operate across time and space.

Järvillehto's (2006) perspective of learning extends it beyond the borders of the individual organism-environment systems, that is persons: “all efficient learning presupposes the participation of both the teacher and the pupil (or the trainer and the trainee)”. Järvillehto's views resonate with other non-individualist, or “extended”, perspectives on cognition (e.g. Hutchins 1995; Cowley 2006). These argue that cognition is “spread” among the participants, is “shared” by them, or “emerges” in the interactivity between the human agent(s) and the resources / tools present. Thus also the ability to learn language – either first or additional ones – can be understood as ways in which human agents are capable of perceiving and acting in their different linguistic environments: with other people and artefacts present.

#### **4. Language: What is it that is learned?**

##### **4.1. Criticism of ‘language’ as a system**

Another set of questions is concerned with how to define ‘language’. That is, what is the object that learners set out to learn? What is the object of teaching at school and other institutions that provide instruction in languages? When one looks both at the research of language learning and the pedagogical discourses and practices, one finds several persisting metaphors and dominant conceptualisations. These include 1) the influence of written language and literacy, 2) the impact on the national language ideologies and 3) the influential Saussurean view of language as an (abstract) system. These ideas have led to the idea that learners are supposed to *internalize a system of abstract rules and contextless lexical entities* (for a critical discussion, see Dufva et al. 2011).

The written language bias of linguistic inquiry has promoted the idea that units of ‘language’ are similar to those found in written forms of language (for criticism, see, e.g., Linell 2005; see also Voloshinov 1973). A literacy-based, written language bias can also be found in the ways languages are taught and language proficiencies are assessed. The written word is strongly present in classrooms where textbooks and literacy-based ideals still rule (for a survey in the context of Finland, see e.g. Luukka et al. 2007). Also, learners’ proficiencies are still often evaluated and assessed by literacy-based standards in spite of the continuing critical discussion.

Thus it is almost inevitable that the written language bias is present also in language learners' *beliefs*. In their studies on foreign language students' conceptualisations - with learners' self-portraits, narratives and questionnaires as data - Kalaja et al. (see, e.g. Kalaja et al. 2008) have found a consistent presence of textbooks and written materials. Their findings suggest that learners see that their goal is to learn the contents of textbooks, grammars or dictionaries, that is, the decontextual descriptions of language rather than how to use language. These beliefs are no doubt advanced by the textbook-centered practices of foreign language classrooms, but they are also supported by the discourses, metaphors and vocabularies of linguistic research.

Another idea that has been much criticized during the recent years is how we have regarded languages as internally homogeneous entities, still categorically different from others. This idea of language, influenced by the ideologies of nation states, not only conceptualizes languages as bounded entities (Finnish, French, German) but also promotes a monolingual bias, an ideology that still often dominates the educational discourses and language classrooms where borrowing, hybridity and mixing are "wrong" and where use of more languages than one may be judged as pedagogically unfavourable. Further, the assumed stability and singularity of norms and the entailing policy of "one correct answer" is maintained in classrooms, exams and language tests. The alternative views speak for subjecting the norms and language use for negotiation, and for not only tolerating but also promoting 'translanguaging' in the classrooms (see, e.g., Blackledge & Creese 2010).

The third notion that needs a rediscussion is to see whether language as (an abstract) system, consisting of (e.g.) syntax, morphology, phonology & lexis should actually be seen as the goal of the language learner. It has been commonplace in the study of language learning as a process in which a language system is internalized. However, as has been pointed out by many authors since Voloshinov (1973), a system of this kind is necessarily an *artefact* produced by the linguist's analysis: a selective description of the formal properties of language use. Valuable as they may be, these artefacts are not to be confused with the actual reality of language use, or the "first-order languaging" (see, e.g. Cowley, 2005; Steffensen 2009): grammars - whether linguistic or pedagogical - inevitably select, summarise and reduce the material they choose to describe and systematize.

It should be also pointed out that the conventional linguistic and grammatical descriptions may not be adequate *at all* to describe the processes by which language users actually operate. Although it has been an exceedingly popular metaphor in (psycho)linguistic research to speak about *mental* grammars and *internal* lexicons, the metaphor may be faulty in many senses: as both the early dialogical and sociocultural arguments (see, e.g., Voloshinov 1973: 38), and the recent research seems to indicate, the nature of mental language knowledge is very much an open question. To the point, Steffensen (2009) argues that "there is no reason to posit internal representations of linguistic units". With Cowley (2011:21) we can say that language is to be found not in one's internal storage, but with "the resources of the world's language stores".

Finally, if language proficiency is seen in terms of decontextualised formal knowledge, the repercussions involve a decontextual approach in language teaching. It is at the very core of the conservative tradition of language teaching to focus the classroom practices and homework routines on decontextual practices: on memorising grammatical rules, lexical items and formal translation equivalents. Instead of seeing situated and contextual practices as their target, the learners grow to disassociate the “knowledge of language” from its use.

#### **4.2. The viewpoint of heteroglossic languaging**

The contemporary discussion around the notion of ‘language’ often stresses its *dynamic* qualities, and also, many point its *relational* character. The dynamicity - the flow-like character of language is present in the formulations of language as *languaging* (Maturana 1995; Becker 1991; for a closer discussion, see Dufva & Pietikäinen, forthcoming), as *communicative activity* (Thorne & Lantolf 2007), as *doing* (van Lier 2004) and as *practices* (Pennycook 2010). Many new formulations also frequently embed a notion of language use (and learning) as *collaborative* or *systemic* activity. If these qualities of language are forefronted, it seems to follow that, implicitly, the views also highlight *functional* and *meaningful* elements rather than formal and structural ones. In all, language is regarded as purposeful rather than mechanical process - and it may well be regarded as “the game rather than the building blocks”.

Here, I will draw particularly upon the linguistic arguments of the Bakhtin Circle and the notion of languaging. I will suggest that the goal of the learners is to appropriate language practices that are heteroglossic in nature. The implication of the notion of *heteroglossic languaging* is to see the learners’ goal not in learning a ‘language’ (as singular entity), but *learning situated usages (practices)*. In this, both the quality of doing/action and the essential diversity of language usages is highlighted. This seems to indicate that it is doing things with language and participating in different types of activities that are at the core of language learning, and should also be a focus in teaching.

With its “concretist” and contextual perspective, the arguments of the Bakhtin Circle these help us to regard *language as use* but also to claim that language use is *about something*. Arguing that language is tied to its use and its social context at large Voloshinov (1973:70) says that “words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behavior or ideology”. Thus language use relates to the ways language is used in the community but also concrete situations where people use language to express personal meanings.

The contextual emphasis is not theoretical only, but leads to a view that language in context should be at the core of language education. In his criticism of Saussurean concept of language, Voloshinov (1973: 69) actually comments on language teaching, arguing that students should become acquainted with linguistic forms in their concrete contexts and situations only. On a similar tone, also grammar is regarded as a contextual and stylistic phenomenon. As Bakhtin (2004: 12) says, “One cannot study grammatical forms without constantly considering their

stylistic significance. When grammar is isolated from the semantic and stylistic aspects of speech, it inevitably turns into scholasticism". These few comments of the early dialogism echo now in many contemporary discussion on the principles of language teaching (van Lier 2012).

A related observation is that the Saussurean preference for invariance is replaced by Bakhtin's insistence on the importance of diversity and variation, and to his view of language as *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981: 291). To simplify, this means that there is no 'language', but rather 'languages' - that is, all sorts of usages that vary across different contexts, speakers and modalities and that are liable for change and diversification over time. If, and as, language is regarded as heteroglossic, the goal of learning a language-as-a-boundaried-system is an impasse, as are the single norm policies exerted in the classroom. The view pushes us to consider language as activity, or practices that differ both contextually and modality-wise.

## 5. Language learning: Theoretical considerations and pedagogical implications

### 5.1. Language learning as recycling

To summarise the views presented above, language use and learning can be regarded *as social (inter)activity and (distributed) cognitive (inter)activity*, without making a Cartesian distinction between social and cognitive. Language use emerges in (inter)activity in an environment where different resources - both artefacts and people - will be used. The processes of (inter)activity is where and how also language learning happens, by the power of social, observable practices but also by the power of activity that is produced by distributed cognition (Cowley 2006). There is much cutting edge research available on how people in health care (Steffensen et al. 2010) or in dance (Kirsh 2010) achieve cognition in interactivity that is embodied in nature, but the context of language learning and teaching is largely unstudied.

I would like to stress in particular, however, that we should not fail to take into account the individual and personal aspects of cognizing that are for so many reasons important in the research of learning. First, we need to be able to explain the aspects that belong to each particular person as a language learner. Second, although we aim at understanding learning as interactivity, or as a distributed process, we also need to consider that this interactivity emerges from the efforts of participating agents, or subjects. Without the agents, there is no interactivity. I will refer to these personal and subjective qualities here as *agency*.

Consequently, agency can be conceptualized here as the ways in which learners (as organism-environment -systems) *perceive and act upon* the different environments they are involved in. Agency is thus not an individual property in the sense of the Cartesian, rationalist reading, but a relational faculty that has a strong personal component and background. First, as persons, we are uniquely positioned in time and space (Bakhtin 1993), and we each have different learning paths or learning histories as language learners. As language learners we also have different

preferences, abilities and qualities of how to connect to environments. Second, we are also members in different cultural and linguistic communities and in a sense, products of particular cultural-historical developments, working under particular social constraints. Third, we are also embodied agents in the universal sense of human beings: thus attached, in various ways of embodiment, to our physical environment(s). Agency is thus essentially a concept that describes the human ability to connect. But it also seems to be a useful concept as it can easily be given a “positive” reading: in other words, it may be a pedagogically wise concept that can be used to mediate an atmosphere for learning as action and activity.

Thus, language learners are regarded as agents who relationally engage with different resources provided by the linguistic environments and turn these into *affordances*. Defined originally by James J. Gibson (1979:127), affordances are “what (the environment) *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill”. Particularly van Lier (2004) has continued to argue the importance of this concepts for language education and pointed out that affordances need to be understood as *relational*. This means that linguistic resources as such are not yet affordances, what is needed is a *connection* – involving a process of noticing and perhaps reflection - between the learner and the resource. It is thus the reciprocal relationship between an agent and a resource that makes something into affordance.

To continue, learning is *not* considered as internalization. Instead, I will be using the word *appropriation* to refer to the notion of learning that highlights participation and dialogue: whatever learners learn, part of it remains “out” as a shared property of the societal and cultural languaging, while part of it becomes one’s own. This is a dialogue of recycling in the Bakhtinian sense:

“The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not , after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker get his words!), but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own. (Bakhtin, 1981: 293-294)

Thus as suggested above, there may not be any need to hypothesise an internal ‘language’ (in the sense of grammar and lexicon). Instead, agents must be allowed different processual *skills* of interactivity that help them to respond and take initiative in different types of situations, at the same time relying on their experience of situations encountered in one's own past. To go back to Bakhtin’s notion of words, we might imagine that it is not words *in their formal and decontextual sense* that we learn, but rather, how to interpret usages in concrete situation, how to use them meaningfully, but also, necessarily, how to perform different types of articulations and manual operations that are involved in language use in different modalities (speech, writing, typing etc). It needs to be said that what we can say at present is largely hypothetical, and that we

need substantial research to support the arguments, it can be suggested that the skills by which we understand and use language are largely procedural and context-sensitive, not static and abstract in nature.

As to the question of *how* humans learn languages, we have some clues, however. When we say metaphorically that language practices are "recycled", this means that they are borrowed from others through participation in diverse social practices, copied for further use and reused in appropriate situations. The view can be associated with the recent research avenues on *imitation, copying and repetition*. As the neurological evidence shows, individual agents have a mechanism, the mirror neurons (Arbib 2002) for imitating and copying the others' behaviours, an ability that is not exclusively human (see, e.g. Gross 2006 for the primates' capacity to imitate). Suni (2008) shows how interaction between second language learner and native speaker can be seen as a forum of shared attention, shared cognition and as a step for the learner to share the "native" language repertoire by negotiations of meaning and repetition.

Importantly, one needs to note that repetition should not be regarded as *mechanical* copying. It is also, to varying degrees, regeneration and relocalisation. Language practices are appropriated, made one's own, "populated with own intentions" as Bakhtin (1981) put it. Each speaker has a unique voice in the sense of articulation, but also more metaphorically: words will be adjusted with the perspective of the speaker, they will be uttered in the contexts other than the original and they may be modified to serve quite different purposes. Thus speakers in many ways - both meaningwise and articulationwise - personalize the public linguistic resources when they add them to their personal repertoires. Linguistic resources undergo "fertile mimesis", to borrow Pennycook's (2010) expression. There will be modifications, by creative and playful practices, innovations by novel usages, hybridity by converging usages, diversified use when communities diverge and also "copying errors" by random or repeated mistakes.

## **5.2. Language pedagogy**

The way to develop language education in institutional contexts is to reconsider many of the fundamental metaphors and also, many of the practices. The ways of speaking are powerful: if we stop using metaphors such as learning as "internalization" and language as "grammar and lexicon" and start using wordings that see learning as "activity", "doing", and "participation" and language as practices, this also gives the learners different expectations. However, in addition, the learners need to be engaged in activities and practices: doing things in language, through language and with language. This can be done in any classroom, but the language pedagogy could - and should - give more thought to how to combine the practices at school with out-of-school activities.

Thus to reconsider the conceptualisations of language and learning means to give some thought on the practices of pedagogy and teaching as well. It is obvious enough that there are several good examples, some of them dating back for a long time - and that in some cases everyday

practices may have been ahead of the theoretical developments. It would seem timely now to establish a firm connection between theory and praxis to develop both: it is a dedicated goal of (critical) applied linguistics to see that not only are the outcomes of research “applied”, but that theoretical developments are genuinely informed by societal circumstances and existing practices. The theoretical views discussed above resonate with research and/or pedagogy on, e.g. language awareness (van Lier 1995), authenticity, extended notions of learning as formal and informal (Benson & Reinders, eds., 2012), learning in virtual environments (Zheng & Newgarden, 2012) and various others.

With the enhancement of the learners’ agency as the main goal and the development and sophistication of their linguistic repertoires in mind, the pedagogies should nurse aspects that encourage participation. For that, both perception and action need to be addressed: on one hand, to enhance the ability to notice and reflect different features of both language and learning is important, and, on the other hand, the skills of action and participation are similarly necessary. I will sketch below some aspects that might be highlighted in contemporary pedagogies.

*Take heed of learning opportunities.* First, learners should notice the linguistic resources around them and learn to reflect upon different matters that are linguistic, interactive or cultural in nature. Thus language awareness is precisely as social as it is a cognitive phenomenon: learners are encouraged to reflect upon their development – in context. As the beliefs of learners may act as tools for further action (Alanen, 2003), the “negative” ones work against learning. Far too often learners simply miss learning opportunities because they are “misled” by conventional notions of language and learning. Learners may see themselves as “poor learners”, the language skills as “non-useful”, or the language in question as “unpleasant” (see, e.g., Kalaja et al 2011).

*Expand your learning environments.* One popular misconception is that learning of languages takes place at school and/or it is process led by a teacher (Aro 2009). As many new directions, both in research and in pedagogy, point out, learning does not happen in school only, but that informal and formal contexts and ways of learning can be mixed and mingled. Thus the learners should understand that also they can bridge the gap bringing in their knowledge and skills acquired in other contexts and environments.

*Become a language detective.* Many learners need tasks that activate their noticing and make them *detect* linguistic resources and opportunities for learning in their different environments: particularly not in the school or institutional contexts only, but in different face-to-face and virtual contexts of their everyday life. From being a novice language detective one can go on to becoming a proper Sherlock Holmes with his skills of *deductive reasoning* and sharp intelligence. Such tasks that invite learners to compare, dissect, find patterns and regularities at the same time observing irregularities and abnormalities work towards heightened language awareness (van Lier 1995).

*Become an anthropologist.* Learners could be trained as anthropologists: sending them to do field-work in virtual and non-virtual environments alike, to make observations of cultural behaviors and the underlying norms, to take notes or write diaries. In all tasks of this kind, the learners work in specific environments with specific types of languaging, always tied to the context. By observing language use, students learn *about* language use and its diversity and variation - which can be subjected to discussion in the classroom - but they also learn actual language use themselves.

*Become a participant.* From observation and along with observation any learner needs to become an increasingly active participant in various contexts and modalities. What are the means of encouraging agency, participation and dialogue? Collaborative tasks, group work, crowdsourcing, social media... and also simply talk. The new developments in linguistics and cognitive science that aim at dismantling the individualist view of learning are also rather unanimous in their view of interactivity and collaboration being a considerable strength in many different types of tasks.

*Do languaging.* While it may be futile to erase the conceptualization of a 'language' - after all this is how different educational institutions conceptualise and practice it, it may be useful to encourage learners towards seeing language as doing, action and activity. Doing *is* - if we believe arguments that have been presented above - learning. Pedagogically, 'languaging' could simply mean doing all sorts of things with language. This does not refer to 'productive' activities alone, such as speaking or writing. Also 'receptive' activity, such reading, listening or watching is active in nature - and is thus languaging (for active view on perception, see, e.g., Noë, 2004).

*Do multimodal languaging.* To continue, saying that language use in different modalities is important we in a way we go back to the traditional Four Skills (of reading, writing, speaking, and listening). This view positions itself against teaching where formal decontextualized knowledge is given a primacy but it also raises questions against views that are biased either towards literacy or oral communication skills. The heteroglossic, contextual view suggests - as do also observations on contemporary language use - that not only different modality-specific, but also *multimodal* usages should be at the core of instruction.

*Do metalanguaging.* Finally, a word of caution may be at place: the above view does not exclude the traditional grammar or the acquisition of theoretical or structural knowledge of language. Rather, the perspective gives these a new position and imagines new types of activities. Thus it is almost inevitable that we need to see metalinguistic activities a part of our language curricula. However, in these activities one should stress tasks that tap into the learners' language awareness and develop their skills in noticing, reflection and analysis. Those views that speak of grammar as 'grammaring' are a good example (e.g. Larsen-Freeman 2003; van Lier 2007).

## **Conclusion**

By rethinking concepts of language and learning and by regenerating the pedagogical practices and materials, we invite the learners to “enter upon the stream of communication” as Voloshinov (1973:81) said. Ideally, what could be achieved is “distributed classrooms” - an idea that the learners’ trajectories could reach across informal and formal contexts. As to the learners, the aim is that each learner has a potential to develop a strong personal language learner agency that helps them to proceed towards what they have chosen as their own personal goal - either an institutional one of a proficiency diploma or a degree, or a more personal one of becoming a member in their chosen language community. The following example, coming from an interview of a language learner, may illustrate how languages are best learned - along doing:

”I’ve been lost and found my way in French, I’ve taught myself how to make *goulash* in German, I’ve discussed relationships in English and I’ve cleaned fish in Swedish”.  
(Translated from Finnish). (Dufva et al. 1996)

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[https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/index\\_html/dialogues](https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/index_html/dialogues)

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