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Multilingual But Monolingual

Claims and Contradicitons in the Practice of Pedagogy within Adult Education in the Field of German as a Second Language

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“Biting off piece by piece, arduously, tenaciously working on the language of the others. Anthropophagically learning the dominant language. Devouring the dominant language as a response to the demand to learn it. Not considering language as home. But rather living homelessly in the German language, or better yet: discharging the idea of home and occupying and arranging the language. It is not *inhabiting* that is chosen as a verb, but *occupying*. Antagonistic agency. The language as means of presuming a changed reality. Anthropophagic utopia. Placing the world in the world through language. Changed. Antagonistic utopian agency in and with language, in and with the hegemonic language. Deploying distance as a useful precondition and grasping language at a meta-level in its constitutive function in relation to reality. Speaking and negotiating and reflecting on language, so that they recursively

have a changing effect on the reality, in which they take place. Performativity. And anthropophagy." (Salgado 2011)

Our approach to the theme of this conference is informed by the research and development project "German as a Second Language as Critical Pedagogy." The project explored the relationship between pedagogical practice within the educational field involving teaching German as a Second Language to adults and examined the tension between two specific approaches. One with the aim of facilitating the assimilation of the migrant (women) learners to the existing dominant structures and norms and the other with the aim of expanding the learners' capacity for taking action themselves using methods of empowerment and self-empowerment. The project's exploration placed these two seemingly contrasting approaches within the neoliberal and migration society context and critically assessed empowerment and self-empowerment as concepts, as well as of the aim expand the learners' capacity for taking action.

The project took place in 2011, and was executed by maiz - autonomous center by and for migrant women in Linz, Upper Austria in cooperation with the Department of Education at the University of Innsbruck and the division for German as a Foreign and Second Language at the Department of German Studies at the University of Vienna.

Before reporting on this project, I would like to present the place from which I speak and write. Or at least try:

When speaking about working in the field of German as a second language, I repeatedly say that my reference is practical work. Praxis, practical experience: that is to be understood both as action and reflection. Proceeding from here, and embedded in a collective,

challenges are recognized and named as such, questions raised, theoretical approaches and positions further reflected on, processed, merged, unfolded, related with experience. Insights emerge. At times, perspectives for political actions and interventions are outlined. But this needn't always be the case. Other questions emerge. Again and again.

In thinking, speaking and writing about the insights and processes of research work, I create a WE, which includes me in the group of those who are interviewed in the research project and at the same time points to a state of non-belonging. A we that calls itself into question. We and I as migrant constitute a plural here. A strategically conceived and constructed identity. The identity as migrant as a counter-model, as the designation of an oppositional site (FeMigra 1994). Not essentialist. Strategic.

I am not speaking, writing, thinking about the teachers of German as a second language, but about us, teachers of German as a second language in relation to our professional-pedagogical actions.

The creation of a we to offer reflexivity as an option and at the same time as a challenge for reflexivity. Among other things, my presence as I migrant in this we does not function as an alibi, instead it is disruptive, a reference to a structurally empty space. And at the same time, it extends an invitation, it is an offer. For dialogue. For there are hardly any migrants working as instructors in this field.

It is a we that questions itself and intervenes.

Because this we critically examines what is commonly understood as a given regarding our actions in our everyday professional lives as teachers of German as a second language. It also uncovers practices that reproduce dominant practices without giving it a second

thought. Within our own speech it also uncovers the perpetuation of uneven power relations in the migration society and the lack of problematizing one's own position of privilege.

The we calls itself into question, seeks reflexivity and self-reflexivity, but it is by no means self-destructive. It recognizes our professional competences and our knowledge, our courage and our involvement and it reinforces this by attempting to expand the existing spaces of professional dialogue and involvement. This we that has been disrupted by a vacant space extends an invitation to engage in a dialogue.

I will now speak about the project. The project was the first step toward developing, or more precisely re-conceptualizing, the curriculum for German as a second language in adult education and teaching material, as well as a program offering further education for teachers of German as a second language in Austria. During the first phase of the project (2011), we were concerned with laying out the basic guidelines and principles for the development work that was to follow. We studied theoretical concepts and concrete practices of the courses in German as a second language that were currently being offered (within Austria). The results presented here are based on thirteen interviews conducted both with groups and with individuals, twenty-five teachers and heads of projects in four different provinces in Austria.

In the course of evaluating the material collected in the process, maiz noted, mapped, analyzed, and interpreted various themes (both present and absent). In my contribution today I will focus on the subject of multilingualism. I will say something about the analysis and the interpretations carried out on this subject as part of the project. I will also juxtapose the concept of migration-social multilingualism, as formulated by Paul Mecheril and Inci Dirim,

with the idea of heterolingual address as put forward by Naoki Sakai and reflect on the possible further consequences for educational work in the field of German as second language.

Multilingualism With a Monolingual Habitus

Throughout the project the statements made by teachers on the topic of multilingualism were interpreted in connection with the conceptions and contradictions regarding pedagogical practice in the field of German as a second language that the data analysis revealed.

Learning German is empowering?

In all of the interviews, special meaning is attributed to learning the hegemonic language German with regard to the participation in social life and shaping a self-determined life in Austria. An overview of the recurring statements on the relationship between empowerment and learning the dominant language that was made in interviews could be structured as follows:

Learning German empowers because the learners thus have or assume "more ability to act" (within a legal context, the German term "handlungsfähig," which means the "ability" or "capacity" to act, also means 'legal competence'); learning German empowers because the learners thus "live with greater self-determination"; learning German empowers become the learners are thus able to find a place in society." Such claims are juxtaposed with contradictions that are to be elucidated in the research report. In my contribution today I will focus on the first claim-contradiction cited, since here, too, the issue of multilingualism is addressed.

Before addressing the issue of multilingualism, I would like to speak about a certain recurring figure that illustrated the way the

teachers and heads of projects spoke about the goal of expanding the capacity to act. The idea that one needs a knowledge of German to be able "to go outside" or to be "capable of acting outside" appears again and again in connection with the idea of an empowerment through hegemonic language. Going outside is presented as leaving an imaginary inside.

German classes are characterized by the goal of empowering those learning to act independently outside the imaginary inside. An imaginary inside a situation of dependency. When conceived in this manner, however, German classes also represent an inner space, or perhaps an in-between space. The underlying assumptions of this — that those learning are incapable of independently living, experiencing, organizing, structuring, creating life outside, and that the goal of German classes is to empower learners to do so— legitimize and justify the existence of the internal or in-between space of "German class."

This inside is neither described nor named in the interviews, there is only mention of the outside: the public sphere with all its spaces, consumer sites, institutions such as schools, hospitals, doctors' offices or cultural institutions: what they all have in common is that they all assume a certain capacity for acting independently in places such as these. The migrant learners are denied (not always, but in most of the interviews) the capacity to act independently within this hegemonic outside, mainly because they have no (or insufficient) knowledge of the hegemonic language. When viewed from the perspective of feminist and antiracist demands for participation in creating and having a part in public space / public life in Western Europe, descriptions of a monolingually structured outside that can only be entered through an act of independence imply that the public sphere is a necessary outside (or more

precisely as an outside that has been imposed upon those learning as something that is necessary).

The (supposedly feminist) goal of empowerment in order to enable independent interaction in public space is linked to un-naming (*Entnennung*). The learning migrants' capacity to move independently in public space, in spite of their limited knowledge of the hegemonic language, and to engage in social interaction there could be based on a "knowledge" of the necessity and correctness of a certain form of interaction in public space in western European societies. Especially with respect to (women) migrants who are learners, standard narratives on "isolation of migrants through patriarchic force"should be taken into consideration (Mohanty 1991, cit. in Brunner/Hrzán 2009, p. 97). In this sense, it is important to critically assess this goal of empowering migrants to leave an imaginary inside and enter a necessary outside where they are able to act independently.

One could ask whether this is a hidden liberation impetus (Castro Varela/Dhawan 2004, p. 205).

One could also ask to what extent this goal is influenced or even made possible by two standard narratives: the interpretation of (women) migrants as the victims of alleged patriarchal force of isolation and the narrative of the "migrant life" (not just referring to women) that takes place in isolation from a (allegedly homogenous) majority society. It is also interesting to note that in everyday discourses the supposedly isolated life of women migrants is described as a life "outside."

In the interviews it is claimed that the migrant women who are learning the language need this hegemonic language to "go outside." Life in this imagined "outside" cannot be "mastered"

without this language. Life in this imagined "outside" is structured in a monolingual way.

To describe migrant women learners as "impotent" because of their lacking knowledge of the German language (as seen from the perspective of the instructors) and to make learning the hegemonic language a prerequisite for being capable of action would mean not taking into account the fact that the learners are not without language (Krumm 2002).

Un-naming the Evident

In the interviews, hospitals or doctors' offices are offered as examples of such "outside" places, where learners are supposed to act independently. Two interviews addressed the problems of using children as interpreters. Both passages have an appellative character and, at first glance, they appear to offer convincing arguments that support the clam that learning the hegemonic language is an inevitable precondition for living a dignified and independent life. However, questioning the presentation of the monolingual habitus of (the Austrian) society as a given somewhat weakens this argument. It does not relativize the inappropriateness of children functioning as interpreters (particularly in certain instances like accompanying parents to doctors' visits)—on the contrary, it is an appeal to develop solutions and alternatives, which also include learning the hegemonic language German. In both interviews, the option of "learning German" is presented as the only solution to the "problem." There is no mention of any other solution (such as multilingual staff within the health system, the possibility of offering free translation services, etc.) This argumentation may be telling of their own implication within a discourse that assumes a monolingual society as a given, and more precisely, also constructs it as the truth.

The implicit affirmation of monolingual habitus (Gogolin 1994) stands in opposition to the approach of recognizing the "other languages" of the learners that were repeatedly associated with the concept of multilingualism by the interviewers. It is striking that the instructors were hardly able to report on the implementation of the demand for multilingualism in connection with teaching German as a second language. The need for methods and material was recognized and addressed while the latent contradiction was not dealt with in the interviews.

Assuming that this presents a contradiction led to a closer examination of the instances in which the teachers and heads of projects mentioned multilingualism. Can we take the claim "of course they have a language" (in the quote below) as an indication of a stance that acknowledges the "other" languages of the migrants in the classes? Does the statement "of course they have a language" mean that the teachers are actively involved in supporting the multilingualism of those learning? Or can it be understood as simply stating a fact? Does simply mentioning multilingualism allow us to assume that it is an issue that needs no further discussion?

"And this is not the only key to integration, of course, once many more other things are required but what we can impart to them now in the language, in the German courses, is this tool of language, that they ... that happens to me again and again that I ... the language – of course they have a language... German, that we really give them this tool of German so that they can also really model their everyday life as they would like and that they can also realize what they want and the possibilities they have and therefore also live more independently, yes ..."

This passage contains a number of statements that are relevant for tracking the contradictions that structure the analysis of the material:

1. The teacher speaks of the German language as "the language"; she quickly corrects herself, and goes on to complete her statement by adding the "obvious" fact that the learners can speak.
2. The passage also claims that integration does not hinge merely on learning the hegemonic language.
3. The hegemonic language is described as a tool that the teachers impart upon the learners; this implies that German as a second language is something "external" that is passively received, yet still leads to the ability to act.
4. The ability to live independently is attributed to knowledge of the hegemonic language.
5. (Only) through knowledge of the German language are the learners able to recognize what they want and what they are able to do.

The emphasis on the function of the German language as a tool is telling of prioritizing an understanding of language as an instrument that, firstly, can/should be implemented consciously and for a specific purpose and, secondly, carries the trait of an object that is external for its users, which they are not involved in constructing, but instead is "imparted" upon them as a tool. Due to time constraints, I have chosen to not discuss in detail the observation(s) concerning the function of language within the interviews, but to focus the attention on multilingualism.

Multilingualism as Opposed to the Imperative of Monolingualism

Learning the hegemonic language is seen as a prerequisite for the emergence of capability to act; it is thus associated with a neglect of the fact that the learners actually have a language. (Krumm 2002)

The statement "Of course they have a language" would be exemplary of a contradiction between the obvious advocacy of a multilingual education and the imperative of monolingualism. The acknowledgment and promotion of multilingualism stands in contrast to a deficiency-oriented view of migrants in terms of their knowledge of languages (Krumm 2004; Gogolin 1994; 2001; 2008). Following this understanding, the field of German as a second language may be able to examine the question of how to grasp the migrants' and minorities' richness of language not as a hindrance but as a useful resource.

The approach of the multilingualism of the migration society (Mecheril/Dirim 2010) differs from positions that refer to a richness resulting from linguistic diversity (Krumm 2004), (Gogolin 1994; 2001; 2008), (Barkowski 2008). In their approach, the concept of multilingualism as a condition in which multiple languages are available to a person or system (Brakowski/Krumm 2010) is expanded by also considering the different variations of one specific language. They speak of internal multilingualism, which points to the fact that languages do not exist as static entities (languages as instruments and reflections of social developments) and at the same time that multilingualism requires that these varieties be used in a manner appropriate to the situation. Multilingualism is associated with a critical analysis of the existing power structure and the related social and societal dimensions of languages (Dirim/Mecheril 2010, p. 103).

Language is described as a space in which social distinctions take place. Referring to Bourdieu, the authors claim that access to social contexts does not just depend on the linguistic competences of individuals but first and foremost on the recognition of the language or the linguistic variant. The effectiveness of language is seen as being dependent on political, cultural, social and legal conditions. Because of these conditions, different values are attributed to languages and linguistic varieties. Put differently, the approach to migrant education implies a critical relation to the structure in which *the* value of languages is hierarchically ordered (ibid. p. 102).

According to the authors, there is a common understanding and notion of an internal consistency that enables one to clearly distinguish "the language" from other languages. To deal with the social and societal dimensions of language would also mean reflecting on the question of creating an alleged "we," which speaks a national language. The multilingualism of the migration society is especially concerned with school as an institution and describes it as having a part in the production of differing values between linguistic practices within a migration society, and as a place that continues to foster the notion that one variation ("the standard language") is the legitimate national language (ibid. p. 108). Giving priority to a language is brought into relation with the historical process of the idea of modern nations. Accordingly, monolingualism must be viewed as something ideological. From the perspective of a monolingual standard language, forms of mixing or alternating between languages, such as code switching, are deemed as signs of deficiency and/or as threats.

Here, attention is directed to an affinity between the critique of monolingualism in the approach of multilingualism of the migrant society and the critique put forward by Naoki Sakai of the

prevailing translation regime. This is a regime of translation in which one language is represented as being external to another language. He refers to this regime as the regime of "homolingual address."

According to Sakai, "homolingual address" derives its legitimacy from envisioning a modern, international world as a number of sovereign states that border on one another and recognize each other as nation states. The unity of a national language is taken as a given and is thereby linked to constructing the notion of a homogeneous national community (Sakai 2010).

As in the approach of multilingualism in connection with migrant society, the author emphasizes that the idea of a unity of national language was fundamental for creating national subjectivity. According to Sakai, the argumentation that a homogeneous national language is necessary in order to realize democratic ideals would not hold today, because the nations are populated by subjects that are heterogeneous in comparison to the supposed homogeneity of the nation.

In the pedagogy of migration, which constitutes the framework of the multilingualism of migration society, migration is described as a phenomenon that addresses the boundaries of belonging, the boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside,' between 'we' and 'not we.' The pedagogy of migration is interested in the question of a natio-ethno-cultural order of belonging, "[...] in which people are distinguished and positioned in such a way that they are ascribed different values in regards to how they are acknowledged and their capacity to act" (Mecherli 2010, p. 15). This addresses pedagogy's contribution to the (re)production of a natio-ethno-cultural order of belonging and also investigates the possibilities that exist for changing this order, as well as alternatives that can be developed to

transform this order. In discussing the possibilities of change – following a deconstructivist theory of difference –, the focus and attention are placed on the phenomena of multiple belongings, border crossing, hybridity, and transcontextuality.

The goal is to weaken and to subvert thought and action that classifies, homogenizes, categorizes and fixates. (Mecheril et al. 2010). In both positions (pedagogy of migration and a critique of "homolingual address" and advocacy of "heterolingual address"), it can be noted that the boundaries of difference between the national languages is addressed. Both the notion that the unity of a language is a given as well as identifying it as a national language are addressed as problematic issues. The approach dealing with the multilingualism of the migration society also addresses the issue of transgressing the internal boundaries of a supposed homogeneous language. Like Naoki Sakai, I am inclined to assume that addressing these pedagogical issues within the context of teaching German as a second language to adults poses a challenge to everyone involved in the learning process, particularly by focusing on meaning and on what can (and cannot) be understood. And, within the context of migrant education, the challenge is more specifically related to dealing with the meaning and functions of things that are clear and unclear, and based on classifying and hierarchical orders

Communication and interaction do not just take place on the basis of understanding but also when something is not completely understood, or misunderstood. Here, too, I am referring by extension to Sakai (2010). Here the idea is to cultivate the utopia of an educational practice within the field of German as a second language that would not just seek to translate non-understanding into understanding but would rather see non-understanding as part of the interaction processes in migrant society and to critically

examine this against the backdrop of racism and sexism: how does this non-understanding happen? How should a member of a discriminated minority strategically deal with the hegemonic non-understanding and with the hegemonic manner in which understanding is structured?

An educational practice committed to promoting multilingualism of learners and to contributing to the creation of a multi-lingual society must be aware of the fact that this requires actions and positions against a monolingual imperative and that criticism of monolingualism calls for and implies a critical position vis-a-vis monolingually structured nation states. A critique of the nation state, questioning boundaries and orders of belonging also means addressing unequal power structures and ultimately calling into question one's own privileged position within the dominant system. A critical note on the pedagogy of migration: when dealing with dominant unequal power relations, migration pedagogy does not transgress the boundary between deconstructive questioning and capitalism critique. It fails to address economic conditions, production relations or the division of labor. In contrast, Naoki Sakai considers the accumulation of capital as one of the main pillars on which the development of a modern inter-national world is built. The second pillar he mentions is the classification of global humanity in nation states (that is to say the production of national subjects). It would thus be impossible to apply Sakai's concepts to a critical analysis of capitalism based on the assumption of the existence of national subjects. Such an analysis would have to overlook the fact that both of the main pillars are accomplices and work together. The relevance of this argumentation for our work in the field of German as a second language becomes clear in the reversal of this idea: a critical analysis of the production of national subjectivity cannot be built upon the naturalization of economic

relations and movements (such as the accumulation of capital). After all, both the pillars upon which the development of the modern inter-national world is built are accomplices and work together.

Advocating multilingualism means a radicalization of the understanding of democracy and subsequently a radicalization of pedagogic practice, which, in its current self-understanding, wants to see itself as democratic. The question regarding democratic subjects (subjectivities??) must be addressed in current migration societies. It should be asked whether the learners are being addressed as democratic political subjects when the instructors speak about multilingualism or seek to promote multilingualism.

Let us return to one of the contradictions that was assumed to exist in one of the interviews cited above, namely between advocating and valorizing multilingualism and furthering a monolingual habitus. The reflections offered in the text have (hopefully) given this contradiction a new shape that is: without criticizing the monolingual constitution of the nation state, that is without critically questioning and undermining the marginalizing power of the regimes that implement and legitimize both the boundaries of the nation state and those of the national languages, advocating multilingualism remains a pseudo-resistant speech that cannot bring about any transformation of the given conditions.

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