Third Culture and Language Education

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11.1 Introduction

In language education there has always been a tension between the conventionally agreed upon and collectively shared ways of making meaning by members of a given culture, and the individual idiosyncratic uses of language by speakers and writers. In foreign language education, there is an additional tension within language learners who are by definition performers of a first language (L1) and a first culture (C1) and are becoming also performers of an L2 and C2. In both cases, there might be a conflict between the needs of the individual and the group, the demands of the self and the other. It is to break out of these dualities – individual–social, self–other, native–nonnative speaker, C1–C2 – that the concept of 'third culture' was conceived. Third culture has been conceptualized under various names in various disciplines in the social sciences. In the following, I pass in review the various ways in which thirdness has been theorized and applied to language and literacy education. I then take stock of current structuralist and emergent post-structuralist approaches to the relation of language and culture in language education. I finally discuss the future of thirdness as an educational principle in a plurilingual and pluricultural world.

11.2 Thirdness in Language Education

As a cross-disciplinary field of research, language education has drawn inspiration from various theories of Thirdness in semiotics (Barthes, 1977; Peirce, 1898/1955), philosophy and literary criticism (Bakhtin, 1981), cultural studies (Bhabha, 1994), foreign language education (Kramsch, 1993a) and literacy pedagogy (Gutierrez et al, 1999; Kostogriz, 2002). I consider each of these in turn.

11.2.1 Third meaning and Semiotic Relationality

Even though the concept of third culture has been used in general education mostly in a psychological or social sense, in the case of language education it is worth remembering its semiotic antecedents and the role that thirdness plays in the creation of symbolic meaning through linguistic and visual signs.

In his famous little essay 'The Third Meaning' (1977), the French literary critic and semiologist Roland Barthes reflects on the meaning of some stills from the Soviet filmmaker Sergei M. Eisenstein. He notices that beyond the referential meanings communicated by the image (objects, people, settings) and the conventional, symbolic meanings recognized by every viewer (a shower of gold symbolizing wealth; a fist clenched in anger symbolizing the working class) there is a third meaning – 'evident, erratic, obstinate' (p. 53) that focuses the viewer's eyes on the signifier itself. For instance, the man's fist that is not raised in protest but left hanging naturally along the trouser leg as if in clandestine revolt; the touching discrepancy between the excessive mass of a woman's hair and her tiny raised fist. As poets have noticed, this kind of meaning is fleeting, subtle, it 'escapes' easily (Widdowson, 2003), but it affects the viewer aesthetically and emotionally. This third meaning Barthes calls *signifiance*. By contrast with *signification* that fills the signified with reference or symbolism, signifiance remains on the level of the signifier, of the form itself. By drawing attention to itself, the language or the image requires a '"poetical" grasp' (Barthes, 1977: 53) that can trigger an emotional response (p. 59).[1] In applied linguistics today, third meaning is studied in research on style, whether it be literary style in stylistics (Widdowson, 1992) or, speech styles in sociolinguistics (Johnstone, 1996; Coupland, 2007) (see below section 11.2.2). Language teachers draw attention to thirdness when they point out the meaning of putting on a posh accent, or adopting a formal style when writing academic essays.

Even though Barthes claims that *signifiance* 'carries a certain emotion', emotion is of course not in the signifier itself, but in the particular relation between the viewer and the signifier. It is precisely on this relation that the American semiotician Charles S. Peirce built his theory of signs (Peirce, 1898/1955). In Peirce's semiotic system, a sign, such as a word or an image, not only has an object to which it is related, but it also evokes in the mind of its receiver another sign, which Peirce calls 'the interpretant'. It is through the interpretant that signs have meaning rather than just signification. The activity of the interpretant is what Peirce calls 'Thirdness'. If Firstness is the mode by which we apprehend reality and gain immediate consciousness of incoming bits of information, Secondness is the mode by which we react to this information, and by which we act and interact with others within a social context. Thirdness, on the other hand, is a relational process-oriented disposition, that is built in time through habit, and that allows us to perceive continuity in events, to identify patterns and make generalizations. All three modes of being coexist at any given time, but only Thirdness is able to make meaning out of the other two and to build a sense of identity and permanence.

If Barthes' semiological theory foregrounded style as the third dimension of communication, Peirce's theory of signs underscores the relational nature of this third dimension. Meaning according to Peirce emerges

– by relating linguistic, visual, acoustic signs to other signs along paths of meaning that are shared or at least recognized as such by most socialized members of the community.

– by relating signs to prior signs whose meanings have accumulated through time in the imagination of the people who use them or see them used.
– by relating signs to human intentionalities. Because signs are used for a purpose (they are 'motivated'), they are intended to evoke quite specific interpretants in the minds of their recipients.

Signs in one culture are not limited to the meanings historically given to them by members of one social community. In heterogeneous environments like the large urban centres of the world, signs may evoke in different people other interpretants than those intended. They are constantly resemioticized by outsiders who have come in, by insiders who have gone out and come into contact with other cultures and who now give different meaning to the traditional signs in their original community. Peirce's concept of Thirdness has proven useful in educational linguistics to researchers who, like Kramsch (2000) or van Lier (2004) propose a semiotic and ecological approach to language education (see section 11.2.2). Language teachers can benefit from teaching culture not as a collection of objects, fact and events, but as a system of signs that has a logic of its own (see Note 1).

11.2.2 The Thirdness of Dialogue

If, for Peirce, thirdness stresses the relationality of signs and meanings, for literary philosophers like Bakhtin (1981) it highlights the relationality of Self and Other**.** How do we know when a sign in a foreign culture is to be read as the expression of one individual's purpose or as the collective purpose of, say, a national community, since a person can act either as an individual or as a member of a group? Bakhtin eschews the dichotomy altogether by insisting that the Self has no meaning, cannot even define itself without the Other.[2] The Bakhtin scholar Michael Holquist (1990) calls this relationality 'dialogism'. He characterizes the thirdness of Bakhtin's dialogism as follows.

– Dialogism is a differential relation. Part of becoming a member of another community is precisely the process of constructing your own identity in relation to that of others. We are what others are not. We perceive the world through the time/space of the self but also through the time/space of the other.
– Dialogism is not only relation, it is always response. For Bakhtin, cultural and personal identity do not precede the encounter, but rather they get constructed in language through the encounter with others. An utterance is always a response to an actual or potential utterance that preceded it. We are the role we are playing at this particular moment in response to the roles played by others. The individual, like the sign in Peirce's system, does not exist in any other way than as a response to a sign with other signs.
– Dialogism is not only a relation to the other in space, but also to others and other manifestations of self in time. Dialogue, composed of utterances and responses, links not only present to present, but present to past and future.

Within the same utterance I can at once enact my present relationship to my interlocutor, evoke past relationships and mortgage our future. More important than either the utterance or the response taken separately, is the relation between my words and prior and future words.

– Dialogue is, for Bakhtin, a triadic relationship between a Self, an Other, and a remembered/anticipated Self and Other. The only way to find our own voice, he says, is to have a double-voice, i.e. to see and express ourselves both through our own perspective, from the inside, so to speak, and through the perspective of others, from the outside. He calls the ability of speakers to see themselves from the outside *transgredience.* Through transgredience, speakers develop a distance to themselves and their words, i.e. an awareness of stylistic variation and an ability to subvert the 'unitary' language of political and marketing discourse.

Michael Holquist explains the relation Bakhtin establishes between thirdness and transgredience:

The thirdness of dialogue frees my existence from the very circumscribed meaning it has in the limited configuration of self/other relations available in the immediate time and particular place of my life. For in later times, and in other places, there will always be other configurations of such relations, and in conjunction with *that* other, my self will be differently understood. This degree of thirdness outside the present event insures the possibility of whatever transgredience I can achieve toward myself. (1990: 38)

Bakhtin's dialogic principle has inspired scholars in cultural studies (e.g. Butler, 1997) and in language and literacy education (e.g. Ball and Freedman, 2004), especially those concerned about promoting social justice and giving immigrant and minority children a voice in the public educational system. Language learners can find in Bakhtin an incentive to question the texts they read as to who is talking, for whom and in answer or reaction to what or whom.

11.2.3 The Third Space of Enunciation

The interest for Bakhtin among language educators coincides with a realization that language education need not be tied to structuralist theories of language, that view language as separate from reality, but would benefit from drawing on post-structuralist theories, that view speakers and writers as constructing through discourse the social and cultural reality that in turn constructs them. The Indian British cultural critic Homi Bhabha is one of those post-structuralist thinkers. His notion of *Third Space* (Bhabha, 1994) complements on the discourse level Peirce's and Bakhtin's theories of thirdness.

According to Bhabha, culture is located in the discursive practices of speakers and writers living in post-colonial times in complex industrialized societies.

Cultural difference is built into the very condition of communication because of the necessity to interpret, not just to send and receive messages.

> The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. (Bhabha, 1994: 36)

For Bhabha, Third Space defines the position of the speaker of an utterance who both refers to events in the outside world and, in so doing, constitutes him/herself as a 'subject of enunciation', i.e. as a speaker/writer who is at the same time a social actor. This position is historically contingent, socially larger than the individual, and therefore beyond any single individual's consciousness. In other words, we cannot be conscious of our interpretive strategies at the same moment as we activate them. They are the unconsciously acquired discourse practices that speak through us and that constitute our essential cultural difference. The encounter between two cultures always entails a discontinuity in the traditionally continuous time of a person's or a nation's discourse practices. For example, a non-native speaker living in a host country might not have the same discourse regarding his/ her host nation's history as a native national. The inclusion of the foreign national's perspective makes it possible to envisage, for example, a national anti-nationalist view of a people's history.[3] Understanding someone from another culture requires an effort of translation from one perspective to the other, that manages to keep both in the same field of vision.

Cultural difference gets articulated, says Bhabha, in the 'highly contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation' (p. 37). We always say more than we think we do because part of the meaning of what we say is already given by our position in the social structure, by our relative power, and by the subject positions we occupy in social encounters. Because it carries with it the traces of our multiple positions in the social order, the cultural space carved out by our words and those of others is, in modern societies, an eminently heterogeneous, indeed contradictory and ambivalent space in which third perspectives can grow in the margins of dominant ways of seeing. Bhabha calls this space Third Space.

It is because of the heterogeneity of this Third Space, that ensures fluidity of signs and symbols, that cultural change is conceivable:

> Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, . . . constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (Bhabha, 1994: 37)

For Bhabha, the speaking subject is, as Bakhtin would say, 'full of the voices of others', but he/she reinscribes earlier voices into her own. This reinscription is a

political act in itself. Many post-structuralist thinkers have elaborated on the notion of the appropriation, translation and resignification of signs (see e.g. Weedon, 1987; Butler, 1997). Their ideas have inspired researchers in second language education like Norton (1995), Kramsch (2000), Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), Kinginger (2004), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004). In English language teaching, the debate about the right of non-native speakers to appropriate for themselves the English language and give it other meanings than native speakers would, owes a great deal to the kind of third space Homi Bhabha talks about.

11.2.4 The Third Culture of the Foreign Language Learner

The theories of Thirdness discussed above have been used to question the traditional dichotomy native speaker (NS)/non-native speaker (NNS) in language learning (e.g. Kramsch, 1993b, 1997). The concept of *third culture* was proposed as a metaphor for eschewing other dualities on which language education is based: first language (L1)/second language (L2), C1/C2, Us vs Them, Self vs Other. Third culture does not propose to eliminate these dichotomies, but suggests focusing on the relation itself and on the heteroglossia within each of the poles. It is a symbolic place that is by no means unitary, stable, permanent and homogeneous. Rather it is, like subject positions in post-structuralist theory, multiple, always subject to change and to the tensions and even conflicts that come from being 'in between' (Weedon, 1987). These tensions can be painful, but they can also be fruitful in the same manner as unsuccessful socialization can be the mother of invention. In Kramsch's view, the third culture or third place of the language learner has three characteristics.

- *A popular culture.* The 'third place' of the language learner is an oppositional place where the learner creates meaning on the margins or in the interstices of official meanings. It is not a place of strategic resistance but of tactical subversion. As the sociologist Michel de Certeau characterizes it, it is a 'way of using imposed systems', of making do with resources acquired from others, such as foreign grammars and vocabularies . '"Making do" (or *bricoler*) means constructing *our* space within and against *their* place, of speaking *our* meaning with *their* language' (de Certeau, 1984: 18).

  A third culture pedagogy leaves space for mischievous language play, carnivalesque parody, simulation and role-play and the invention of fictitious, hybrid identities that put into question NS claims on authenticity.
- *A critical culture.* Third culture pedagogy does not merely transmit content and have the students practice their L2 in interactions with others about that content. It encourages making connections to dominant attitudes and worldviews as expressed through the textbook, the grammar exercises, the readings (Kramsch, 1988). It encourages reading against the grain, questioning the social categorization of experience as expressed through the L2 vocabulary and grammar, making students aware of the historical resonances of words and

their combinations. It actively promotes comparisons between L1 and L2 categorizations.

- *An ecological culture.* Third culture methodology is also highly context-sensitive and adapted to the demands of the environment. Since bricolage is the name of the game, third culture uses any method that 'works': communicative activities but also the memorization of vocabulary, poems or prose; real-world tasks but also dictation, translation and the transcription of audio-recordings or written texts. Exercises in communicative fluency in the L2, but also observation and reflection in the L1. Third culture promotes rereadings, retellings, multiple interpretations of the same text, multiple modes of meaning making (visual, verbal, gestural, musical) and multiple modalities of expression (spoken, written, electronic); it favours the deconstruction of signs and their subversive reconstruction (see Kramsch and Nolden, 1994).

Finally, in 1993, the concept of third culture was meant to capture the experience of the boundary between NS and NNS. In the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people were forced to cross linguistic, national and ideological boundaries within Europe and across the Atlantic. Immigrants brought along with them

> stories of bordercrossings that help the story-telling participants understand the joy and make sense of the pain these crossings have occasioned. They belong to a stock of narratives that attempt to create a third culture, made of a common memory beyond time and place among people with similar experiences. (Kramsch, 1993: 235)

The telling of these boundary experiences makes participants become aware of how manipulating contextual frames and perspectives through language can give them power and control, as they try to make themselves at home in a culture 'of a third kind'. Such research has inspired language teachers to have their students read published 'language memoirs' like those of Nancy Huston, Eva Hoffman or Alice Kaplan and to elicit students' narratives of their experience crossing linguistic and cultural borders.

11.2.5 Thirding in Literacy Education

In the 1970s and 1980s, thirdness was best represented by the work of the Brazilian educationalist Paolo Freire (1972) with his insistence on the liberatory potential of dialogue and community building practices in raising the political consciousness of the 'oppressed' through literacy education. Since then, the growing spread of economic globalization and human migration and the educational challenges presented by the computer and the internet have rendered the duality between oppressors and oppressed less clear. This is not to say that relations of power no longer exist, but they are more diffuse, less visible. Rather than seeing

literacy education as autocratic top-down inculcation or bottom-up harmonious assimilation into a community of practice, literacy scholars now call for a pedagogy that teaches learners how to live with difference, contradiction and ambivalence (Kostogriz, 2002). They base their view of literacy education on the work of semioticians like Yuri Lotman (1990) and cultural geographers like Edward Soja (1996). Lotman, studying the cultural changes occurring in multicultural nation-states where national languages and cultures are becoming increasingly hybridized by the influx of immigrants, focused on the production of cultural-semiotic Thirdness, or semiotic creativity that produces hybrid texts, hybrid identities and meanings. Soja, studying the social space of megacities like Los Angeles and Amsterdam in a post-structuralist perspective, coined the term 'Thirdspace' (in one word) to conceptualize social space as it is perceived, conceived and lived in a networked, multicultural world. Echoing the work of bell hooks, Michel Foucault and feminist theorists, Soja used the term 'trialectics' to escape the seemingly simplistic dichotomy implied by the Marxist term 'dialectic'. He proposed instead a three-dimensional representation of social space that would take into account the interaction of spatiality, historicality and sociality. The work of these two social scientists has captured the imagination of language educators and literacy researchers in two large immigration countries, Australia and the United States.

In Australia, Alex Kostogriz' Thirdspace pedagogy of literacy (Kostogriz, 2002) invites teachers to (re)imagine classrooms as 'multivoiced collectives' (p. 8) whose efforts to read, write and interpret texts owe a great deal to the meaning making practices brought to the class by minority and migrant students. Thirdspace for Kostogriz is not about resolving differences or finding common ground in literacy representations and practices. Rather, it is about making the students aware of contradictions and ambivalences and helping them find a way of living and learning with this ambivalence. Kostogriz calls this 'thirding'. Thirding in meaning-making can be genuinely appreciated only when difference is recognized and used as a resource for literacy learning in conditions of 'multiculturalism and semiotic multimodality' (p. 9). He links thirding to the development of intercultural competence and to the building of 'classroom communities of difference' (p. 10).

In the United States, Third Space (in two words) is associated with the work of Gutierrez et al. (1999) and Moje et al. (2004). Like Kostogriz, they associate thirdness with the typical hybridity and diversity encountered in countries with large numbers of immigrants and with conflicting interests due to race, class and gender, but they stress the 'transformative potential' of conflict and difference. 'Tension and conflict in various learning activities can lead to a transformation in the activity and the participation and discourse practices therein. These transformations can lead to productive literacy learning' (p. 286). In their concrete analyses of classroom transcripts, they associate third space with the counterscripts produced by students within the discourse of the classroom. Embedding the notion of third space within learning theory and a developmental view of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, they identify third space as a developmental zone, in

which 'hybridity and diversity can be used to promote learning'. In their words: 'we believe the use of hybrid language practices can help educators negotiate or traverse the diverse and often conflictual urban classroom landscape' (p. 301). For these educators, it seems that the third space of diversity and conflict can be used by teachers not to change the existing relations of power between immigrants and mainstream members of society, but to neutralize hybridity and conflict by embedding them into the mainstream and making them serve the interests of the school institution.

11.2.6 Summing up

In this brief survey of the concept of Thirdness in Western language education we can see how this notion has been variously used in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Originally conceived in semiotics, it migrated to literary and cultural studies where it got applied to the analysis of novels and post-structuralist defini-tions of culture; it spread to foreign language study and the teaching of literacy to immigrants in immigration countries like Australia and the United States. While all these applications have in common the desire to eschew dichotomizing and essentializing tendencies in thinking about the education of language learners, they vary in the location they assign to thirdness and in the importance attached to its subversive potential.

For Barthes and Peirce, thirdness is constitutive of the sign itself, and its relation to other signs, both verbal and visual. Its subversive potential is of an aesthetic or formal nature, but for Barthes aesthetics and politics went hand in hand. Post-structuralist thought, as championed by Bakhtin and Bhabha, builds on the Third-ness of the linguistic sign. Bakhtin includes the relation of Self and Other in the dialogic use of verbal signs; Bhabha considers the way in which discursive practices construct culture and the speaking subject finds a location in the very space of enunciation. Both thinkers are quite conscious of the political implications of Thirdness: Bakhtin because in the Stalinist state in which he lived it was dangerous to deviate from the ideological dichotomies of the day; Bhabha because by locat-ing culture in language, he ran the risk of antagonizing those in whose interest it is to essentialize cultures.

Foreign language educators like Kramsch apply the principles of post-structuralism to locate the foreign language learner in a bilingual, oppositional culture that, like popular culture, thrives in the interstices of dominant monolin-gual cultures, whether they be C1 or C2. The metaphor of third culture captures language learners' growing awareness of the predicament of language stated at the very beginning of this paper, and of the larger social and political forces that govern its use. Literacy educators like Gutierrez et al. see the culture of immigrant language learners as hybrid, conflicted and ambivalent. The Third Space peda-gogy they propose attempts to deal with this ambivalence and turn it into a trans-formative experience for the immigrant learners that will help their integration in their host societies. While Kramsch's third culture ultimately aims at diversifying

the unitary discourse or monolingual ideology of countries like the U. S., Gutierrez et al.'s Third Space is meant to transform multilingual individual immigrants into constructive members of American society.

11.3 Current Attempts to Capture the Language/Culture Relation in Applied Linguistics

The search for third culture inserts itself in the current efforts in applied linguistics to better capture the nature of a L2 learner's competence faced with the changing needs of a global economy. Indeed, if applied linguistics is 'the study of language with relevance to real-world problems', we need to explore the nature of this relevance once the real world has become a global world of multilingual and multicultural interconnections. How do NS and NNS understand one another *across cultures?* How do L2 learners grow into another *sociocultural* speech community? How do they find their place as *intercultural* speakers? These questions have been asked mainly in the large-scale context of human migration and immigration in the last 20 years, especially immigration to the industrialized societies of Europe, Australia and North America. Several strands of this research take culture to be a stable category, attached to an individual's identity and place of belonging. They hold on to the equation: one language (or way of speaking) = one culture (or social background). These are: cross-cultural communication studies, sociocultural theories of second language development, and intercultural learning, which I consider in turn.

11.3.1 Cross-cultural Communication Studies

Cross-cultural communication as studied by linguists and discourse analysts focuses on the way native speakers and non-native speakers manage conversations in everyday life. It examines the different expectations of speakers regarding the pragmatics of speech acts, the management of turns at talk, discourse cues and various pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of talk. 'Culture' is the term used for characterizing the personal background that might account for variations in individual verbal behaviours, whether they be attributable to a national, racial, or ethnic culture or the culture of a particular social class, generation or gender. Culture is often seen as the source of interference and misunderstanding and sometimes as the object of negotiation. This strand of research focuses mainly on problematic talk (Grimshaw, 1990) and instances of miscommunication in social life (House et al., 2003; Kramsch, 2003) based on mismatches in assumptions and interpretations, themselves often based on cultural difference. Researchers in cross-cultural communication maintain a dichotomous view of self and other that easily leads to essentializations and generalizations of difference across social groups. Because they do not systematically examine power relations, they are not primarily interested in the notion of third culture.[4]

11.3.2 Sociocultural Theories of Second Language Development

Sociocultural theory**,** despite its name, is not, as Lantolf and Thorne point out, 'a theory of the social or of the cultural aspects of human existence . . . [but] a theory of mind . . . that recognizes the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play in organizing uniquely human forms of thinking' (2006: 1). Within the Vygotskyan perspective they espouse, Lantolf and Thorne define culture as 'an *objective force* that infuses social relationships and the historically developed uses of artifacts in concrete activity'. They add: 'An understanding of culture as objective implies that human activity structures, and is structured by, *enduring* conceptual properties of the social and material world' (ibid.; my emphases). Sociocultural theory clearly sees culture as a stable category, an objective force, structured both by historical processes of socialization and by people's engagement in cultural activities.

What is not clear, however, is whether that force is real or imagined. This question becomes relevant to our topic when we ask to what extent L2 learners must accommodate to the target culture, and to what extent they can carve out for themselves a third culture of their own. Sociocultural theory describes well the zone of proximal development that L2 learners traverse under the guidance of NSs or other NNSs who have internalized the cultural models or schemas of the L2 cultural community. Lantolf and Thorne, for example, refer to 'American culture' (p. 116) and its schemas of individualism and autonomy that get reinforced and internalized through such cultural events as conversations, movies and TV shows. But their example seems to suggest that everyone growing up on the territory of the United States sooner or later internalizes these American schemas and makes them their own. Is that really so? Do the cultural models of English speakers have any psychological reality for speakers of other languages and are they even psychologically real for all English speakers? Are they not, for some, merely ideological constructs? Lantolf and Thorne recognize that 'cultures are rarely monolithic organizations and as such comprise communities with different schemas and concepts' (p. 148), but they don't account for the fact that cultural models and the cognitive categories created by language might not be internalized, but, rather, imitated, parodied or simulated, and that communities are not real but 'imagined', in the sense that Benedict Anderson gives the term (1983).

The fact that many immigrants do not internalize these schemas, even after decades of living and working in the country, raises questions as to the necessary link between mind, culture and activity in second language learning. Is language learning, as they suggest, 'a matter of intent and commitment to live one's life as a member of the new community'? (p. 148). But what if the newcomers either do not recognize this community as a community, nor care to join it, but only want to work there and make a living? (p. 148). 'It remains to be seen', they write, 'if programs can be developed that will promote the type of knowledge that learners can make use of to re-mediate their thinking . . . Perhaps the type of third space discussed by Kramsch (1993) is the appropriate outcome of instruction when it comes to culture' (p. 148). A third space by default?

11.3.3 Intercultural Learning

Intercultural learning is an interdisciplinary effort on the part of scholars in the sciences of education to link language education to the teaching of cross-cultural awareness. It has taken off in Europe, Japan and Australia. In Europe, the concept is associated with the work of Michael Byram, Adelheid Hu, Ingrid Gogolin, Lothar Bredella, Hans-Jürgen Krumm (for a review, see Königs, 2003; Kramsch, 2002a). Originally conceived within the framework of linguistic, academic or professional exchanges across the national borders of the European Union, it focuses on national languages and cultures. Its original theoretical grounding in cultural studies (Byram, 1989) has been broadened to include various fields in the social sciences and the humanities (e.g. Bredella and Delanoy, 1999). In Japan, the interest in 'intercultural literacy' is a variation on the European intercultural learning (Sasaki, 2006).

In Australia, the notion of 'intercultural language learning' (ILL) is being discussed at conferences of the Australian Modern Language Teachers Association and is gaining ground in the crafting of government foreign language curricula. Based on the work of Antony Liddicoat and his colleagues (Crozet et al., 1999; Liddicoat, 2002; Liddicoat et al., 2003), ILL tightens the link between the foreign language and the foreign culture in language education and strives to develop a learner's 'third place' (Lo Bianco et al., 1999) that is neither that of the C1 nor that of the C2. Language learners develop an intercultural perspective where they get to understand both their own culture and language contexts (First Place) and the target culture and language contexts (Second Place). Using this knowledge, they move to a position in which their developing intercultural competence informs their language choices in communication (Third Place). ILL pedagogy helps students construct this Third Place by making connections between the L1/C1 and the L2/C2; communicating across linguistic and cultural boundaries and identifying and explaining those boundaries; critically reflecting on their own intercultural behaviours and their own identity; and taking responsibility for contributing to successful communication across languages and cultures.

In sum: In much of applied linguistic research, the links between language and culture are taken to be stable and non-problematic. Culture is seen as a fixed category of place and identity. Such a structuralist approach is favourable to a positivistically inclined research that seeks to describe pragmatic sources of conflict among speakers from different cultures and to minimize those conflicts. It is also favourable to a normative educational process intent on making minority language learners aware of their right to be listened to and be given the respect they deserve, and to make mainstream language learners aware and accepting of the minority and foreign Other. The concept of Third Place serves that purpose. It is seen as a place of contact or encounter between speakers from two different cultures. However, because intercultural communication gives little attention to issues of power differential and conflict within and between cultures, the notion of Third Place risks being seen by some language educators as a romantic excuse

for immigrant L2 learners to escape from long-term commitment and social integration into the host society, and for mainstream L2 learners as an opportunity to colonize the other (see 10.3.3).

11.4 Emergent and Future Issues

Recent research takes a more post-structuralist approach to the relation of language and culture. It defines culture as an individual's subject position that changes according to the situation and to *the way he/she chooses* to belong rather than to the place she belongs. Such a definition of culture presents a challenge for foreign language education and for applied linguistic research. The social, cultural and political contexts in which languages are taught and learned are so diverse, the educational systems often so incommensurable that it has become very difficult to make any generalizations about the best way to teach foreign languages. In the United States, for example, the increasingly multilingual and multicultural nature of college campuses in general and of foreign language classrooms in particular should lead to an ever more diversified response and attention to social and cultural difference on the part of language teachers (Lam, 2000). Yet, many school administrators and educators turn to the findings of research on the acquisition of English as a second language for solutions on how to best teach foreign languages. They seek to standardize best teaching practices in order to better control and predict the outcomes of language education. Right now, post-structuralist approaches to second language education inspired by work in interactional sociolinguistics, and in ecological theories of learning are gaining momentum (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2006; de Bot et al., 2007). Third culture becomes relevant here as the oppositional subject positions taken by the children of immigrants in English secondary schools (Rampton, 1995). We can also see third culture at work in the hybrid language of hip-hop and English that weaves together in new and creative ways the 'transcultural flows' of global youth culture and localized subcultures (Pennycook, 2007).

11.4.1 Post-structuralist Perspectives in Sociolinguistics and Anthropology

The study of communication across national, ethnic and social cultures by researchers in interactional sociolinguistics (Rampton, 1995; Johnstone, 1996; Blommaert, 2005; Cameron, 2005; Coupland, 2007) and linguistic anthropology (Hanks, 1996; Ochs, 1996) takes a post-structuralist perspective on language acquisition and language socialization. Researchers in this strand of applied linguistics see language relations as much more decentred, in flux and relative to the perspectives of the participants. Rampton's concepts of *crossing* (1995) and *styling* (1999) capture the fluid nature of the relation between language and culture: social actors temporarily take on others' ways of speaking and behaving, style themselves on others, act out different identities, play out different relations of power. Blommaert's notion

of *layered simultaneity* (2005: 130) brings in the historical dimension of unequal cross-cultural encounters: individual encounters reenact past encounters, internet users simulate, parody, cite, plagiarize others' postings. Cameron (2005) discusses explicitly the issue of power and domination in unequal encounters across genders. In linguistic anthropology, the extended notion of indexicality proposed by Hanks (1996) and Ochs (2002) challenges any notion of one language = one culture.[5]

A post-structuralist view of the relation of language and culture focuses nowadays on four major aspects that together could be seen as constituting a 'third' perspective on the relation of self and other through language.

– *Subjectivity or subject-positioning,* Different languages position their speakers in different symbolic spaces. Subject positioning has to do less with the calculations of rational actors than with a multilingual's heightened awareness of the embodied nature of language and the sedimented emotions associated with the use of this or that language, dialect or register.
– *Historicity or an understanding of the cultural memories evoked by symbolic systems.* In times of migrations and displacements, cultures become collective *lieux de mémoire* formed by the sedimented representations of a people. These are deterritorialized cultural icons (or stereotypes) that individuals carry in their bodies and that they enact in their day to day transactions. Whether these representations are accurate or not, historically attested or only imagined, they are actually remembered by individual members and serve as valid historical models. As Blommaert writes: 'The synchronicity of discourse is an illusion that masks the densely layered historicity of discourse' (2005: 131).
– *Performativity or the capacity to perform and create alternative realities.* Within an ecological perspective of human exchanges, language is not merely the representation of thought: instead, language creates and performs thought in dialogue with others (Pennycook, 2007: Ch. 4). This performative aspect of language can be seen as having 'political promise' (Freire, 1972; Butler, 1997), i.e. as potentially effectuating social change. In language education, the capacity to use various linguistic and semiotic codes to create alternative realities and reframe the balance of symbolic power has been called by Kramsch (2006) symbolic competence.
– *Stylistic variation.* The renewed interest in style (Rampton, 1999; Coupland, 2007; Pennycook, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2007) is symptomatic of current post-structuralist efforts to capture individual creativity in language use. Style here should be understood not in the eighteenth century monologic sense of individual elegance and stylishness, but in the dialogic sense of stylization, i.e. a general capacity of speakers to rework the utterances of others in their own personal style – a capacity that Coupland defines as 'a subversive form of multi-voiced utterance, one that discredits hegemonic, monologic discourses by appropriating the voices of the powerful, and reworking them for new purposes' (p. 150).

11.4.2 *Complexity Theory and Language Education*

Like the post-structuralist strand of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, complexity theory (Byrne, 1997; Cilliers, 1998; Capra, 2005) considers language to not only represent, but actively construct social and cultural reality in interaction with others. Actively embraced in educational philosophy by scholars like Lemke and Sabelli (2008), Mason (2008), Morrison (2008) and others, it has been drawn upon by SLA researchers like Larsen-Freeman (1997) and Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) and applied linguists advocating an ecological approach to SLA (Kramsch, 2002a/b; van Lier, 2004; Kramsch and Steffensen, 2007). Complexity theory, which originated in the physical sciences, has been used as a productive metaphor in SLA to stress the relativity of self and other, the need to consider events on more than one timescale and to take into account the fractal nature and the unfinalizability of events. What does this mean for language education?

Complexity theory has in common with sociolinguistic theory the notion that any use of language, be it learning a language or using it to gain information, make friends or influence people does not derive from structures in the head – beliefs, rules, concepts and schemata, but are new adaptations that *emerge* non-linearly from the seamless dynamic of events. In complex dynamic systems like human relations, both the *self and the other* are intrinsically pluralistic, variable, and possibly in conflict with themselves and with one another. Because the I is not unitary, but multiple, it contains in part the other and vice-versa; it can observe itself both subjectively from the inside and objectively through the eyes of the other. The meanings expressed through language operate on multiple *timescales*, with unpredictable, often unintended, outcomes and multiple levels of reality and fiction. Our memories are not in the past but live on as present realities in our bodies to be both experienced and observed.

Complexity theory offers an ecological perspective on language education. It is concerned with patterns of activities and events which are self-similar at different levels of scales, i.e. which are *fractal* figures for larger or smaller patterns. For example, as Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008: 216) observe, patterns of behaviour at the classroom level are fractals of and interact with patterns of behaviour at the institutional and, beyond that, at the socio-political level and historical timescale. An ecological approach to language education does not seek dialectical unity, or bounded analyses of discrete events, but on the contrary open-endedness and *unfinalizability*. It counts under 'participants' not only the flesh and blood interlocutors in verbal exchanges, but also the remembered and the imagined, the stylized and the projected. It problematizes the notion of bounded speech communities and focuses our attention on open-ended, deterritorialized communicative practices rather than on the 'territorial boundedness' posited by the 'one language – one culture assumption' (Blommaert, 2005: 216).

What we see emerging in ecological approaches to language education is a new way of looking at the relation of language and culture. Culture is seen as heterogeneous, fluid, conflictual; it is seen as a mode, not a place, of belonging; it is as

imagined as it is real, a *lieu de mémoire* as much as a lived event. In a similar manner the notion of third culture has changed from a place, space or status that learners occupy, to an oppositional way of being. Within a globalized economy, the changing landscapes of human migrations and the expanded time/space afforded by internet technology, third culture has become located in language itself, either as textual identity (Kramsch and Lam, 1999), or as 'intercultural stance' (Ware and Kramsch, 2005) or as the 'symbolic competence' recently proposed by Kramsch (2006).[6]

However, because the metaphor of third culture is prone to romanticizing marginality and hybridity, it risks being easily re-appropriated by members of dominant first or second cultures as the exotic 'border-crossings' of polyglot cosmopolitan individuals (Kramsch, 2004; Lam, 2004). It also risks becoming a static place between two dominant cultures, the place of a community of like-minded bilinguals that immigrants strive to participate in (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000), or a permanent hybrid subject-position for Chicanos in the United States (Gutierrez et al., 1999). As a metaphor, third culture has become less capacious than that of thirdness itself. It is therefore more useful to consider the future of thirdness as an epistemological principle that might inform both the research and the practice of language education.

11.4.3 The Future of Thirdness

By contrast with 'third culture', thirdness is a stance (Ware and Kramsch, 2005), a way of seeing the relation of language, thought and culture. As shown in section 11.2, thirdness has captured the imagination of literary critics, semioticians, linguists, applied linguists and literacy educators and will continue to inspire new research. It has served as a rallying point for researchers dissatisfied with the usual dichotomies prevalent in positivistic research and eager to focus on dynamic, relational, variable and emergent phenomena rather than on stable entities. In language learning and teaching, it has been at work in recent efforts to develop a conceptual lens that would supersede and reframe traditional dichotomies, for example Cook's notion of 'multicompetence' to supersede the dichotomy NS/NNS in SLA research (Cook, 1992), Rampton's notion of 'language repertoire' based on expertise, inheritance or affiliation to replace the L1/L2 dichotomy (Rampton, 1990), Larsen-Freeman's notion of language learning as a 'complex system' to overcome the duality individual vs social (Larsen-Freeman, 1997), Kramsch's use of 'language ecology' to eschew the language acquisition vs language socialization dichotomy (Kramsch, 2002b). Such reframings stress process, variation and style over product, place and stable community membership. Because the concept of thirdness always runs the risk of becoming reified, essentialized into a stable third culture, which in turn also includes and excludes, it struggles to retain the internal conflictual plurality of the object of study.

In Europe, thirdness has informed recent thought on intercultural learning (e.g. Byram and Fleming, 1998; Hu, 1999) and the training of language teachers

in plurilingual settings (e.g. Byram, this volume). In the *Handbook of Plurilingualism and Pluriculturalism*, Zarate, Levy and Kramsch explain:

> The teacher trainers of tomorrow will need to operate in a globalized space where verbal exchanges will be increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural . . . [But] linguistic and cultural pluralism is more than the mere coexistence of various languages. It is primarily about the transcultural circulation of values across borders, the negotiation of identities, the inversion, even inventions of meaning, often concealed by a common illusion of effective communication. (Zarate et al., 2008; my translation)

In the United States, the interest in the relationality afforded by thirdness underlies the recommendations of the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2007) to rethink the relation of language, literature and culture in foreign language departments. In the recent report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages of the MLA, the goal of language study at university level is defined as 'translingual and transcultural competence'. The Report adds:

> The idea of translingual and transcultural competence places value on the multilingual ability to *operate between languages.* . . . In the course of acquiring functional language abilities, students are taught critical language awareness, interpretation and translation, historical and political consciousness, social sensibility, and aesthetic perception. (pp. 3–4; my emphasis)

Our students' ability to 'operate between languages' will not be so much a matter of bringing their message across accurately and appropriately, but of creating affordances, i.e. 'relationships of possibility' (van Lier, 2004: 105) among and between symbolic systems, whether these are verbal, visual, filmic, electronic or gestural. These relations will be created if they learn to see themselves both through their own embodied history and subjectivity and through the history and subjectivity of others.

The past President of the MLA, Michael Holquist, put it bluntly in a recent *MLA Newsletter*:

> We need to do some educating among those powerful constituencies who do not recognize the existence of, much less the power of, Language [*sic*] and who conceive our work as confined to teaching individual languages. That is of course a very important and honorable part of what we do. But in performing that task, we are simultaneously, always already creating deep change in the minds of our students. (Holquist, 2007: 5)

– change that is possible only because of the intricate link between language, thought and culture. Making Language in all its forms, rather than any particular language or literature, the central object of study in foreign language and literature departments, is quite revolutionary (see also Kramsch, 1993b). It offers a way

of overcoming the traditional dichotomy between the study of language and the study of literature, as well as between linguistics and applied linguistics in academic departments. It also represents the 'dream of a unified field' (Graham, 1980) that researchers in language education have never ceased to pursue.

Notes

1 The literary scholar Roland Barthes, who was keen on discovering the source of aesthetic pleasure in the reading of texts, rejoined in this sense the linguist Roman Jakobson, who at around the same time proposed that the distinguishing characteristic of a literary text was its focus on the poetic function of language (Jakobson, 1960). Barthes' notion of third meaning is also related to what the philosopher Karl Popper (1972) calls the 'world 3' of symbolic systems like language, scientific theories, and works of art – all products of the human mind that have their own logical relationships beyond the world 1 of physical objects and the world 2 of mental processes. In his 1977 essay, Barthes only deals with the third meaning in works of art.
2 Bakhtin's notion of dialogism has strong Orthodox Christian resonances. In the Christian theogony, God is both Father and Son, Christ is both Man and God. Thirdness is the principle that holds the two poles of the duality together in the person of the 'Holy Spirit'. This third person of the Trinity represents the love between Father and Son, between God and Man.
3 See as an example, the different ways in which the Kurdish conflict with Turkey is represented in the media in Germany. While the German language media speaks of the Kurds in Turkey as 'rebels', the Turkish language media calls them 'terrorists' (Kulish, 2007: 4).
4 Critical Discourse Analysis does study the relation of language and power but, because it has an educational agenda, it often gets caught between a Marxist structuralist view and a Foucauldian post-structuralist view of power relations (Fairclough, 1999).
5 The notion of indexicality goes back to Halliday's notion of genre in the 1960s–1970s.
6 Communication in cyberspace has also become a kind of romanticized 'third culture' that supposedly speaks the universal language of computer technology and tends to gloss over power struggles and identity conflicts. The location of this virtual third culture is all the more difficult to identify and talk about as it is the invisible interface that is increasingly defining our discursive existence (see, e.g. Poster, 1995; Turkle, 1995; Jones, 1997; Mitchell, 2003).

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