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MEDIATION AS NEGOTIATION OF SOCIALLY SITUATED MEANINGS WITHIN AND ACROSS LANGUAGES

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MEDIATION... from past to present

- Practiced in the ancient Mediterranean world (as a central political act of diplomacy, when mediators intervened in public affairs to *explain, help, offer advice* over political or legal issues), and in Africa, Asia, South America (where the *mediator* was someone with profound knowledge, able to *intervene or interpret* for others and be an *intermediary* with people from the outside world).
- Mediation is specially important for today's knowledge-economies, where the creation, distribution, use, adaptation and manipulation of information globally is a significant economic, political, and cultural activity.

MEDIATION... now

- A dynamic, purposeful, interactive process, involving agents who are willing to assist parties that fail to agree with or understand a text, cultural artifact or social situation.
- It entails *relaying* messages (in one or a combination of semiotic modes) for an expressed communicative purpose. Messages may be in the same or a different language, variety of language, discourse, genre or register.
- Relaying messages involves negotiation, interpretation or creation of meanings for others participating in the event, using strategies appropriate to the context of situation.

MEDIATION, then is:

- A *meaning-making* process focused primarily upon the needs, rights, and interests of the parties for whom mediation is enacted.
- Successful when there is semiotic awareness, skills of negotiating meaning and ability to use strategies conducive to the task and context.
- A socially meaningful act performed in all types of institutions – including the church, the law, politics, mass media, technology, art, education.
- Practiced in public and private affairs and in many different settings.

MEDIATION

Verbal

**Intra-linguistic
Cross-linguistic**

**Uni- or
multimodal**

**Verbal + / visual,
acoustic, gestural,
spatial**

Cultural

**Intra-cultural
Cross-cultural**

WHAT IS MULTIMODAL TEXT?

- A text is said to be *multimodal* when it combines two or more of the following semiotic modes of production:
 - Verbal: oral or written language
 - Visual: images still or moving
 - Audio: volume, pitch and rhythm of music and sound effects
 - Gestural: movement, facial expression and body language
 - Spatial: proximity, direction, position, organisation in space.
- Multimodal text can be print, physical or digital.
- Most of today's texts in our digital age are multimodal
- Analysis of multimodal texts requires a theory of grammar of speech (at the level of discourse, genre, text and utterance) and a theory of grammar of visual design.

WHO IS A MEDIATOR?

- All of us language users are potentially mediators but we are not all necessarily *competent* mediators as we may lack awareness (that can be developed), skills (that may be acquired) and strategies (that may be learnt).
- All of us language users are meaning-making agents but mediator negotiate the socially situated meanings for others who are often of a different social, linguistic or cultural background.
- When we take or are given the role of mediator, we assume or are granted the power to make meanings for someone else.
- Being a competent mediator requires awareness, skills, and use of strategies which can be taught and learnt.

MEDIATION DIFFERS FROM TRANSLATION...

Translators:

- always work with a written source text to produce an equivalent
- appear nowhere in the discourse produced
- do not express their personal take on the issues involved
- remain true to the source text which they are required to respect
- are not entitled to alter the discourse, genre or register of the text they are producing
- they may not resort to reported speech

Mediators

- work not only with verbal but other semiotic modes (for input and output)
- are present in the discourse produced, making choices from the source text useful for the other
- choose which messages to convey and which to silence
- relay only the information/ideas, and use the means of representation required by the task at hand
- are entitled to relay information/ideas in third person

MEDIATION DEFINED BY THE CEFR

- The concept of mediation here involves only *verbal* exchange.
- It is generally described as the act of ‘linguaging’ messages and ideas to facilitate understanding and communication.
- It is further defined
 - a) as a means for making communication possible between persons unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly
 - b) as an instance when someone acts as an intermediary between speakers of different languages (but not exclusively) who are unable to understand each other directly
 - c) both as input / output texts, which may be spoken or written (in L1/ L2).

MEDIATION AND PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION

- The CEFR considers (verbal) mediation as part of plurilingual competence—making a distinction between plurilingualism and multilingualism.
- In using the term *plurilingual competence*, it shifted attention from the ‘ideal native speaker’ to the language user who has a repertoire of languages and/or language varieties of different levels.
- A mediator’s repertoire is dynamic and develops throughout one’s life.
- The development of plurilingual competence is the main scope of Plurilingual Education, as promoted by the Council of Europe (ECML),

PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION (according to the CoE)

- It embraces all languages learnt in and outside of school, i.e., home language/s, language/s of schooling, foreign languages, regional and minority languages
- Its basic axiom: EDUCATION **FOR** PLURILINGUALISM AND EDUCATION **THROUGH** PLURILINGUALISM.
- Its practice/s is/are based on:
 - A holistic view of languages in education
 - Linguistic repertoires and *partial* competences
- Plurilingual Education is proposed (by the CoE) for European educational institutions, which are increasingly multilingual and multicultural.

THE 'WHAT' AND 'HOW' OF PLURI-ED

- It is grounded on the understanding that:
 - Bi- and plurilingualism are "normal" and achievable by all
 - There are cognitive benefits to be gained from plurilingual education
 - Plurilingual approaches contribute to social integration
 - Plurilingual competences are empowering for all learners
- The *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures*, published by the ECML, provides a description of the knowledge, attitudes and skills of plurilingual and pluricultural competences (including mediation).
- It also describes three 'didactic approaches' to plurilingual education:
 - 1) Integrated didactics (where the teaching of different foreign languages is made complementary, by using links and similarities between them.
 - 2) Awakening to languages (designed to raise learners' awareness of the diversity of languages in their homes, schools and societies.
 - 3) Intercomprehension between related languages.

TRANSLANGUAGING - A (dis)similar concept:

- The term and the practices that it entails were born in and for a bilingual context (Welsh-English) and later expanded to cover many different settings where bilingual students are taught and assessed on the basis of the same criteria as monolinguals. In this way they are disadvantaged.
- Sometimes also called poly-languaging or cross-languaging (and mediation), it shares similarities but also significant differences with code-switching or code-alternation, as it involves the *meshing* of languages.
- According to Garcia and Kano (2014), translanguaging is not a shift from one language or code to another, rather it is “rooted on the principle that bilingual speakers select language features from a repertoire and ‘soft assemble’ their language practices in ways that fit their communicative situations. Bilinguals call upon different social features in a seamless and complex network of multiple semiotic signs, as they adapt their languaging to suit the immediate task.”

TRANSLANGUAGING...

MORE THAN THE SIMULTANEOUS USE OF MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE

- The four potential pedagogical advantages of translanguageing put forward by the Welsh team were: (1) bilingual students' deeper understanding of curricular school; (2) use of the students' weaker languages, (3) the co-operation between teachers and parents, 4) integration of fluent speakers with early learners.
- García (2009) popularized the term and expanded it to also include its view as a strategy used by bi- or multilinguals to make meaning, shape their experiences, gain understanding and knowledge, and make sense of their bilingual worlds through the everyday use of the languages which comprise their repertoire.
- Translanguageing pedagogy that effectively guarantees that students can cope with the discussions about content, other than language itself

TRANSLANGUAGING IN EDUCATION

- Translanguaging is not an educational model but a pedagogical approach which is promoted with the dictum “from *allowing* (students to use a language other than the school’s official language) to *enabling* (them to use their whole linguistic repertoire).
- For effective implementation, the teacher should gather information and acknowledge the complexity of language use in different domains.
- Translanguaging pedagogy is based on:
 - an understanding of the lived reality of languaging for purposeful meaning making in bi- /multilingual discursive practices and thus a normal occurrence for students who live and learn in more than one language
 - a right for learners to draw on all of their languaging practices in the process of learning, and in learning to learn
 - a view of translanguaging as required practice for equity and social justice.

CRITICISMS OF TRANSLANGUAGING

- It is a pedagogy:
 - fitting bilingual schools, where students have already developed some form of communicative competence in two languages
 - most suited for contexts where the two languages involved are not of equal status and language use is related to issues of identity (e.g., English-Chinese in the US, Spanish-Basque or Catalan in Spain, English-French in Canada)
 - unconcerned with the *development* of plurilingualism for all (whether mono, bilingual or multilingual)
 - unsuitable for the occasions when the language teacher needs to focus on the development of literacy/ies in the official school language or in a foreign language (focusing on correct and appropriate language use) so that learners pass exams and operate as conversant members of society.

CRITICISMS OF PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION

- Plurilingual Education, there are a number of criticisms such as the following:
 - 1) Hélot (2012) has warned that Plurilingual Education, in the way it has been articulated by the CoE, is about promoting a European identity, without questioning the use of the national language as the main medium of education, and thus claims that the concept of 'plurilingualism' is still tied to national languages, usually European ones, without paying attention to the many language practices of individuals.
 - 2) Young and Mary (2017) claim that in France, for example, where the principle of promoting plurilingual education, as recommended by the Council of Europe, has long been endorsed by the Ministère de l' Education Nationale, plurilingualism is a term often misunderstood by teachers and plurilingual approaches to education 'n'est pas effectif' [has not taken effect].
- Has Plurilingual Education not been implemented in France and elsewhere simply because teachers' beliefs (or mind-sets) are still locked in the understanding of languages as autonomous systems, in the monolingual ethos of communication, the 'ideal' erudite NS? Or are there other reasons?

CRITICISM OF BOTH

- 1) Both these approaches address the 'issue' of multilingual classrooms and the education of bilinguals (which often involves social injustices and fails to value the important capital they bring into the class, as opposed to what monolinguals bring to the educational context).
- 2) Neither of them, however, provide an all encompassing plan for literacy/ies approach, based contemporary communications environment. on the characteristics of successful learners and the competences, skills and sensibilities workers and citizens in today's society is marked by:
 - the effects of globalization
 - an ever-increasing diversity of culture and language
 - high-speed change and incessant movement
 - proliferating multimedia and ICT
- 3) However, these conditions are shaping the way in which meaning is made and exchanged, and generating a dynamic plurality of texts.

CRITICISM OF MEDIATION (IN THE CEFR)

- The most important problems with how the concept of mediation is treated in the CEFR are three:
 - 1) Despite the fact that most of today's communication is multimodal, the CEFR understands mediation as verbal only
 - 2) It does not relate its leveled scales on task-based performance and the outcome which involves language meshing or hybridity (because in mediation, like in translanguaging and translation languages are 'disinvented and reconstituted' as Makoni & Pennycook (2007) put it.
 - 3) Created arbitrary groups of scales which are problematic in content (see next slide) and invented descriptors of communicative competences on the basis of intuition, not by investigating data of learner corpora.

GROUPS OF THE CEFR SCALES FOR MEDIATION

- **Mediating a text**
 - Relaying specific information – in speech and in writing
 - Explaining data (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts etc.) in speech and in writing
 - Processing text in speech and in writing
 - Translating a written text in speech and in writing
 - Note-taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.)
 - Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)
 - Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)
- **Mediating concepts**
 - Collaborating in a group
 - Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers
 - Collaborating to construct meaning
 - Leading group work
 - Managing interaction
 - Encouraging conceptual talk
- **Mediating communication**
 - Facilitating pluricultural space
 - Acting as intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues)
 - Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements

MULTILITERACIES (TERM COINED BY THE NEW LONDON GROUP 1996)

- One additional education-related notion about meaning-making agencies in contemporary contexts of increased cultural and linguistic diversity.
- The multimodal, ICT enhanced global landscape is rendering past conceptions of literacy as ‘writing and speech’ obsolete.
- Multiliteracies theory argues that contemporary literacy pedagogy needs to engage diverse, multilayered learners’ identities, so as to experience belonging and transformation in their capacities and subjectivities. Becoming ‘multiliterate’ would require students to develop proficiency in meaning-making in multimodal designs (New London Group, 1996; 2000).

MULTILITERACIES PEDAGOGY

- Multiliteracies pedagogy is based on the belief that the key qualities which effective learners need are:
 - autonomous and self-directed learning
 - to be flexible and collaborative with open sensibility
 - to be able to work productively with linguistic and cultural diversity.
- Helping learners develop these qualities requires a broader and more creative approach to curriculum and assessment than these which common across European schools today.
- Multiliteracies pedagogy is about enabling students to participate fully in our dynamic, technological and culturally diverse societies.
- A pedagogy of multiliteracies, featuring teacher integration of four key pedagogical orientations (situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice) has been developed to support the development of students' multiliterate capacities.

MULTILITERACIES & LEARNING BY DESIGN

From: W. Cope & M. Kalantzis' website "L-BY-D"

- The term 'Multiliteracies' refers to two major aspects of language use today:
 1. *Variability of meaning-making* in different cultural, social or domain-specific contexts (differences which are becoming increasingly significant in our communications environment).
 2. Language use today arises in part from the characteristics of ICT. Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal.
- The first aspect suggests literacy teaching focusing not on the rules of standard language, but on learners' ability to figure out differences in patterns of meaning from one context to another, bearing in mind that every meaning exchange is cross-cultural to a certain degree.
- The second aspect suggests extension of the range of literacy pedagogy to bring into class multimodal representations, making literacy pedagogy more engaging with today's communications milieu. It also provides a powerful foundation for a pedagogy of synaesthesia (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6ZBINnYgG4>).

CONCLUSIONS

EDUCATION ADDRESSING DIVERSITY

- Today's European societies are marked by the effects of globalization and the increasing diversity of languages and cultures, as well as the proliferating multimedia and information technologies. The need for a differing educational paradigm is intense to change from the monolingual for the homogeneization of nation state
- The thinking in the theory and practice of education studies for this new order is producing concepts and ideas for teaching and learning which seem to converge and diverge, to share similarities and difference to clash and compliment each other. Given that the purpose is similar we should clear up terms and learn from each other rather than strive for supremacy...
- Contribution of both: Much of the time, though, we are working with students to explore concepts, add to their knowledge, make connections between ideas and to help them make their voices heard by others. This is often about communicating, and this is where using all our language resources can be very valuable.

MEDIATING AND NEGOTIATING MEANINGS

- All three paradigms considered constitute attempts to rethink literacy pedagogy and more inclusive language education policies in today's linguistically and culturally diverse technological societies, all three moving away from the view of language as an autonomous meaning system.
- These paradigms have certain shared as well as conflicting meanings, they use many of the same terms to mean very different things and different terms to convey similar meanings. Consider just a few:
 - *translanguaging, cross-languaging code-switching/code alteration, code meshing, code-crossing and code mixing, polylinguaging, multilingualism, multiliteracy, multimodality bilingualism, plurilingualism, polyglottism, heteroglossia, hybridity, plurilingual education, translanguaging pedagogy, plurilingual competence...*
- The political and ideological underpinnings of the paradigms converge but also diverge significantly
- The population that concern them is the same but also distinctive.

SOME IDEAS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION :

- Critically analyse ways of talking (which are ways of meaning) in the academic literature about literacy in multilingual societies / settings, in the effort to interrogate related and competing discourses, uses of terms and ways of meaning-making.
- Reflect on issues related to language-meshing and instances of cross-linguistic mediation, frequently occurring during translanguaging practices, and where the 'boundaries' of languages are.
- Consider the concept of hybridity and investigate which levels of hybridity that are acceptable and by whom.
- Investigate questions related to mediation practices, e.g., When and for what reasons do different agents mediate? What kind of mediation tasks are performed in which contexts? What sort of discursive practices do different mediation tasks entail? What type of 'texts' are the source of mediation practices? What kind of awareness, skills, and strategies do learners develop in order to be in a position to perform mediation tasks successfully? Which kind of literacy pedagogy is conducive to the development of mediation skills?

