Languaging Experiences

Languaging Experiences:
Learning and Teaching Revisited

Edited by

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P U B L I S H I N G

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PREFACE

The central theme of the book is the notion of languaging, which has recently become quite popular and applied in many disciplines from philosophy (Maturana 1991, 1995), across psychotherapy (Hall 1996) to linguistics (Lado 1979; Mignolo 1996; Jørgensen and Juffermans 2001) and language learning and teaching (Swain 2006; Swain and Lapkin 2011). Be it philosophy or linguistics, the foundations of the concept rest on the assumption that language is a way of knowing, making personal sense of the world, becoming conscious of oneself and a means of creating an identity. The very notion of languaging is still a fresh and unexplored concept in applied linguistics and deserves due attention and scrutiny. For this reason, the volume might be seen as a significant contribution to the existing body of research, offering new insights into the field.

Sociolinguistics and sociocultural studies comprehend languaging as the human ability of making sense of the surrounding world in the form of a system of signs, peculiar only to the human species, in a version that allows communication which changes the world. Languaging perceives language beyond the traditional category of an entity in the nationally compartmentalised form, in which it is a political category necessary for the cementing of a people. This can be done repressively by the imposition of norms or categories (e.g., nationalism), or alternatively language can be perceived simply as an imprint of the long process of political and sociocultural formation. Such a perspective does not allow for a natural continuum of human linguistic creativity (exhibited personally, locally or socially) and fails to delve into the problem of communication beyond the formal level of a language. This, in turn, entails the perception of a language as a sociocultural construction shaped by the existence of standards. Using a language is either conforming or flouting the convention. Hence the claim that "languages in the plural exist only as sociocultural inventions" (Jørgensen and Juffermans 2001).

In the simplest way, languaging, on the one hand, stands for an unbridled, natural way of using language beyond the normative constraints of a language. This dimension opens new areas of research in, for example, language acquisition and sociolinguistics, and might be very inspiring and challenging for language pedagogy. On the other hand, it underscores the dynamic relationship between thought and language, in

which language ceases to be perceived as a mere conduit, but rather performs a function or "coming-to-know-while speaking" (Swain 2006).

The two aspects are in no way exclusive, and we dare say are fully integrated into the ecological approach in language learning (van Lier 2004), breaking with the normative, fixed-code perception of language, in favour of human agency in the semiotic activity and experiential character of the so-called narratives of life. Language awareness resulting from the concept of languaging obviously has repercussions for pedagogy in general, and language pedagogy in particular, but may also be relevant in various other academic areas.

Each of the authors of the chapters included in the volume represents a different subfield of applied linguistics, or literary studies, and offers a unique interpretation and application of the key notion of languaging. Thus the scope of the volume obtains a multidisciplinary perspective, which might be perceived as its genuine asset. Last but not least, the value of the book derives from the contributors themselves. All the authors are experienced scholars affiliated to leading universities in Poland and Spain devoted to their academies and research shared with the scholarly world in numerous publications and conference presentations all around the world.

The core of the articles included in this volume pertains to second language teaching. Sometimes, the notion has been directly interpreted through the language acquisition, or methodological plane, at other times indirectly through discourse, literature or intercultural studies. The whole volume opens with a lead-in article on languaging and its implications into language pedagogy elaborated by Hadrian Lankiewicz. Thus **chapter one** summarises theoretical foundations for the concept of languaging as a basis for further applications of the notion by all other contributions in the following nine chapters, illustrating its application in their original research studies.

In **chapter two,** María Jesús Cabarcos Traseira, building on the communicative tradition in language learning marked by negotiation and contributing to the development to learner autonomy, makes the use of the concept of agency in the production of meaning—a constitutive element of languaging—in verbalisation of students' needs in a given professional context. She presents the application of languaging as a counterbalance to the strict application of an *a priori* educational policy in tailoring a master's level course of English for Professional Purposes. Languaging is made operational as a space within classroom routines between students and teachers to compensate the regulatory character of education with practicality of students' expectations at the tertiary level of language education.

In **chapter three**, Marek Krawiec conceptualises languaging as a natural predisposition of making sense of the surrounding reality with recourse to all possible resources. Such a stance unwittingly capitalises on the ecological and semiotic approach perceiving language as a tangible interpersonal activity reifying direct experiences into the conceptual domain. The proposed format of a lesson channels art into a foreign language class through the use of virtual space and thus bridges the signifier and the signified to account for students' linguistic creativity.

Languaging in its very transversal linguistic and philosophical sense is elaborated on by María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia in **chapter four** and applied to translating minorised Galician poetry into English. The author uses the eponymous notion to analyse the intercultural influence, pertaining mainly to the Celtic world on establishing a voice and identity for Galician poetry in the national and international context. Interestingly, her methodology is built upon ecolinguistic praxis of poetry translation. Rendering the notion of languaging commensurable with ecocriticism, she offers a solid and undeniable theoretical foundation for her analyses.

Magdalena Murawska, in **chapter five**, makes interactive case reports, as initiated by the *British Medical Journal*, a case in point of languaging, concentrating on a patient's voice as a way of enhancing his/her voice in patient-doctor relations. She offers relevant interpretations of the use of interactive reports both in medical practice and the ESP context accentuating the importance of written communication. Most importantly, however, she interprets the interactive reports with regard to a critical ecological perspective as a means of discursive creativity of patient-doctor relations with the potential to effect perceptual and affective changes.

Agnieszka Nowicka, in the subsequent **chapter six,** relates languaging to ethnomethodology and considers any discursive practice in the constructionist and interactional perspective governed by the primary function of language, namely, its indexicality. Language, again, receives a border-free conceptualisation in the form of languaging—using all available signs in communicating one's identity. Linguistic and cultural norms are perceived as subject to interpretative forces of the language users. Instead of an etic perspective in analysing intercultural talk, the author seems to prefer an emic one, which accentuates intersubjectivity of social norms and corresponding identities depending on micro-contextualisation. Consequently, assuming the non-normative character of the endolingual talk, she makes a parallel claim regarding the use of English as lingua franca, and underscores the ability of negotiating macro-social categories, traditionally comprehended as culturally normative. Analysing interaction samples, she focuses on micro-sequences as

instances of talk-in-interaction to account for the negotiating power of languaging in identity formation.

Chapter seven by Anna Szczepaniak-Kozak presents languaging in the context of the narrative approach methodology. By studying the narratives of Dutch students sojourning in Italy, the author aims to demonstrate the indexical character of language, always experience-based, contextualised, and demanding active and interactive participation of its users. Languaging in this project achieves a truly Vygotskyan perspective of consciousness-raising within the microgenetic domain. Verbalisation of students' experiences becomes a platform for self-recognition and realisation of the constitutive power of discursive practices.

Narrative inquiry as the exemplification of languaging also receives elaboration in **chapter eight** contributed by Emilia Wąsikiewicz-Firlej. The author, in turn, aims at analysing mid-aged EFL teacher narratives to account for the dynamic process of relating personal and professional identity shaped by broadly understood environment. Assuming a sociocultural perspective in language study and languaging as a mediation of mental process to reflect on personal experiences rather than communicate them directly, the author identifies moments in the narratives, in which the exteriorisation of ideas or concepts resulted in reshaping, or reformulation of teachers' identities. This way languaging of personal narratives may serve not so much as a way of sharing experiences but rather as means of building personal and professional self-reflection ensuing awareness and identification.

Dorota Werbińska, in **chapter nine**, presents an interesting incorporation of the concept of languaging into the process of developing professional self-awareness among novice language teachers. Understanding languaging as a means of **externalisation** (Swain, Kinnear and Steinman 2011), she applies it to the search of teacher self-positioning as well as positioning by other stakeholders of the educational process such as learners, colleagues, school directors and parents. Ultimately, she construes the dialogues with the teachers as a process of mediating their self-concepts and a way of reconceptualising their relations in the educational milieu. In conclusion, she offers personal insights and implications derived from languaging for language teacher education.

Elizabeth Woodward-Smith, **in chapter ten,** concluding this volume, applies the notion of languaging to developing intercultural competence among EFL students. Being a native speaker of English and a resident and an active academic teacher of another country (Spain), she offers first-hand and interesting comments pertaining to the importance of intercultural competence while relating to native speakers. As she duly

points out, while native speakers may easily accept incompetent language on the part of foreigners, they may not so readily approve of their inappropriate handling of local customs, perceived simply as "bad manners". Subsequently, analysing cognitive shortcuts as a form of stereotyping in advertising Britain as a destination point for travellers is recommended as a useful tool "for enhancing students' ability to detect biased information in the media". The process of languaging cultural stereotypes is suggested, among other uses, as a "help to reorient students' visions of the world around them".

The editors hope that this monograph presents an intellectual challenge for the European language teaching market, but its impact is not to be restricted to it. The notion of languaging lends itself easily to interdisciplinary approaches so its popularisation may stir and inspire other scholars. Its application to teaching, including language teaching, may constitute an intellectual support for new tendencies in education, accentuating humanistic or ecological values such as quality and identity. Hence, it is expected that potential readers will be academics (linguists, pedagogues, foreign language methodologists, culture-oriented researchers) as well as teachers, teacher trainees, and students of humanities and social studies.

Editors

CHAPTER ONE

FROM THE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGING
TO L2 PEDAGOGY

HADRIAN LANKIEWICZ

Abstract

In the following manuscript the author undertakes to present the notion of languaging as it has mainly been worked out in the field of linguistics. Language researchers, e.g., Halliday (1977; 1985), Lado (1979), Swain (2005; 2006) mention the term on various occasions giving it different interpretations. Sociocultural studies associate the notion with the primary semiotic function of language as meaning making out of all possible linguistic resources and perceive it as standing in contradiction to the narrow compartmentalised conception of language. Swain (2005; 2006), in turn, drives the notion from Vygostky's (1986) claim of a close correspondence between language and cognition and presents languaging as a way of learning as talking-it-through. Languaging also appears in the philosophical concept of autopoesis worked out by Maturana and Varela (1973, 1980). All these strains are presented here to be compatible with most contemporary ecological and experientialist cognitive approaches to language offering drastic consequences for language pedagogy.

1. Introduction: Defining languaging

The notion of languaging has recently become quite popular and applied in many disciplines from philosophy (Maturana 1988, 1995), across psychotherapy (Hall 1996; Lenchuk and Swain 2010; Swain and Lapkin 2011) to linguistics (Lado 1979; Mignolo 1996; Jørgensen 2010; Juffermans 2011) and language learning and teaching (Swain 2005; Swain 2006; Swain and Lapkin 1998; 2002; 2006). Be it philosophy or linguistics, the basis of the concept rests on the assumption that language is a way of cognising, making personal sense of the world, becoming

conscious of oneself and a means of identification (cf. Lenchuk and Swain 2010). Basically, this understanding of the notion of languaging is inscribed in Halliday's conception of systemic functional linguistics seeing language as "a meaning potential". Perceiving language as a systemic source for meaning, his concern is "naturally occurring language in actual contexts of use". He uses the term "languaging" as such to refer to "how people exchange meaning" (Halliday 1985, 193) or to the personal experience of using the language (Halliday 1977, viii).

Sociolinguistics and sociocultural studies comprehend languaging as a general human ability of making sense of the surrounding world in the form of a system of signs as peculiar only to the human species in the version allowing communication which changes the world. Languaging entails the perception of language beyond the traditional conceptualised category of a language in the national compartmentalised form seeing language as a political category necessary for the cementing of a nation. This can be done repressively by the imposition of norms or categories (e.g., linguistic nationalism of newly-independent countries), or language is simply construed as an imprint of a long process of the political and sociocultural formation. Such a perspective does not allow for a natural continuum of human linguistic creativity (exhibited locally or socially) and fails to delve into the problem of communication beyond the formal level of a language. This, in turn, entails the perception of a language as a sociocultural construction shaped by the existence of standards. Using a language is either conforming to or flouting the conventions. Hence the claim that "Languages in the plural exist only as sociocultural inventions" (Jørgensen and Juffermans 2011).

In the languaging perspective the basic analytical element is a feature. "Linguistic features appear in the shape of units and regularities" which "are also associated with values, meanings, speakers, places, etc. (Jørgensen 2010). Learning language in real life means learning new features, including some or all of these associations" (Jørgensen and Juffermans 2011). Thus the central issue of languaging is the distinction between using a language and using language, with the latter meaning any available linguistic resources uses by languagers, real agents of the ultimately produced system. The linguistic system in question, it may be assumed, is very personal, based on available resources, experiences, and sociocultural context. An inherent claim of languaging is that people do not normally speak a language but rather actively employ their linguistic predisposition—languaging. This can be observed both within a native language with all "lects" (dialetcs, sociolects, ect.) as well as cross-linguistically (bilinguals speaking more than just one of the languages but

something in-between as conceptualised in the notion of interlanguage. This may be a reason why in the world language continuum languages which are too close to each other are sometimes denied the status of a language but maintained as dialects (e.g., Czech, Slovak, or Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian). At the same time linguistics looks for syntactic similarities in geographically remote languages. Hence the claim that "Languages are conceived and languaging is practiced" (Mignolo 1996, 181). The ability of languaging does not have to derive from the existence of Universal Grammar and be identified with the language faculty, as assumed by Chomsky, since it necessitates the existence of a close correlation between the form and meaning (the result of brain modularity) and the idealised language user, both of which are difficult to maintain in the light of the sociocultural, cognitive and critical approaches to language study. The Vygostkyan tradition making strong correlation between cognition and language gains its momentum in contemporary linguistics and as pointed out by Danilewicz, since language is not a physical object "the concept of *language* or *languages* is quite elusive and can be regarded as a very abstract object, some mental construct or even as an illusion. This observation is corroborated by the fact that each person's linguistic system is different from the other person and can be properly compared to one's particular fingerprints or DNA" (Danilewicz 2011, 87). Languaging, reaching beyond a language as a self-contained system, allows for making a closer bond between human cognitive capacity and the linguistic reality and perceiving language as a general human condition of making sense of the surrounding world and one's own existence.

An interesting understanding of languaging in the field of language learning is presented by Swain (2005; 2006). Departing from the Vygotskyian theory of the mediatory role of language in cognition and the Hallidayan concept of language as an agent in meaning making, she proposes substituting the notion of output with that of languaging. The reason for this switch in terminology is to abandon "the image of language as a conveyor of a fixed message (what exists as thought)" (Swain 2006, 95). She opts for recognition that language production is more than mere articulation or verbalisation of ideas, which are also shaped by language in a dialectal relationship. Thus, for her languaging stands for "a dynamic, never ending process of using language to make meaning" (ibid., 96) and this articulation of thought possesses a new quality for the thought itself as it brings it to a new level in a more crystallised, artifactual form necessitating further articulation or reshape. Consequently, "languaging is a process which creates visible or audible product about which one can language further" (ibid., 97). Assuming that the production of spoken or

written language mediates remembering, attention and other higher mental processes "[l]anguaging is not just communicating; the construct of languaging adds to the meaning of communication the power of language to mediate attention, recall, and knowledge creation" (Swain and Lapkin 2011, 105).

The line of research on languaging launched by Swain and Lapkin rests largely on defining the term as "the activity of mediating cognitively complex ideas using language" (ibid.) with references to Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin, and Brooks (2010); Swain (2006, 2010); Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, Suzuki, and Brooks (2009). In the context of advanced learners, Swain (2006) presents after Becker (1991) the idea of languaging about language as a source of second language learning. Swain interprets Tocalli-Beller's (2005) research pertaining to the effectiveness of peer-peer dialogues on jokes and riddles presented in an extended activity-based approach in language learning and Watanabe's (2004) study activating the technique of talking-it-through, in which students' original sentences were reformulated by proficient speakers of the target language and the learners were expected "to language" about the feedback to re-shape their cognition through languaging. Believing strongly, after Vygotsky, in the value of interaction between an individual and others, as well as artifacts in developing higher mental processes, Swain offers languaging as a mediation tool in the process of learning. The mechanism of languaging is that it allows transforming thinking into language (the artifact) to be worked on further as a means of reflection and reshaping of cognition (Swain 2006, 106). If I comprehended it correctly, learning took place through meaning-oriented discovery techniques with language awareness being a by-product while students themselves "created new meanings and understandings—that is they learned both through and about language" (ibid.). Elsewhere in the article she accentuates students' agency as opposed to ready-made feedback offered by teachers for digestion. What is taken in depends not that much on the quality of feedback, but more on the activity of the learner as an agent (ibid., 100–1). I can only guess that teacher's feedback is offered as a last recourse when students have been given a chance to language about language. Linguistic reflection results not from metalinguistic activities but rather the experiential use of language resulting in higher language awareness.

Summarising the considerations on the concept of languaging so far, I may say that on the one hand it stands for an unbridled, natural way of using language beyond the normative constraints of a language. This dimension opens new areas of research in e.g., language acquisition and sociolinguistics and might be very inspiring and challenging for language

pedagogy. On the other hand, it underscores the dynamic relationship between thought and language, in which language ceases to be perceived as a mere conduit but rather performs a function of "coming-to-know-while speaking" (Swain 2006, 97). The two aspects are no way exclusive and I dare say fully integrated into the ecological approach to language learning (van Lier 2004) breaking with the normative, fixed-code perception of language in favour of human agency in the semiotic activity and experiential character of the so-called narratives of lives, or compatible with experiential language learning (Kohonen et al. 2001). The latter one accentuating the capacity of discourse as "an open dialogue" revitalises lived experiences and argues for their verbalisation as a remedy to reification of objectification of the world (Candlin 2001, xvi). Language awareness resulting from the concept of languaging obviously has repercussions for language pedagogy.

2. Vygotsky's legacy

Proponents of the idea of languaging make it apparent that the foundations for the concept are derived from Vygotskyian thought as presented to the English speaking world in translations (1978; 1986; 1987). Sociocultural regard to language inspired a bulk of contemporary approaches to language and its acquisition (cf. Lantolf 2000; Lantolf and Throne 2006; Swain and Deters 2007; and van Lier 2004 assuming basically a critical sociocultural approach).

Vygotsky's claim, which fired enthusiasm of linguists and pedagogues, was that of mediation theory seeing language as a tool in human interaction with the environment. The claim that mediation permeates all human activities stands for the fact that humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely, instead, on tools and labour activity, "we use symbolic tools, or signs to mediate and regulate our relationship with others and with ourselves" (Lantolf 2000, 80). The theory of mediation is complemented with the one of self-regulation, a feature attributed to all skilled adults, meaning that they are able to function in an autonomous way. It needs to be observed that an integral part of self-regulation is interaction with others. Vygotsky stands in opposition to Piaget and postulates that human cognition is not "private" and contained only to internal processes, it starts primarily as an intermental activity (interactions with others, with language as mediating tools) and is taken over at a later time by intra-mental activity (language as a mediation tool for the development of internal thinking and conscience). In this context, private speech of children is interpreted "as evidence of children's

growing ability to regulate their own behaviour—when, for example, a child talks to himself, while painting a picture, or solving a puzzle (Mitchell and Myles 2004, 198). Eventually, this exteriorised speech in later stages of human development becomes inner speech still performing the function of regulating thinking of every autonomous individual, no longer feeling the need to articulate external private speech. Nonetheless, Mitchell and Miles (ibid.) point out "when tackling a new task, even skilled adults may accompany and regulate their efforts with a private monologue. This very idea became the basis for the concept of languaging. However, Swain (2006) underlines that the term cannot be found in Vygotsky's writings.

Languaging is a natural extension of Vygotsky's ideas and is additionally informed by more contemporary developments in language psychology and education. It seems to be well-grounded to remember that his work is of unfinished and open-ended nature and as van Lier (2004, 16) says "we clearly need to place the deep insights afforded by Vygotsky's theories in the context in which we live and work, taking account of all the influences that are available to inform us". Thus straying from his original ideas and conflating them with incongruous theories is a signum temporis resulting from the process of mediation so vital for Vygotsky's work as inferred from the review of most contemporary application of sociocultural theories in the field of L2 education (Poehner 2012). Yet there is a danger that pedagogic interpretations of some proposals may lead to aligning incommensurable ideas as in the case of the notion of the zone of proximal development or scaffolding with comprehensible input (Lier 2004, 15; Dunn and Lantolf 1998). The bottom line of languaging is that the process of producing language lies in the claim that language performs a powerful role in human cognition and it possesses a mediatory function in shaping thinking, regulating, and mediating it "through interation with others and with the self (through private and inner speech)…" (Swain and Lapkin 2011, 106). Parsing the above sentence with regard to its constitutive Vygotskyan elements Swain and Lapkin (ibid.) point out that: 1) cognition is shaped by "[t]he interactions between an individual and the social world of people and its artifacts" (ibid.), and the interactions are transformed and internalised as mental processes with language as a mediatory tool for both interactions and internalisation; 2) "developmentally, mental processes are first (…) regulated by objects in the external world" (ibid.), then by the tool of language and once language is internalised it begins to regulate individual's cognitive process; and finally 3) the relationship between language and thought is given regard. Thus, accordingly the authors

support Vygotsky's (1986, 218–9; in Swain and Lapkin 2011, 106) claims that "thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" and that "thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form" with the ones by Smagorinsky that speaking "is an agent in the production of meaning" (2001, 240), or that "the process of rendering thinking into speech is not simply a matter of memory retrieval, but a process through which thinking reaches a new level of articulation" (1998, 172–3; ibid.). All in all, languaging (speaking or writing—the processes particular to production) is tightly interwoven with human cognitive processes.

The Vygotskyan line of thinking reverberates explicitly or implicitly through contemporary cognitive and functional approaches associated with the second cognitive revolution, which began in the 80s of the last century and was led by Lakoff, Langacker, Painter, or Faucconier among others. It is also compatible with the theory of systemic functional linguistics elaborated by Halliday and receives additional support in neuroliguistic research. All in all, it can be summarised in the perception of language as an integral part of cognition, not a neutral carrier of information produced by the mind, as Faucconier points out "language forms carry very little information per se, but drive their power by activating pre-existent networks in a way that creates emergent structures" (Fauconnier 1999, 123–4). Thus, discarding Chomskyan socially impermeable processing of Universal Grammar items, in more contemporary linguistics "there is little point in arguing about whether language influences thought or thought influences language for the two are functionally entwined to such a degree in the course of individual development that they form a highly complex, but nevertheless systematically coherent, mode of cognitive activity which is not usefully described in conventionally dichotomising terms as either 'thought' or 'language'" (Lee 1996, xiv; quoted in Danilewicz 2011, 88–89). The fundamental consequence of seeing language as meaning making or a semiotic activity is to construe it as a very individual experience resulting in different systems—by-products of languaging (interpersonal building, negotiating, re-formulating language-laden ideas).

Most compatible lines of thinking about language with the languaging perspective can be derived from the strain of experientialist cognition as opposed to objectivist cognition (Danilewicz 2011, 91). While the latter stance rests firmly on the belief in the existence of an objective reality and truth, and the "separation of symbols from what they mean" (ibid.), assuming "thought as algorithmic manipulation of arbitrary sounds" (ibid.), the former one presupposes that reality is "in large part construed

by the nature of our unique human embodiment" (Evans and Green 2006, 47). Thus human beings are constrained from having direct access to objective reality by their "ecological niche"—their habitat and the construction of human body or "human-specific cognitive structure and organisation that affect the nature of experience" (Danilewicz 2012, 92). This allows us to presume that reality is the working of human experience (projected reality—cf. Jackendoff 1983) in a very active constructive way as opposed to a mere collection of impressions in a behavioural fashion. The constitution of the human body makes the individual an active element of social environment and motivates their thoughts and actions. Cognition, an essential predisposition of the human species—a phylogenetically acquired set of innate capabilities—an ability to reason by making sense of the surrounding sign, receives its proper elaboration in the semiotic theories of language. However, only some of them highlight the intersubjective and tentative value of signs accentuating human activity in the semiotic process, e.g., Pierce (1992; 1998) in his triadic theory of the sign, or van Lier (2004) in his semiotic and ecological approach to language learning. The theory of experientialist cognition, no doubt, presupposes personal experiences as a precondition of creative meaning making. Danilewicz (2012, 93) summaries that "the theory of experientialist cognition views meaning as essentially involving the kind of structured experience that has its source in our having human bodies, the experience that comes from innate human sensory-motor capacities and perception, i.e. meaning is embodied, which entails that the outcome of our interaction with the word is motivated by our cognitive capacities" (Danilewicz 2011, 93).

The thing which makes human cognitive experience a particular one is the mediatory function of language as a tool for cognising. Nonetheless, cognitive linguistics supported by neuroscience underscores that language makes direct use of the same structures as their characteristic for perception or conceptualisation. Langacker (1995, 154), in this regard, poses a rhetorical question: "Is it in fact legitimate to characterise the apprehension of linguistic meanings as a kind of 'observation'? I think it is not irrelevant to note that our language itself encourages us to do so". If human cognition is governed by reification or categorisation, the same is true about language. The word "language" itself is a good example of human semiotic activity and the tendency towards building sematic mirages. Lamb (2000, 174) uses the term "language" to present the one-lexeme-one-thing fallacy understood as a process of conflating different concepts: language as a set of sentences, language as a system, and language as a linguistic process.

Assuming the belief that language use entails categorisation, which, in turn, is motivated by perception, experience and conceptualisation, I have selected, after others, to accentuate the notion of languaging to underscore the central and active role of a human being in the meaning making process out of available resources (affordances). Summarising the achievements of the second cognitive revolution, van Lier (2004, 124) recognises its antecedents mentioning among others Wittgenstein, Vygotsky, Pierce or Bakhtin to state that contemporary perception of language is "centrally implicated in cognitive as well as social activity, and indeed, language of course connects the cognitive and the social aspects of our activity" (ibid.).

3. Languaging in the philosophophy of Maturana

Languaging occupies a particular place in philosophy of Maturana—a Chilean biologist and philosopher, the founder of the term *autopoesis*. The term was introduced and adequately defined by Maturana and Varela (1973; 1980, 89). Translated directly form Greek, it stands for self-creation. In Maturana's philosophy it has been chosen to mean autonomy of living systems, which must possess a dynamic as a form of knowledge or cognition. Language as a text is believed to be such a system performing a cognising function for a human being. Deriving his theory from the biological interpretation of the experiential world, Maturana maintains that all organisms are information-closed and "all cognitive domains arise exclusively as the result of operations of distinction which are made by the organism itself" (Glasersfeld 1990).

Critics of his philosophy label it as radical structuralism and solipsistic epistemology and deny its commonsensical or scientific grounds (Swenson 1992). Doubting the possibility of getting "true", objective knowledge, Maturana resurrects the observer functioning in the experiential world (Glasersfeld 1990) and presents cognition processes as organism dependent. "Cognition is not a means to acquire knowledge of an objective reality but serves the active organism in its adaptation to its experiential world" (ibid.). It needs to be pointed out that "experiential worlds and their domains can be brought forth only by an acting observer…" (ibid.). An important element of relativity dominating this thought is the place of linguistic activity pervading human perception. He terms this activity as languaging, "we human beings find ourselves as living systems immersed in it" (ibid.)

Being blind to direct extrinsic factors, a human being has languaging as a way of adapting to the environment according to the present structure

(cognition embedded in the language). The world is the result of languaging and epistemologically human existence can be construed only from this dimension since: "[n]othing exists in human life outside language because human life takes place in language, and although we may imagine an independent, objective reality, that which we imagine is not independent from our languaging" (Maturana 1995). Languaging is to perform the reflective function of omnipresent autopoesis that "we become aware that all our explanations take place in a closed domain, and that reality and other explanatory notions are a priori assumptions that do not take out of the explanatory domains in which we exist as languaging beings" (ibid.).

Underlying human activity through languaging Glasersfeld (1990) interprets Maturana's constitution of the observer via language: "The observer, thus, arises from his or her own ways and means of describing, which is to say, by distinguishing him-or herself". Language is the way of mediation the "truth" but at the same time it is the constitutive element of identification of the observer who only then is able to tell the difference (observe). Glasersfeld proposes that "[by] distinguishing, I create myself as an observer", alluding to the Cartesian ontological principle. Language is a prerequisite of this distinguishing "[t]hat I, as a living organism, 'find myself immersed in language', means to me that I have the capability to *find* myself, and this capability, which involves a kind of *reflection,* belongs to what I call consciousness" (Glasersfeld 1990).

His philosophy assuming the centrality of languaging seems to be rooted in the Piercean dynamic semiotics of the sign being always social, taking place in the world or using Bakhtin's paraphrase "half someone's else's" (Bakhtin 1981, 345–6). Pierce also makes the observer an active creator of meaning in his view of coupling of signs, the moment when signs' meanings are created or negotiated. This bears similarity to Maturana's claim that languaging "is a manner of living in coordinations of doings, not a manner of symbolising the features of an independent reality" (Maturana 1995). The Piercean notion of a "ground" possibly stands for the observer, "the person's self, as the person centers and coordinates the semiosis" (van Lier 2004, 69). Languaging in Maturana's philosophy iterates Bakhtin's concept of the dialogicity of identity (consciousness) as derived from the phenomenological observation of *the self* and *the other*. The latter functions as an informative mirror to the former. Supposing my interpretation is sound languaging in Marturana' philosophy (social activity of making sense of the world) is a way of identification, even if it be untrue and solipsistic in nature. Epistemologically, however, only penultimate truths are available because

"all that we human beings talk about are relations" (Maturana 1995) not real things.

Interpreted pedagogically, Maturana foreshadows the role of languaging in education, the primary objective of which is helping the learner relate to the world and realise that knowledge is basically a set of interpersonal relations built by languaging (Maturana 1995). Languaging is the means for obtaining the goal of autopoetic creation—realisation of the fact of being an observer, or becoming conscious of oneself (Glasersfeld 1990). Maturana'a line of thinking about language reverberates polyphonically across the whole content of this article.

4. Languaging–pedagogical dimension

Assuming Vygotskyian correlation between language and cognition supported by Whorf's (1956, 207–8) criticism of natural logic, perception-conditioned conceptualisation and seeing language as some kind of observation (a way of viewing the world) as worked out by Langacker (1995), I venture to say that linguistic categorisation corresponds directly with the cognitive aspect of this process. Perception of reality, which is constructed through our embodiment (Evans and Green 2006) is mediated through language which, in turn, is also a cognitive construction mediated through experiences. Thus the concept of languaging with the dynamic "ing" as an inherent component may have radical consequences for the place of linguistic activity in education including L2 instruction.

The broader, sociolinguistic line of thinking, delineated in the introduction is compatible with van Lier's (2004) idea of educational linguistics as derived from the ecology of learning. Even if educational linguistics, as he points out, appears quite often in the name of academic courses or names of university departments, it pertains more to the field of applied recognising balkanisation of the theoretical and practical aspects (ibid., 3). His vision of educational linguistics delineates a "transdisciplinary endeavor" as highlighted by (Halliday 2001) with the impact both for linguistics and education. The former pertains to the bridging of theoretical linguistics with the language of schools, which might result, among others, in verification of theories in the real world and alternately bring about improvements in teaching linguistics to students and teachers.

Assuming languaging as a prerequisite for the epistemology of human condition (Maturana 1995), particularly its ideological dimension (cf. Fairclough 1992), and more colloquially to human social existence (van Lier 2004, 2), language awareness seems to be an indispensable element

for educating autonomous language users, learners and responsible citizens (cf. Benson and Voller 1997). Thus schooling in general may be inspired by educational linguistics to make "the study of language a more central, relevant, and interesting part of the education of teachers especially since they increasingly face heterogeneous classes of students" (Trappes-Lomax and Ferguson 2002; quoted in van Lier 2004, 3). Recognised centrality of language in education envisages researching educational discourse far away from the mere study of its properties and functions, mostly in the normative perspective but rather implies the languaging perspective (Swain 2006, 100) where students' native language, dialects, interim languages and various sociolects occupy a legitimate place in the student cognitive effort (Lankiewicz 2013, forthcoming).

The position of language in education has recently obtained more attention in researching educational discourse as initiated by Bernstein's (1971) sociolinguistic studies pertaining to the restricted and elaborated codes and relates issues. No doubt, language has eventually been recognised as a primary source for meaning making in the school milieu. Sociocultural theories of language as represented by van Lier or Halliday underscore the semiotic activity of the language user in the social context subjugating formal aspects of language as grammar, or lexicogrammar in Halliday's case, to their meaning. Significant in this regard is the concept of grammaring (Larsen-Freeman 2003) seeing grammar as a dynamic ever-changing system governed primarily by the inherent meaning. Thus learning grammar should be perceived so much as juggling its structures but rather as conceptualising the meaning inscribed in them. Halliday (1975) and Painter (1984; 1996) underscore the role of language in learning, maintaining that building knowledge of the world would be impossible without recourse to linguistic measures. The mediatory function of language is best illustrated by Painter (1986, 67) who provides the following example in which Stephen (S), a young child, is assisted by his older brother Hal (H) in finding the reason for not finding a seal picture in his fish book:

> H: Seals aren't fish. That's why. They're mammals.
> S: Are seals mammals?
> H: Yes, cause they don't lay eggs; they have babies.

Working in the zone of proximal development, following Vygotskyian terminology, or languaging (verbalisation) of the problem, there takes place cognitive categorisation—classification of seals as mammals with the tentative presentation of the most characteristic feature for the ensuing

taxonomy. An apparently innocent chat is marked with a powerful learning potential. A natural, contextualised language use, laden with cognitive burden (hence languaging) reaches, as Painter (ibid.) points out, far beyond the immediate tangible meaning.

In the narrower line of thinking, as suggested by Swain (2006), languaging may be considered as a technique (I would not insist on this particular term) of learning—cognising the content while speaking or writing. As presented in her therapeutic studies, languaging narratives (talking about experiences) facilitated cognition of patients suffering from mild cognitive impairment (MCI) (Swain and Lapkin 2011). Generalising from this, I may presume that verbalisation—she consciously refrained from the use of this term in her earlier papers in favour of languaging (Swain 2006, 86)—reinforces learning processes, such as retention and understanding. She exemplifies it with the study of the facilitating value of self-explanation (Chi et al. 1994; quoted in Swain 2006, 97) in which students saying things aloud to themselves or to others exhibited deeper understanding of concepts they were intending to learn. Elsewhere, the same phenomenon is referred to as "talking-it-thorough" (Swain and Lapkin 2002) or "coming-to-know-while speaking" (2006). The claim can be corroborated by my teaching experience seeing that lecture presentations and explanation of things to students and colleagues often result in my own reflection or experiencing "eureka moments". Thus creating conditions for languaging experiences and the learning content may facilitate learning conditions. The need for communication may, after all, be perceived as building a common cognitive platform. Interpersonal communication, even small talk, is marked by building cognitive bridges. Looking for a common platform is so evident in joke telling, the activity in which shared cognitive structure is indispensable for catching the punchline. In this form of languaging we probe our cognitive maps against the ones represented by our interlocutors. Languaging as a way of learning reverberates with the Bakhtinian concept of dialogicity representing the need for *the other* (real or virtual) in establishing *the self*. Consequently, assuming that learning is a personal construction mediated through language, it does not only necessitate language use, but also a conscious personal voice as embodied in the idea of languaging.

5. Languaging and L2 acquisition

Matthiessen, the co-author and interpreter of Halliday's ideas, designates a place for languaging in the cline of instantiation, the space between text and the overall potential of a language, or the space between

"acts of meaning that make up a text to the meaning potential that makes up the linguistic system" (2006, 39–42). According to Matthiessen this is the space of language learning manifested by the phenomenon of languaging to stress the fact that language is "both system and process to avoid reifying it" (cf. Halliday 1973; Swain 2006; quoted in Matthiessen 2006, 42). As to learning Matthiessen envisages it as "moving up and down the cline: learners 'distil' their own personal meaning potential out of acts of meaning in the text by moving up the cline, and they test this changing meaning potential in the instantiation of new acts of meaning, confirming or revising it" (Matthiessen 2006, 42). He claims the levels of instantiations are especially vital for advanced learners while for beginners the challenge of L2 learning may be more in the hierarchy of stratification. Thus the more advanced learners become, the more they focus on the meaning potential. As I understood it, neither the native speaker nor the L2 learners are ever able to reach the "actual" collective potential of a language, as we all operate with personal sub-potentials. This entails the existence of idiosyncrasies, personal languages, which in L2 acquisition have become to be recognised as interlanguage, learner language, an approximative system or idiosyncratic dialect (cf. Lankiewicz 2010, 72–73).

An additional claim derived from sociolinguistic studies and the semiotic approach is that language, be it mother tongue or an L2, is defined as a collective resource (the whole languaging dimension). An idealised syntax or idealised denotative meaning are theoretical illusions of formalistic linguistics. Hallidayan lexicogrammar, a stratum in his systemic functional linguistics does not function in isolation. It is an integral part of the whole system of meaning making since every use of language has a potential of changing the system (Larsen-Freeman 1997, 148). Thus languaging in this sociolinguistic perspective is perceived as a continuum or more appropriately as a cline (to account for its multidimensional fractal nature, as opposed to the flatness embedded in the notion of a continuum) of meaning making resulting from the potential inscribed in linguistic systems, or in "semiotic resources for meaning" (Halliday 1985, 192), which van Lier (2004) refers to as affordances.

Both Hallidayan and Vygostkyan thoughts and their interpretations in the form of languaging have promising consequences for the understanding of the second language acquisition process and language teaching practices. Proponents of the Vygotskyian line of thinking accentuate that "SCT views language in a manner fundamentally different from traditional SLA conceptions of language. Whereas traditional psycholinguistics views language as conveyor of an already formed

thought, SCT views language as a tool of the mind, a tool that contributes to cognitive development and is constitutive of thought" (Swain and Deters 2007, 821–822).

The critical approach to language and its learning goes further than the traditional sociocultural language studies. Fairclough (1992), drawing on the works of social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault or Jurgen Habermas, perceives discourse as the construction of the dominant minority. Questioning the notion of appropriateness elaborated by sociocultural studies, Fairclough calls for critical language awareness to be able to see beyond naturalised, commonsensical conventions and discourse practices and become more conscious users of language. He surely does not conceive of language as an established set of idealised features—these are imposed on languagers to smuggle ideologies. Language is in no way a conveyor of concepts hidden in the mind, alternately, being a social construct. It is the means of categorisation and perception of the external reality. The representative function of language does not allow interiorisation of the external reality; it also shapes the perception of the world. "Languages do not exist as real entities in the world and neither do they emerge from or represent real environments; they are, by contrast, the inventions of social, cultural and political movements" (Makoni and Pennycook 2007, 2). This approach posits many implications for L2 learning such as the position of a dialect, linguistic imperialism, critical cultural awareness, the idea of lingua franca in the case of English. Languaging may pertain to the unconstrained use of all linguistic resources of the learner as a means of manifesting awareness and control over the linguistic content. L2 language learning is more than, for example, learning cultural conventions, particular to a given linguistic area, in order to come closer to the native command of the language (cf. Byram 1997). Engaging students in languaging, may be seen as a way for working at critical language awareness.

The notion of languaging underscores the priority of human activity. In learning, activity means learners' autonomy when "they are allowed to define the meaning of their own acts within social context" (Lier 2004, 8). Supporters of languaging also capitalise on the relation between language and thought and challenging Fodor's *mentalese*, the language of thought (1975), opt for Vygotsky's mediation and ecological linguistics. Crucial to understanding languaging is Reed's ecological psychology of human activity of making sense of words and signs or the experiences (action, perception, interpretation) cycle—"the effort after meaning" (Reed 1996; quoted in Fettes 2002, 33). The relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1986) also accounts for the fact that language experience is conditioned

by direct experiences or alternately may be the basis of learning as suggested by Vygotsky's theory. It is, in turn compatible with the idea of experiential learning by Kohonen et al. (2001). Experiential education of language learning envisaged in the series of articles in the volume emphasises that social formation rests firmly upon the linguistic dimension and thus it is of a very specific nature. The contributors make the proposed approach remarkably different from the umbrella notion of learner-centeredness or cooperative learning. As Candlin (2001, xii) points out:

> For Kohonen and his colleagues, however, the reconstructing of classroom discourses towards a more participatory, and individual experience-based interaction order is not motivated so much by how they view this as a necessary condition for successful second language acquisition, as has been the case with many SLA theorists, though it is and they do, but by their philosophical commitment to the humanizing of learning and to the signalling of such discourse reconstructing as a prime agent in the development of critically aware citizenry in the context of social instruction outside the school.

The reconstruction in question pertains mostly to "the languaging of schooling" understood as "reforming and reconstructing the nature of the interactions and their discourses between teachers and pupils" (ibid.). Further reading affirms that languaging is approached from a critical perspective in which *the otherness* in foreign language teaching is perceived as a constitutive element of *the self*. A foreign language is accommodated inter-discursively within the context of the linguistic continuity and the construction of learning to manifest identity and personal voices through enhanced transactions and interactions. The need for articulation or verbalisation of experiences of the learner as a way to the conceptualisation of a foreign language in the trinocular perspective (cf. Halliday 1996) haunts the book.

The notion of languaging has at least two direct implications for L2 acquisition. First, it allows perceiving language learning as basically a meaning making process in a systemic functional activity. Thus it restores the position of the native language as a resource in the process of languaging. In turn, since language use triggers dialectal dependence on cognition (as manifested by Vygostkyan tradition), language learning entails the need for languaging (put forth by Swain)—tentative articulation (putting it down) as a way of speaking the mind while shaping the thought. Breaking the conduit metaphor for language as a way of "transcribing" thinking, any language use becomes the way of learning. Learning is always done through language, hence Matthiessen, after Halliday,

articulates the need for language-based learning while the ecological approach puts language in the centre of attention calling for educational linguistics. This new understanding of the nature of language entails revision of certain deeply rooted constituents of the language learning process such as: input and output.

Inadequacy of Krashen's theory of comprehensible input as a primary condition of L2 language acquisition has long been reckoned inadequate in explaining the phenomenon (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman 2006). Its basic foundation that understanding of decoded messages accelerates language acquisition and that language thus grows by itself as stipulated by Chomsky has been totally debunked. It needs to be remembered that Krashen's theory was an extension of Chomsky's ideas. As a counterbalance the output hypothesis was put forth by Swain and Lapkin (1995) claiming that the learner needs opportunities for language production, not only for the sake of practicing it, but also to understand the construction of language. Van Lier (2004), capitalising on the semiotic theory of Pierce and sociocultural approaches, pens the "input metaphor" for reducing the role of the learner to the idle absorber and perceiving language as a fixed, socially invulnerable system (ibid., 139–140) and postulates the learner working on affordances as an alternative (Lankiewicz 2011). Perceiving the learner as an active creator of meanings out of the "semiotic budget" of the environment, he underscores the value of multilevel interactions in the process of learning mediated through language, which in its turn is mediated by affordances. The notion of affordances seems to be commensurable with the idea of languaging superseding both the shortcomings of the input and the output conduit metaphor to manifest the central role of the learner "as an agent-operating-with-mediational means" Wertsch (1998, 26).

The concept of languaging, drawing on interactionist theories of language, deconstructs the whole process of language learning. It assumes centrality of an individual in the process of creation, not in the narrow Chomskyan way as the working of a blueprint of a language in a computational way appealing to an inborn language faculty (LAD or Universal Grammar), but rather working out language features in the social and personal context as meaningful units (concepts underlying experiences). Thus languaging is primarily the process of creating meanings with the linguistic system as a by-product of this activity as claimed by emergentists, with grammar regularities as the sedimentation of most commonly used forms (Hopper 1998, 158). Languaging is viewed as a dynamic social phenomenon with the language system idiosyncratically constructed by its users. The process of language

acquisition may be seen more as governed by personal factors and variability rather than stability (cf. Lankiewicz 2012) which translated into language pedagogy means more dependence on the use of contextual factors as found or built in a foreign language classroom to fashion a foreign language as a narrative of life (van Lier 2004). Heather and van Dam (2002) working in the same mode as van Lier edited a volume presenting multiple interactions the learner engages in while learning the language and continue to label this approach to language acquisition as ecological. This situated and contextualised perception of language learning manifests the importance of levels of interaction, such as spatial, social, cultural, education and many others exerting an influence on the final shape of the learning process. Articles included in the volume discard the notion of normativity and adhere to emergence of linguistic features. The authors see learning as basically languaging, even if the term remains only implied. Language as a system emerges from its contextualised use to produce meaning—thus languaging. Fettes (2002, 32), looking for an all-encompassing theory of language acquisition "that explains how linguistic order can emerge from interactions of speakers displaying a wide variety of abilities, beliefs, and purposes, rather than taking such order as the primary reality from which speakers are viewed as deviating", recalls views which underlie the concept of languaging as a natural uncompartmentalised human ability. Recalling Bakhtin (1981) and Harris (1980; 1981), or Smith (1990), he points out the fact that the conception of "languages" is the invention of the modern era. It engages in ideological practices forcing normative tendencies to textual studies and tries to bring order and scientific explanation forgetting about "uncertainty endemic to all human affairs, in language as elsewhere" (Bakhtin 1981; Bauman 1992; quoted in Fettes 2002, 32). Fettes reminds the reader of Paul Friedrich's call for a "more realistic view" of linguistic reality, in which "discreteness can make room for continuity, exact meaning for associative meaning, passive reproduction for active creativity, the generic 'native speaker' for the unique individual, and in which 'the range of order' can concede an enduring place of chaos" (Friedrich 1985; quoted in Fettes 2002, 32). Consequently, the ecological view of language and its learning is delineated as a remedy revising the ontological perception of what language is and the epistemological dimension of language as a way to knowing.

The ecological approach is somehow compatible with the experiential cognitive approach aiming "to understand the mental system that is in charge of meaning construction, cognitive scientists discover the cognitive structures of the semantic substrate that govern our experience of