

THROUGH LANGUAGES, STRENGTH FOR MANY PEOPLES

Peter J. Heffernan, PhD, Professor of Education, University of Lethbridge, Alberta

INTRODUCTION

The maintenance of biodiversity is currently generally valued. In concert with this, researchers (including this author) are now looking into what the promotion (or want of same) of languages diversity in and through education, among other social institutions, means for a strengthened, more vibrant (or weakened, less diverse) human condition. The senior professor in Alberta's universities in second and foreign language teacher preparation, he has worked throughout his career on issues pertaining to language maintenance and expansion and the relationship between language and culture. Indeed, his doctoral thesis (Heffernan, 1995), completed in French (his second language) at Laval University in Sainte-Foy, Quebec, explored this question in considerable depth, looking at the cultural authenticity (or want of same) and broadening of horizons (or limitations of same) for Anglophones studying in Canadian French immersion programs.

More recently (in the course of the past five-seven years), he has been involved in projects looking at similar issues from different, though related, perspectives. One deals with language-of-dissemination practices of Canadian scholars, particularly those working in languages and intercultural education, while the other deals with Aboriginal language maintenance and leveling the certification playing field so that reasonable, if perhaps temporary, accommodations are made to allow for Aboriginal communities to be able to meet teacher supply needs without diminishing Aboriginal language learners' exposure to quality language teaching.

In this paper, he hopes now to be able to provide a brief overview of his recent research findings (in what is actually an ongoing research project) on language-of-dissemination practices of Canadian scholars, particularly those working in languages and intercultural education. This work is cited in way of example of what, this researcher believes, is a generalized kind of sleep-walking towards monolithic monolingualism disguising what may well be a widespread form of involuntary, if not also possibly intended, cultural imperialism.

He hopes to promote some meaningful discussion and reflection on our part collectively as educational academics and researchers, practicing teachers and aspiring professional educators (student teachers).

BIODIVERSITY AND LINGUISTIC/CULTURAL DIVERSITY CONNECTIONS

In our introduction, the assertion has been made that understanding about the maintenance of biodiversity is widespread and the idea generally valued. In way of support for this, look to such signposts as the career's worth of efforts by Canadian scientist and media personality, David Suzuki. Look also to the work of such groups as Greenpeace and numerous wildlife foundations. Yet again, look to the ever-growing presence of 'Green' in politics both in Canada and abroad. Whether or not one subscribes wholeheartedly to all of their methods or even their entire message, it is clear that we are more aware now than ever, in our developed (and developing) world, about the role biodiversity plays in making our world more robust and stronger.

Interestingly, WestCAST 2008 conference's organizers have seemingly picked up on this idea also with our organizing conference theme being: "From Many Peoples, Strength". In the human arena too, diversity is now being seen as more desirable (if not necessary) not because of ideological leanings the one way or the other but rather because current science(s) very much support(s) this idea. This can be seen on both micro- and macro-levels: genetic strength appears to come from diversity just as our economic survival and well-being depends more and more on our fluidity of borders and policy-making that deals intelligently and effectively with workers' migration in the face of demographic changes worldwide.

For a very well documented, thoroughly well thought through reflection on the connections between biodiversity and linguistic/cultural diversity, see Skutnabb-Kangas's (2000: 63-99) chapter on 'Connections Between Biodiversity and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity' in her massive tome, *Linguistic Genocide in Education – Or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* She enunciates numerous causal links between biodiversity and linguistic/cultural diversity, citing case examples from around the world where biodiversity and linguistic/cultural diversity flourish and, concomitantly, where biodiversity is shortchanged in synchrony with one-language policies and cultural genocide masking as multicultural afterthoughts in a one-dominant-culture world. Globalization in any of a number of its steamroller modes, she contends, is a powerful force in all of this. I am over-simplifying in my paraphrasing and summarizing her work, so readers of this article are encouraged to read her, if they are interested in exploring this whole idea further.

Having made a tentative link between the researcher's work and WestCAST's 2008 conference theme and having set the stage somewhat, let us turn our attention now to his related research work and findings.

LANGUAGE-OF-DISSEMINATION PRACTICES OF ACADEME

In recent years, after literally a whole career in which there has been near unanimity among second- and foreign-language and intercultural education theoreticians and researchers about the desirability of as much target language use as possible in the target language classroom (since Moskowitz, 1976, if not before), one is struck by recent

studies (Duff and Polio, 1990; Turnbull, 2001) looking into language practice in second-language classrooms whose authors have attempted to find a rationale for more vernacular in such classrooms (generally, read “more English” for North America). While these studies have some merit, their rationalizing in their conclusions mainly represent aberrations from widely accepted understandings about how more target language in the classroom leads to more proficient second-language learners and classrooms generally understood to be exemplary, and remembered as such, by those who have had the good fortune to spend time in them, while being turned on to another language and its possibilities for unlocking the perspectives embedded in another culture and its worldview.

Yet, while researchers and theoreticians have extolled the virtues of as much target language as possible in the second-language classroom and cajoled student teachers and teaching practitioners to follow this practice, the practice of these same educational leaders has, ironically, been perplexing and seemingly hypocritical for it has amounted in large measure to what, for this paper’s purposes, we will reduce to the dictum: “Do what I say, not what I do”. The evidence of the research we have conducted into language-of-dissemination practices of academe and on which we have published in recent years (Heffernan, 2002; 2007; 2008a; 2008b) shows demonstrably, even overwhelmingly, that academics, when it comes to language used in disseminating their research and ideas, have been guilty of what, for our purposes here, we will reduce to a second dictum: “not practicing what one preaches”.

For a full review of the author’s findings, readers are encouraged to look at his other publications cited above. Briefly here, in way of examples, the Canadian Modern Language Review (CMLR), which board he has recently joined as the board member representing Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, while espousing an editorial policy of considerable publication in both French and English, along with some publication on other languages, has a radically different track record in the period the author has studied to date (the decade of the 1990s). There has been no publication in the CMLR in the 1990s of articles in languages other than French or English, with a disproportionately, even overwhelmingly, high percentage of its articles having been published in English. Ironically, even in an issue dedicated wholly to French immersion pedagogy and research, all articles published were in English. In looking at the language of referential discourse in all of these articles, it is clear from their bibliographies that English-language publications refer almost exclusively to other works authored in English. For those published in the French language, there does appear to be more balance in the referential discourse, with considerably more reference made in the bibliographies to publications in French, English and in other languages. It seems that, by the very act of thinking to publish in a language other than English, at least in the North American context, one is more conscious of the language in which one is working and more susceptible to refer also to other works in languages other than English.

As his other publications note, the author has found similar results in his analysis of language-of-publication patterns in a number of other journals (e.g., *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, *French Review*, *Hispania*, *Journal of the Canadian Association of*

Applied Linguists, among others) specifically directed to readerships working in second-language pedagogy and research. He is continuing this research to update his data for the current decade (2000-present) to see if there is any change in recent years' language-of-publication patterns and to get in more depth, through interviews with selected practitioners, at why so much publication in second-language, especially language-dedicated, journals is done in English and why individuals make the choices they do relative to language-of-publication for disseminating their research findings and ideas.

CONCLUSION

Does any of this make any difference? The author contends that it does indeed. The audiences of these journals all work in and read in languages other than English. Just as English-language educational practitioners know they need to use their language to improve in it, so too is this true for educators who work in other languages. Teacher trainers in Faculties of Education across Canada regularly bemoan the limited amount of material available in French for their courses taught, often in French, but where they are compelled to use English-language publications. The author, a member for many years of the Universities Consortium of the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, has heard this brought up in that context countless times over the years. Additionally, alternative points of view are expressed through intercultural and cross-lingual dialogue, even in academe. By limiting our language of exchange so much to English, we are curtailing this potential broadening of vision about our own practice. In the final analysis, *vouloir, c'est pouvoir*. If we want this to change, the enemy is ourselves; educators working in second-language pedagogy and research will have to change their own practices with respect to language-of-publication.

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