From multiliteracies to posthumanism: Language, literacy, education and society at a digital crossroads

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L2DL/AZCALL
CERCLL

- Digital literacies — computer-assisted language learning
- Convergence and divergence in disciplinary orientations to language, literacy, and learning

1. Epistemological turf
2. From multiliteracies - digital multimodal literacies focus
3. To posthumanism - MALL focus
Digital language and literacy teaching: 6 propositions

1. Language is a medium for human communication.

2. Humans have an innate capacity for language/s.

3. Language/s can be materialized in different technical media (as can nonlinguistic communication).

4. Digitally-mediated communication facilitates and extends multimodality, and introduces novel conventions.

5. Digitally-networked communication enables cognitive distribution.

Common ground

1. Language is a medium for human communication.
2. Humans have an innate capacity for language/s.

Je parle 16 langues... pour le moment. Vous pouvez changer ma langue en allant dans les réglages Siri.

Nous pouvons discuter en allemand, anglais, portugais brésilien, cantonais, coréen, danois, espagnol, français, italien, japonais, mandarin, néerlandais, russe, suédois, thaï et turc.
More or less common ground

3. Language(s) can be materialized in different technical media (as can nonlinguistic communication).

Then the middle Billy Goat Gruff walked across the bridge and the troll said, "Who's that coming over my bridge?"
The middle Billy Goat said, "I want to go over the bridge please," and the troll roared, "Yes!"

So the middle Billy Goat Gruff went over the bridge, stompity plomp, stompity plomp, and he ate the grass on the hill.
4. Digitally-mediated communication facilitates and extends multimodality, and introduces novel conventions.

Patrick Neate
ur profile pic: happy - smiling & smoking. ur last post: "home!" ur hrt gave out @35. ur profile undeleted 6 months on. ur epitaph: "home!"
Quicksand

5. Digitally-networked communication enables cognitive distribution.

From multiliteracies ...  (New London Group, 1996)

- Language and literacy education have morphed and changed with rapidly evolving digital media.

- Global cultural flows have changed social demographics in our schools and communities.

Joyce Public School, northwest Toronto
Toronto, Canada

- Official languages act (English/français): 1969
- Multiculturalism policy: 1971/1988
Official bilingualism - plurilingual society
Our ventures into multiliteracies...

- Language and literacy as construed in the curriculum in the early 2000s...

- Literacy as language written down. Language = English.

- Alternative = French.

- Problem: 16 different languages in the classroom. None is French. Few speak English.
Research agenda

- **Epistemological questions:** What is literacy in the 21st century? How is literacy constituted and performed?

- **Pedagogical questions:** How can we teach and assess language and literacy as contemporary social practice in a digitally-embedded, superdiverse urban context?

- **Socio-political questions:** How do we lobby educational policy makers to anticipate and accommodate rapidly changing literacy practices?
Project-based, experiential learning
Changing the paradigm: From timetabled language classes to plurilingual spaces

- **Systemic language education**
- French immersion; core French; international languages
- **Extracurricular language education**
- Vietnamese and Cantonese after school continuing education programs
- **Socially-situated programmatic language education**
- collaborative, project-based educational spaces that welcome plurilingual inclusion
- linguistically customized resources--via local and digital mediation  (Lotherington, 2011; 2013)
Everyone studies the same languages.

Non-official languages are understood in terms of heritage.

Reading precedes writing; they are discrete processes.

Only official languages are recognized as valid in school.

Literacy is alphabetic and print-based.

4 skills
ideals of language

English literacy

4—skills
ideals of language

Non-official languages
understood—in terms of heritage

4—skills
ideals of language

English literacy

4—skills
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Creating plurilingual, multimodal texts

Imagine a world: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zabcX_zoP0
HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN COUNTRY

Written by Valerie Wyatt AND Illustrated by Fred Rix
and understand how governments work...

• Stake out your identity: geopolitics of nation building

• Run your country: develop, interpret and institute constitutional laws

• Meet the neighbours: develop global diplomacy

Name: Gamethindia

Languages: English and Urdu
Population: 9,000,000

National Motto: We believe, we achieve

Flag:

red is bravery
black is the sky
green is the land

National Anthem:
Globalization

- the global in a child’s eyes

...
Globalization

• from an adult perspective…
To posthumanism...
via mobile-assisted language learning
Communication and the mobile lifestyle

20th century models of communication

21st century communication
• “Technology comprises, first, artefacts and technical systems, second, the knowledge about these and, third, the practices of handling these artefacts and systems.” (Bijker, 2010, p. 64)
Models of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)

• **App-only approach** (Reinders & Pegrum, 2015) / **content-oriented learning** (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009)
  
  • accessing an online language course

• **Design-oriented learning** (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009)
  
  • using the affordances of mobile technologies to customize language learning activities
Apps for language learning

- What apps are marketed for (English) language teaching and learning?

- What epistemologies of language underlie app ELT curricula?

- What pedagogies drive mobile learning?
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<td>duolingo</td>
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<td>MENTiSE</td>
<td>LINGVIST</td>
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Issues...

- Outdated, inadequate learning theories
- Low level content
- Poor achievement tests
- Tedious repetitive drills
- Decontextualized vocabulary memorization
- All testing, no teaching
- Importing old media language competencies
- Deprofessionalization of language teaching: "Rosetta Stone Studio is searching for native UK English speakers to facilitate a series of energetic language classes for beginner to advanced students."
From *app* to *chatbot*?

- The rise of the *chatbot* offers a scary scenario for human cognition—but a potentially interesting new tool to utilize in language teaching.

**The Biggest Players In Chat**

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<tr>
<th>App</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Active Users</th>
<th>Use Of Bots And AI</th>
<th>Can You Hail A Cab?</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kik Messenger</td>
<td>Ted Livingston, Union Square Ventures, RRE, Spark Capital, Tencent</td>
<td>800 million</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American teens, 16-24 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>650 million</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American teens, 16-24 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td>WeChat/Weixin</td>
<td>Tencent</td>
<td>215 million</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Asian, mostly Chinese, 25-34 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINE</td>
<td>Naver Corp.</td>
<td>1 billion</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific and Middle East, 16-44 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Middle East, Asia, 16-54 years old</td>
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Have you heard? Apps are dead; chatbots are the new apps. And they will soon be doing everything, from taking your pizza orders to scheduling your meetings. This is the future and it’s going to be terrible.

The rise of the chatbot has been foretold for some time but only in the past few weeks with Facebook’s *Messenger bots*, chat app Kik’s *bot store* and the rise of subversive *artbots* have they really hit the public consciousness.
Today's societies, we then assume, are thoroughly technological and all technologies are pervasively cultural. Technologies do not merely assist in everyday lives, they are also powerful forces acting to reshape human activities and their meanings.

Bijker, 2010, p. 67
Some educators worry that the kind of active, collaborative learning facilitated by Web 2.0 is being eroded by a slick, corporatized ‘appification’ of the web (Quitney, Anderson & Rainie, 2012), leading to a learning landscape populated by individually purchased, independently used, stand-alone apps training limited sets of knowledge and skills.

Reinders & Pegrum, 2015, p. 2
Human communication

Machine communication

digital language and literacies

Language/s

Literacies

Human communication
Digital language and literacy teaching: 6 propositions

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1. Language is increasingly a medium for non-human communication, too.

2. We can teach languages, too. We are teaching animals and machines to use human languages. Machines are also teaching us.

3. Materializing language — and nonlinguistic human and machine communication — has morphed from static print encoding to a plethora of digital forms using technical media that are socially neither optional nor an add-on.

4. Communication can be variably materialized yielding multisemiotic, plurilingual, multimodal, dynamic and interactive texts. Encoding conventions have changed as part of this!

5. Distributed cognition across people and machines in socio-technical networks is seamless and mobile.

6. Yup. How are you going to change that?
Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today in the L2DL/AZCALL symposium.

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Over to you…
References

- Olson, 2016: http://www.forbes.com/sites/parmyolson/2016/02/10/kik-bots-messaging-facebook-wechat/#8ebd3325712c