

New opportunities for languages learning through 21st century knowledge-building communities

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Abstract

This chapter explores how language learning pedagogies are changing as a result of new technologies and opportunities for international collaboration, and glocal community engagement in the facilitation of purposeful conversations that respond to mutual needs. It explores various initiatives that have emerged as a result of creating connections to fulfil the need for more authentic languages learning spaces (O’Neill 2015; Yardley 2008). These initiatives show how practices have responded to opportunities afforded by digital communication technologies and social networking, providing for both international language-exchange and more localised community involvement in using English, as well as facilitating students’ use of their home languages and cultures. The way such approaches are able to build participants’ capacity, encourage authentic and deeper languages learning (Tochon 2014), add value to educational experiences—as well as sustain student engagement—is described and discussed. The potential of these approaches is further explored through the lens of knowledge-building communities (Bindé 2005) and the importance of student voice and agency, and intercultural literacy for the reshaping of languages policy, curriculum and practice. A model of operation is advanced and explored in terms of language learning being at the forefront of a modern responsive and innovative education system that acknowledges our globalised world and diverse multilingual contexts (Spring 2015).

Keywords: Authentic language learning, intercultural literacy, knowledge-building communities, languages education, languages education policy, multilingual societies

Introduction

Societal change has occurred at an increasingly rapid rate since the industrial revolution. This shift from agrarianism laid the groundwork for mass print communication, faster transport and automisation from which the ‘information age’ has emerged (King 2011; Toffler 1980). This change is unparalleled in the way discoveries and inventions have dramatically impacted at so many levels to spawn a transformation into the ‘new world’ of the 21st century.

With Western epistemologies at the forefront of what has become a knowledge economy, there has been a heightened reliance on the ability to effectively communicate and critically dialogue within the context of globalisation. In advancing this concept, Bindé (2005), in his report to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), notes how the creation of contemporary knowledge-building communities rely on collaborative, social–capacity building practices. He specifies these depend on ‘lines of reflection and action for making communication and information serve the transmission of knowledge, [which is] a diffusion one would want set fast in time and wide in space’ (p. 6).

Essentially, the ability of communities to participate places ‘languages education’ and being ‘literate’ uppermost on the glocal educational agenda. This demands a paradigm shift away from the traditional piecemeal way of there being a multiplicity of

activities across varied contexts that respond in a traditional way, yet purport to address both immediate and future needs. In this respect, languages education is seen as divorced from other learning and disciplinary content, hence, the need for a change in perspective from both within the field and without (Zhao, 2011).

This need for change is also reinforced by Bindé (2005) in his advocacy for the acquisition of communication skills and the provision of resources for effective glocal participation. Importantly, while he conceptualises networked societies as advantaged in being able to create a heightened awareness of global problems, he notes that to be able to jointly address them depends on their ability to dialogue and share knowledge, and to reap the ‘benefits of translation in order to help create shared areas that preserve and enhance everyone’s diversity’ (p. 26). Thus, any rethinking of languages education and being ‘literate’ in the world of today requires a major shift. It demands a move away from the traditional and egocentric view that involves the legacy of the industrial model of education to a more allocentric view (Klatzky 1998), where educators and communities recognise the need for languages and literacies to be integrated into education as a whole. Education in this sense is seen as lifelong and relevant across education sectors and inclusive of work-based integrated learning. It acknowledges the importance of workplaces as learning spaces, as well as the significance of families and communities. Central to this is the dialogic nature of knowledge-building communities and understanding that knowledge is constructed rather than transmitted. As Markauskaite and Goodyear (2015, p. 595) emphasise, ‘to align with the notion of creating ‘better worlds to think in’ (cited in Clark 2011, p. 59) ‘we need to create better environments for engaging in epistemic activity’. With better environments in mind, this chapter explores current evidence of languages education research and new approaches that are helping to shift to a new paradigm. Such a paradigm should have the potential to achieve this bigger-picture strategic goal. It should both assist the reconceptualisation of the glocal context for learning and how languages and literacies education is at the core—notwithstanding its relationship to achieving social and environmental sustainability through its focus on knowledge-building communities.

Knowledge-building communities, multilingualism and linguistic and cultural diversity

The digital divide and knowledge-building societies

While Bindé’s (2005) work is over a decade old, it provides a strong foundation and lens for the exploration of a new paradigm for languages and literacies education. Importantly, four principles are identified, which are seen as underpinning the concept of a knowledge society without which the current digital divide would continue to eclipse many communities across the world. These four principles are:

- (1) universal access to information
- (2) freedom of expression
- (3) cultural and linguistic diversity, and
- (4) education for all.

These principles depend on bridging the digital divide with universal internet access. A vision to ensure the implementation of these principles worldwide may seem a tall order, but current statistics show that internet penetration across all continents has reached an average of 49.7% (see Figure 1). Similarly, when differences in population statistics in terms of numbers of users are examined, only about 50% of the overall world population are internet users. Figure 2 shows that Asia currently has by far the

most internet users, but perusal of Figure 1 shows their substantial potential to more than double in usage, as penetration (45.2%) is below the world average.

Similarly, while the number of internet users in Africa exceeds that of North America, the Middle East and Oceania/Australia, the African continent has a penetration level of only just over a quarter (28.3%), which is well below the average. This leaves room for much greater usage in the future. In terms of the digital divide, it is easy to see the populations that are underrepresented. We can also appreciate the necessity to ensure implementation of the four principles underpinning Bindé’s (2005) vision. Without them, reaching what might be called a new ‘world’s best practice’ in collaborative, social–capacity building practices would not be achievable.

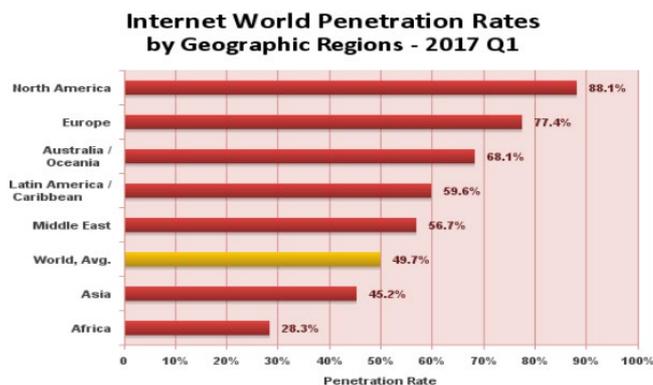


Figure 1: Extent of internet penetration worldwide

Source: Internet World Stats – www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

Penetration rates are based on a world population of 7, 519, 028, 970 and 3,739, 698, 500 estimated internet users for March 31, 2017

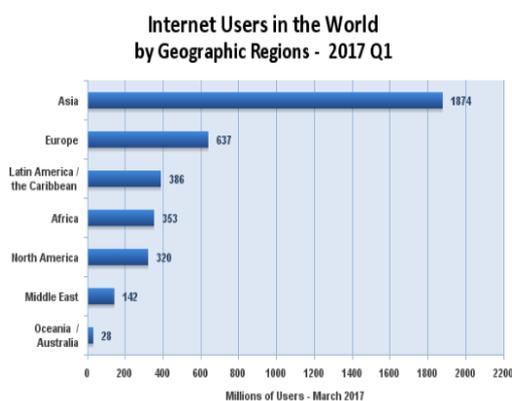


Figure 2: Number of internet users worldwide

Source: Internet World Stats – www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

Basis 3,739, 698, 500 internet users estimated March 31, 2017

Multilingualism and linguistic and cultural diversity

The breadth and depth of multilingualism and linguistic and cultural diversity across the world—as identified at the core of Bindé’s (2005) argument for languages learning to support collaborative knowledge-building communities—is easily justified when the following data are considered. Although there are multilingual countries across the world—such as Luxembourg, Switzerland, Singapore, Malaysia, India and

South Africa—such countries need to adopt an official language to serve the purposes of the law and governance. However, in some cases a country may have more than one official language to reflect the languages of the community's diversity. For instance, Singapore has four languages (English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil), and Switzerland has three (German, French and Italian) (Levitt 2004). However, depending on various factors such as governance, policy and people's local needs, multilingual countries may differ in the extent to which their citizens are bilingual, trilingual or multilingual. For instance, according to Quora (2017), 74.7% of Israeli citizens are bilingual and 17% of Indonesians are trilingual.

In stark contrast, English-speaking countries are in the main monolingual. The USA is 75% monolingual (Palmer 2013) and Australia is 81% monolingual (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012), while in the UK this proportion is believed to be 95% (British Broadcasting Corporation 2017). However, monolingualism in the USA, Australia and the UK is not surprising, given the high level of access the English language provides. For this reason there is a heightened need, worldwide, to learn the English language because of the internet, international business and education that requires English as the lingua franca. Unfortunately, at the same time there is a lack of perceived need or motivation for first language English speakers to learn other languages and to develop their intercultural literacy. Heeley (2012) points out that English is the:

fastest-spreading language in human history, English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide—that's one in every four of us. There are close to 385 million native speakers in countries like the U.S. and Australia, about a billion fluent speakers in formerly colonized nations such as India and Nigeria, and millions of people around the world who've studied it as a second language. An estimated 565 million people use it on the internet.

The linguistic and cultural mix is further complicated by the fact that there are estimated to be three times as many people with English as an added language as there are first language speakers in the world. Thus, the impact of the need for English is highly significant and cannot be ignored in the reconceptualisation of languages education. It is, for instance the global language for business (Heeley 2012); the driver of export education (Stroomberge 2009); and prominent in academia (Davidson 2010). It also has, as Van Tol (2016) notes, the ability to increase the GDP of developing countries as the numbers of students proficient in English increases. This helps increase economic performance. She states that 'countries that focus on integrating English into the curriculum from the primary or even preschool years are attracting foreign investment'. Thus, a global languages education policy needs to take account of the tension between English as the lingua franca and the need for other languages, and how these should be selected. For example, choice of languages might be for economic reasons and include languages that support local community needs. However, implementation may depend on the availability of language teachers for specific languages, thus indicating the importance of language planning.

Even though the need for English is well established, its dramatic rise also has the potential to impact on existing communities in challenging ways. Davidson (2010) argues that its growing acceptance as a lingua franca in Switzerland, for instance, has the potential to ultimately change the country's 'long-standing multilingualism'. Similarly, in African contexts such as Senegal (Diallo 2011) and Mozambique (Ruiz de Forsberg & Borges Månsson 2013), where the official colonial language has held the power, and 'home languages' have been resurrected in recent times, English has naturally emerged as a major priority. Although this provides only a brief insight into

the status of languages in use across the world and the dynamics within, it is easy to appreciate that without timely changes to languages education policy, curriculum and practice Bindé's (2005) vision will be very difficult to achieve and the status quo will continue to prevail.

English as a shared common language and the added value of multilingual communities

A further dynamic, as argued by Luring and Selmer (2011), is that the ability to share and create knowledge in multicultural contexts depends on peoples' ability to effectively communicate with each other. In their research into multicultural organisations they note this can be problematic:

where cultural and linguistic differences create barriers to communication and understanding (Hambrick et al. 1998; Von Glinow et al., 2004) ... And if knowledge is not shared, the cognitive resources available within a group remain underutilized (Argote 1999; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005) (p. 324).

Luring and Selmer (2011) explored the relationships between language, knowledge sharing and performance in multicultural academic organisations. They found that besides English communication (as would be expected), the number of languages and frequency of communication had an impact on knowledge sharing and outcomes. Both the extent of shared common language and proficiency levels were found to influence group cohesiveness and, in turn, their effectiveness. While they note that these findings may not be generalisable to other organisations, they were subsequently supported by Klitmøller and Luring's (2013) research. Importantly, this later research provides deeper insights into the nature of the influence of language and culture on communication because it differentiates the type of 'message' content and use of media. Klitmøller and Luring (2013) focused on the role of media in intercultural and interlinguistic knowledge sharing in virtual teams to examine how cultural and linguistic issues might be better managed. They see the type of media in use as 'at the heart of knowledge-sharing processes in global virtual teams' (p. 398). Klitmøller and Luring (2013) also compared the effectiveness of knowledge sharing between two tasks of different cognitive demand. The first, described as 'lean media' (or canonical messages) involved routine, unambiguous communicative tasks such as e-mail, where making-meaning is related more to factual data that, for instance, is supported by spell and grammar check. The second involved more complex information. In these more difficult tasks the participants used 'rich media' (equivocal messages), which required them to make deeper more critical meaning and interpret information from multiple points of view. This contrast between lean and rich media is identified as a critical consideration in determining the capacity of language users to learn and work, and collaborate effectively in relation to their level of language proficiency.

It is also pointed out by Born and Peltokorpi (2010) that it cannot be assumed that communication is effective when English is the common shared language in global contexts, since differences in proficiency levels can interfere as well as lack of intercultural literacy of expatriates and locals. In terms of English as the corporate language, Klitmøller and Luring (2013) found this is particularly so when rich media is used, because participants have to critically construct meaning from the multiplicity of information, which may also be spoken, written and visual. Of note was that when communication is asynchronous this can be advantageous, because it ensures time for users to reflect during the process. This is in keeping with Luring and Selmer's (2011) conclusion that for languages education planning in the context of

globalisation, for multicultural organisational effectiveness consistent English communication should be supported—especially English in management communication. At the same time, Born and Peltokorpi (2010) advocate acquisition of language/s spoken by host country employees as this can contribute to more positive working relations by reducing intergroup boundaries.

However, the importance of languages education in all of this is very easy to overlook particularly by those outside the discipline. Language is more the ubiquitous ‘glue’ that automatically sticks our communicative transactions together and, without the immediate need for another language, acquiring other languages is not uppermost in people’s minds. This means that changes to languages education policy must prompt a change in pedagogy and practice that motivates languages learning that is generative (O’Neill, 2018). There is a need to address the difficulties people have in making the connections because of the traditional struggle of trying to learn a foreign language at school in a monolingual society where the opportunity to speak with a first language speaker and be exposed to the culture has been rare.

Equally challenging for languages education planning is that in largely monolingual Western societies that readily acknowledge those without ‘literacy’ are disempowered (Jacobson 2016), implications for how this relates to the actual language and cultural diversity of society lacks a clear vision. These countries’ populations include large proportions of speakers of other languages who need to learn English by necessity to participate. But the monolingual majority typically do not see the value of learning another language to communicate with them—thus perpetuating a monologic and egocentric view. Yet if the 21st century is dependent on knowledge-building societies that can collaborate, there is an urgent need to turn the current approach to languages education ‘inside out’. Rather than conceptualising languages and literacies as subjects to study when other key disciplines are able to carry on their business independently, they should be integral to all aspects of learning across disciplines. If glocal knowledge-building communities are to work in keeping with Bindé’s (2005) vision then the ability of people to actively participate is paramount—yet it depends on them having the critical cognitive/metacognitive skills and communication skills, and the tools to make meaning. With respect to the importance of international communication Dahlgren (2015, p. 295) notes cosmopolitanism is an ‘exorable dimension of contemporary global civic virtue and agency’. As Luring and Selmer (2011, p. 325) point out, the high stakes in attempting to build knowledge involves re-examining and gaining a deeper understanding of the role of language in the way we dialogue to make meaning.

Almost half a century ago writers such as Habermas (1971) and Foucault (1980) established a link between language, knowledge and power. Generally, it was argued that whether something is perceived to be valuable knowledge or not is a matter of its place in discursive systems maintained and guided by speech. Hence, mapping how language works in organizations is essential in understanding knowledge sharing and performance (Musson & Cohen 1999).

This vision and need for change therefore raises the bar for the level of education required for all. This not only means languages and literacies education, including intercultural literacy, but acknowledgment of their centrality to learning in other disciplines/crosscurricular fields. For instance, this means that all teachers need this knowledge in order to be able to broaden and deepen their teaching. Dialogue, whether in the context of full-time education or in workplaces or the spaces between, requires all participants to make meaning and transcend the level of linguistic and cultural diversity involved. Scarino (2007) emphasises:

Developing learning programmes for intercultural language learning does not involve simply addressing issues of methods or approaches to teaching and learning or issues of preparing a product or artefact to be used as a basis for ‘managing’ the teaching and learning process. Rather, it is a conceptual matter that relates specifically to how the teacher, as developer, conceptualises language learning, and his/her part in the dialogue with learners (p. 5).

While the purpose for languages and intercultural learnings needs to be reconceptualised, so does the general understanding of how additional languages might be learnt, particularly highlighting the potential available through community participation/service and that provided by digital communication technology.

Although it cannot be denied that English is needed as the common language of choice, people who speak other languages facilitate and add value to the knowledge-building process. As Klitmøller and Lauring (2013) found, the number of languages spoken in the organisation in their study was positively associated with knowledge-sharing and performance (see also Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016). Bearing this in mind, the most pertinent advice for the need for rethinking traditional approaches and practices—and ways of thinking about languages and literacies education (to consider within the constraints of this chapter), involves two of Bindé’s (2005) recommendations. These are ‘making linguistic diversity a priority: the challenges of multilingualism’ and ‘increasing places of community access to information and communication technologies’. First, he argues that ‘knowledge societies must be based on a “double multilingualism”—that of individuals and that of cyberspace’ (p. 186). Bindé sees languages education beginning in primary school to ensure students are at least bilingual and preferably trilingual in the long run. Multilingual digital resources are highlighted as being at the core of practice, as are the opportunities provided by the internet and cyberspace. These are also seen as having the capacity to help maintain and transform the way minority languages are perceived. He recommends research be conducted to assist with deepening educators’ and communities’ understandings of what is needed and why to change current perceptions. Second, increasing places of community access to information and communication technologies are a strategic move to ensure Bindé’s four principles are achievable. The dissemination and sharing of knowledge in this way, and the creation of a virtual world for new modes of social practice, are seen as transformational ways of bridging the digital divide. The rapidly increasing number of mobile phone users with internet access also contributes to achieving this goal, as does the explosion in mobile technologies. Bindé (2005, p. 185) emphasises:

to strengthen the learning and handling skills of digital tools, the spread and use of freeware and inexpensive computer hardware should be stimulated in communities and countries that lack sufficient resources, and software designers and access providers should be encouraged to produce culturally adapted contents that contribute to the growth of freedom of expression.

This need for languages and literacies education in the context of globalisation and knowledge-building societies is not only reinforced by the demographics noted earlier but is also justified in the light of the current rise in human mobility. As Curson (2015, p. 7) specifies, ‘at least 1.8 billion people cross international borders by air or ship every year. Many are on short-term vacations but others leave home in search of a new life. These movements have transformed our world, changing the social, economic and demographic structure of states and regions’. Clearly, as communities increase their linguistic and cultural diversity, and their workforce skills’ base and education needs to change through the increasing mobility, the need to be socially

responsible and adopt inclusive and collaborative practices intensifies.

This disruption to communities requires education systems to be more flexible and adept in responding to the linguistic needs and cultural understandings necessary for constructive settlement. Education must be for both immigrants and hosts. The need for intercultural literacy is essential, as opposed to the notion that only immigrants need to adjust and that this merely entails them learning the English language. As the world's problems of climate change and the need for sustainability practices increases, in keeping with Bindé (2005), these challenges can only be effectively addressed through collaboration at the glocal level thus making languages and literacies education front and centre for policy, planning and practice, and action. This prompts the need to examine current languages, literacies and cultural education policy and planning, and pedagogical approaches.

Schooling, language policy considerations and bridging traditional boundaries

To date there is a substantial body of research into second language acquisition (Saville-Troike & Barto 2017), languages learning and cultural pedagogy (Paris 2012), policy and planning (Wright 2016) and related issues (Mackey & Gass 2015; Nieto 2010). This provides a sound basis for practice, yet does not guarantee students' success nor guarantee that communities will appreciate the need for languages education as Bindé (2005) envisages is required. Ball (2010) specifies, 'the choice of language in the educational system confers a power and prestige through its use in formal instruction. Not only is there a symbolic aspect, referring to status and visibility, but also a conceptual aspect referring to shared values and worldview expressed through and in that language' (p. 8). Similarly, communities' attitudes towards languages learning and the linguistic diversity of a community (Hornberger 1998) and their differing practical needs may greatly influence the impact of languages education policy. For instance, as Johnson (2013) notes in the US context, 'because of local language ideologies, idiosyncratic beliefs about language education research or a focus on test scores, actively promote English-only monolingual approaches even in school districts that already incorporate bilingual pedagogy' (p. 109).

Moreover, there may be a lack of cohesion in approaches to linguistic needs such that different policies exist and the compartmentalisation of their implementation shows anomalies in practice. For example, courses in English for overseas students that aim to increase proficiency levels for university entry are naturally intensive as they are costly and high stakes, but it is generally known how much time is required for the majority of students to improve to proceed up the scale on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test (Green 2006). In contrast, students learning a foreign language in schools may neither have access to learn their language of choice, nor sufficient time or continuity from primary to secondary to make significant progress within a given term in comparison. In addition, students may not have the opportunity to continue learning the same language between primary and secondary school (O'Neill 1990), which suggests a lack of policy direction and prioritisation of resources. Moreover, such language learning experiences have traditionally been isolated in the curriculum, and disconnected from the disciplines and the development of intercultural literacy (Kell & Kell 2014), thus lacking in opportunity for students to use the language to make authentic meaning in a collaborative way.

In moving closer to practices that address the above issues and that are potential enablers of achieving Bindé's (2005) vision, Choo, Sawch, Villanueva and Chan (2017) raise the importance of global education. They describe how a whole US

school district collaboratively developed a whole-school approach to global education. They designed a Global Education Framework that became the catalyst for change, with the infusion of global education into the ethos and culture of the school through its programs, instructional content and practices, giving voice and agency to students. In keeping with O'Neill (2013; 2015) and Abawi (2013), Choo and colleagues found a common language and meaning-making system was constructed with new tools and artefacts of practice that emerged as a result of school community collaboration. Choo et al. (2017) specified:

building a common language around what it means to teach and learn enhances pedagogy and provides opportunities for teachers to integrate aspects of global capacities ... and expand beyond a technocratic, human capital approach to education by taking into account the economic, political, cultural and ethical complexities that now characterize the twenty-first century (p. 202).

The need to reconceptualise and reimage the teaching of languages, literacies and cultural learnings within the context of global education and global citizenship (Dahlgren 2015; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller 2013; Tochon 2017) provides a powerful underpinning for education in the 21st century. As Bindé (2005) argues, citizens of our rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world all need to have the means to communicate internationally and access education besides being able to have their voices heard and contribute in a socially responsible way.

The work of agencies such as United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017), the Council of Europe (2017) and the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2017), for example, provide languages education policy guidance at the international level. Bindé's (2005) work presents a strong platform for governments, community and education sectors, and business to promote the need to reconceptualise their current strategies and practices. They recognise the significance of languages education to their communities' need to achieve their overarching health, economic and environmental sustainability goals. But despite the admirable translation of these policies down the chain, achieving change will continue to be challenging until the general education of the majority recognises that they are operating at a deficit with only one language, and English at that.

Notably, the justification for learning more than one language has significant advantages, including from cognitive, sociocultural and economic perspectives as well as from an educational perspective (see Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan 2000), thus reinforcing Bindé's (2005) stance. This is reinforced by Fernandez (2008). She points out how the capacity of 'languages learning' can improve an individual's literacy in his or her first language, and also enable development of the intercultural competencies needed to participate in a multilingual and multicultural, globalised world. Fernandez (2008, p. 21) cites Liddicoat et al. (2003, p. 23), in emphasising that to achieve this an intercultural approach to language teaching is necessary, and that it should be underpinned by four common features. These are:

- exploration by the learners of the target language and culture and of their own language and culture
- discovery of the relationship between language and culture
- developing conceptual and analytic tools for comparing and understanding cultures
- developing a reflective capacity to deal with cultural difference and to modify behaviour where needed.

These features underpin the new knowledge, skills and tools needed to fulfil the aim for communities to be inclusive and collaborative in learning and working together in the context of globalisation. This is in keeping with Miike's (2003) stance that to achieve such harmonious relations 'usually demands mutual adaptation, [that] cannot be achieved without allocentric communication practices' (p. 259). It resonates with the dialogic attitude that underpins McNiff's (2013) 'cultural cosmopolitanism', which requires:

an openness to the other and a willingness to listen and learn ... recognizing the validity of the other's point of view, and their right to hold that view that depends largely on one's own capacity to acknowledge and respect the cultural and historical situatedness of all participants in the encounter, including oneself (p. 502).

Thus, change is very much linked to the quality of communication and interactions. From a pedagogical reform perspective, learning environments need to exemplify such practices and take account of the shift towards democratic and dialogic pedagogies (Mayer 2012; O'Neill 2018; Richardson, Dann, Dann & O'Neill 2018; Rhymes 2016; Skidmore & Murakami 2016; M. Walsh 2006). This links to Tochon's (2014) argument for deep apprenticeship that involves both cognitive and sociocultural aspects of languages learning. He sees this as occurring within a content-based, transdisciplinary approach that is able to meet disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary goals through project-based and problem-based learning. Tochon (2014, p. 129) argues that since 'learning is socially constructed (Reigeluth 1999), in today's knowledge society, social apprenticeship stimulates various forms of interaction and socialisation through cooperative projects to enhance knowledge, skills and experiences within contexts genuinely and informally created by the learners through peer negotiations and collaborations (Boulima, 1999; Ding 2008)'.

In this way languages education can be turned 'inside out' with languages learners being afforded maximum opportunity to use the target language in authentic, experiential, focused learning spaces (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 2010; Albadry 2017; Schaffert & Hilzensauer 2008). With this in mind the following section describes five scenarios that provide selected insights into how such change is occurring from the policy, curriculum and pedagogical perspectives (within the limitations of this chapter).

Selected scenarios of policy and practice

Scenario 1—Motivating language languages learning in schools: policy change

In Australia, the state of Queensland's 'Global schools: Creating successful global citizens' policy document for consultation (Department of Education, Training and Employment 2014) constructs a new vision for languages education based on the tenet of students needing to be global citizens. It describes existing practice and sets targets over the next decade to foster change and transform languages education to meet this goal. Strategically, it notes:

The international education industry is economically important for Queensland and supports the internationalisation of our school communities by providing all students with a broader view of and connection with the world. It is an important platform from which to build capability within our schools to revitalise our approach to languages education and place it at the centre of our development of successful global citizens (p. 3).

Choice of languages has emerged according to an historical European influence but Japanese is currently the most prevalent—followed by French, German and Mandarin—because of past economic and social ties. However, language choice more generally reflects the linguistic diversity of communities and the availability of teachers. There are well established immersion programs, and technology is in use to connect schools statewide and build international reciprocal relationships that may include study tours and student exchange. It is acknowledged that there is a need to develop long-term strategies to promote the importance of languages education and this global approach at every level of the schooling system. Moreover, the point is made that:

Principals need to demonstrate a personal commitment to the importance of languages, with which to engage their school community. A compelling vision that champions language learning as vital in opening opportunities for personal development and work success is essential. Providing our principals with the knowledge and experience to adopt this vision and the tools to implement an international approach to learning across the curriculum, including a quality languages program in their school, is critical (p. 7).

In addition, this policy recognises that, for this vision to be achieved, a workforce of teachers who have a commitment to a global approach and an enhanced intercultural understanding is essential. This has implications for both inservice and preservice teacher education, as well as for students and their parents, who may not currently be aware of the need for or reasons for promoting languages education.

Scenario 2—Online intercultural communication and language exchange

Now a long term well established approach to learning English as a foreign language (EFL), learner groups across countries participate in project-based language learning online, communicating in English. This comprises a virtual learning space where participation/communication can be spoken and written, as well as synchronous and asynchronous. Students acquire digital literacy using multimedia to make meaning and share cultural knowledge. There is the ability to work in small groups and meet in larger groups in real time, present material in different modes and link to the internet. Using a student-centred thematic approach, this type of program has typically culminated in students meeting face-to-face in one country to present their joint projects together and celebrate their success (O'Neill, Shing-Chen, Li, Kagato & Quinlivan 2005). The involvement of fieldwork helps to bring intercultural understanding to life. The following features of the program show how communicative, meaning-making interactions are stimulated and can easily be sustained. These include the ability to upload and display Word, PowerPoint, video and image files; annotate, type, highlight and draw on the screen; and link to internet resources. As a virtual face-to-face space, speaking, writing and chat can be simultaneous and group members visibly present in 'the room'. There is potential for a strong curriculum focus and data are able to be revisited to enhance learning. This approach may be adapted in a variety of ways to design more authentic language learning spaces. It can connect those who are learning a new language to communicate and make meaning with proficient speakers of that language. It has the potential to support language learning and intercultural literacy as part of cultural exchange programs whether short or long. Importantly the problem associated with traditional approaches that lack the opportunity to actually use the language for real-life purposes can be addressed. By providing a means to interact with first language speakers, combined with the adoption of project- and problem-based learning students can engage more deeply and so better develop their intercultural understanding (Tochon 2014).

Scenario 3—Service learning

An innovative approach was adopted in higher education by providing non-English speaking background (NESB) students with opportunities to participate in service learning (O'Neill & Dowe 2015). 'Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities' (National Service-learning Clearing House, cited in Ryan, 2012, p. 3). Service learning spaces began with involvement with conferences working in pairs to chair individual speaker sessions, managing introductions, timing, question/answer sessions and votes of thanks. Value was added to their experience through their attendance at conference sessions and participation in general planning, organisation of their group and transportation. This core experience motivated other group initiatives, which led to other interested parties joining in to volunteer their skills and provide language coaching in English. In addition, teachers of languages common to the group responded to an emergent interest by the local community to find out more about those languages and cultures. Possibilities for service learning that emerged, included reading stories in first languages in community libraries, schools and other community settings, and presenting on home languages and cultural knowledge to those working in multicultural settings. Implementing such a project naturally fostered language and cultural exchange. Techniques that emerged in response to the need to communicate and share information included regular meetings, e-mail, mobile phones, and a designated Facebook site. As a learning experience it was very valuable for students by creating connections and stimulating language use with people outside their immediate first language group. It provided a more authentic opportunity to use English and/or first languages instructively, and promoted students' engagement to build their language, literacy and intercultural capacity. In this way service learning was seen as adding value to the students' experience by fostering a feeling of belonging and being valued in the community. It demonstrated that service learning provides an opportunity for the students to connect with the staff and each other, linking them into an interesting and non-threatening network, thus building their confidence and motivation.

Scenario 4—Foreign language competencies relevant to NESB students

The existing languages skills of members of the community are often overshadowed by the need to learn and communicate in the applicable lingua franca. These language skills are also in danger of deteriorating over time unless there is a sufficient community of users, but in some immigrant situations language skills are typically not in use by the third generation (Hatoss 2008; Lo Bianco 2009). One approach that can be helpful is to develop foreign language competencies that equate to specific levels of language proficiency (O'Neill & Hatoss 2003). These can then be built into competency-based training packages applicable to different industry areas. Assessing non-English speaking background home language competence as part of study towards a certificate qualification or above would be very advantageous, as it would be relatively reasonably achievable for most, and thus motivational. This is also applicable to other language learning spaces, such as secondary schools, where students are learning a foreign language. The linking of students' competence to a series of competency levels would enable provision of feedback while promoting a mutual understanding. Similarly, such competencies would be able to be applied to school language programs and would support project-based and problem-based learning. For instance, a school student may achieve the competency of SITXLAN2111 *Conduct basic oral communication in a language other than English* in most languages as part of a certificate or diploma in hospitality (Industry Skills

Council 2013). By relating competencies to actual on-the-job experiences, language acquisition can be stimulated because of the need to communicate for authentic purposes. It also provides the opportunity to recognise the existing languages skills of people learning and working in multicultural tourism and hospitality, besides those of foreign language learners. Importantly, this is a model that is adaptable to other industry areas. It provides the potential to be integrated into education and upskill the population if applied in principle across the board.

Scenario 5—Digital communication technology and social media

For those with access to technology and the internet, the opportunities for communication, collaboration, locating information, creating and learning are boundless. Dudeney and Hockly (2012) highlight that English as the language of global communication ‘is becoming increasingly digitally mediated [and] if learners are to fully embrace their 21st century citizenship, they need linguistic and digital skills’. This involves reading/viewing, creating and speaking to multimedia and multimodal texts, accessing the Cloud, and operating in the virtual world with access to virtual reality 24/7 (Reeves & Nass 1996), in which face-to-face communicative interactions can take place, information can be shared, and knowledge can be built. By allowing for synchronous and asynchronous activity and the ability to record and revisit history at any time (Conway & Ion 2013), this adds an additional dynamic dimension to support languages learning and pedagogical approaches, as well as integrating critical dialogic practices. Ludvigsen, Lund, Rasmussen and Säljö (2011) raise issues for language learning and workplace practices from the perspective of digital and networked technologies. They state that in this knowledge era, workplace practices become more specialised and represent a particular configuration of professional languages, technologies and organisational arrangements. On this basis, Ludvigsen and colleagues identify the ‘need to increase our understanding of the many forms of collaboration as types of social practice ... [noting] we seek to reveal how learning as a socially organised activity is enacted in and across sites, settings and contexts’ (p. 1). Language use for the purpose of collaboration has been shown to involve the three aspects of social, technology and research (Engeström & Tolvianien 2011). Combined with the work of Markauskaite and Goodyear (2015) and also that of Shaffer and Gee (2007) and Bielaczyc and Ow (2014)—with regard to being aware of epistemic considerations in the building of knowledge and the teaching of languages—these aspects need to be taken into account. It is not surprising either that Tochon’s (2014) deep approach to languages learning advocates the use of problem-based and project-based learning, as collaborative problem-solving is central and, as Bindé (2005) argues, is critical to globally based solving of society’s 21st century challenges.

The advent of digital communication technologies has also created a shift in ‘literacy’ skills from the traditional focus on linear, monomodal texts that relate information to the reader to the use of multimedia and multimodal texts that ‘present’ information in an interactive way (S. Walsh 2006; Wang 2013). Taken in the context of languages learning through 21st century knowledge-building communities, the concept of ‘literacy’ also needs to include the multiliteracies (New London Group 1996). Cope and Kalantzis (2001) exemplify this pedagogy in relation to a teacher working with Australian Indigenous students to develop an abstract artistic design using natural form as a starting point. Importantly, it is seen as a pedagogy that:

‘makes connections ... between linguistic and visual design, and the cross-cultural aspects of meaning making ... basing learning in the students’ own experience (Situated Practice); the explicit teaching of metalanguage that describes Design (Overt Instruction); investigation of the cultural context of

the designs (Critical Framing); and application of the Designs in a new context that the students have themselves created (Transformed Practice)' (1).

As we see with the use of smartphones, iPads, tablets and laptops, and with the multitude of mandatory 'apps' and software in use, the opportunity to dialogue and collaborate and create and communicate new knowledge has never been so rich. Similarly, from a languages-learning perspective, social media presents a prolific opportunity to use language and multiliteracies to contribute along with many others, any time anywhere, across cultures. Moreover, in terms of developing collaborative skills, Wright and Skidmore (2010) highlight that '[c]ollaboration is probably the most commonly observed behaviour when playing [computer] games' (p. 226). They see teaching through games as being able to achieve authentic learner-centred pedagogy that involves students in critical, reflective dialogic processes and experiential learning.

Harrison and Thomas (2009) specify that social networking sites can transform languages learning and support collaboration, raising the issue of mediation as 'a means to examine the roles of both language and culture in human development' (p. 115). This is reinforced by Lin, Warschauer and Blake (2016), who see such sites as being able to create authentic learning spaces where a target language can be practised among learners who have a common goal and share their expertise. They cite Chen (2013), noting that social networking sites can 'empower users to navigate across languages, cultures, and identities ... [and] research by Blattner and Fiori (2011), Klimanova and Dembovskaya (2013), and Mills (2011) ... [reinforces that its] 'use helps learners construct their L2 identity and build a relationship with the target culture' (p. 125). Lin, Warschauer and Blake (2016) also highlight how digital communication technologies contextualise the use of language and, importantly, how they facilitate this within the disciplines. As a resource they support access to information, interactive communication and collaboration, besides providing a range of authorship tools. As noted by Strangman, Meyer, Hall and Proctor (2005):

These tools are having an impact on foreign language instruction around the globe. Pufahl, Rhodes and Christian (2001) surveyed teachers in 19 countries outside the U.S. about elementary and secondary foreign language instruction. Teachers' answers to the question 'What do you think are three of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in your country?' reflected the need for a 'comprehensive use of technology: technology as a way to provide access to information, give students an opportunity to interact with speakers of a foreign language, and to engage students' (p. 40).

The capacity of technology to improve pedagogy by facilitating a common language and meaning-making system for learning explicates metacognitive processes and enables dialogic practices that use new tools to ensure the development of collaborative skills. All in all, research demonstrates that digital communication technologies and social networking sites have provided a springboard for the transformation of languages learning, as well as facilitating glocal collaborative dialogic practices that have the ability to support knowledge-building communities. The five selected scenarios demonstrate how language and cultural learnings are currently being facilitated in ways relevant to the engagement required for knowledge-building communities.

Discussion and conclusions

This exploration of new opportunities for languages learning through the lens of knowledge-building communities (Bindé 2005) has assisted in creating a new vision and reconceptualisation of how languages education best fits into education in the 21st century. This reconceptualisation is presented through the metaphor of ‘turning languages education inside out’, depicted by the inverted umbrella in Figure 3. It shows the contrast between the traditional general societal viewpoint that is argued to be egocentric, with languages learning perceived as a separate subject-based course of study where both educators and many students do not see any reason for learning an added language. In addition, learning in other disciplines has traditionally been divorced from linguistic and cultural matters. Despite the growth in multicultural/multilingual communities—including those within monolingual countries—educators across disciplines, and those teaching English to first language speakers, have often lacked languages education themselves (Campion 2016) and therefore have failed to appreciate the need. Thus, it is hoped that this exploration using Bindé’s (2005) vision to equip people with the languages, literacies and cultural skills to participate in collaborative problem-solving as a matter of necessity, to solve 21st century global challenges, will illuminate this argument for all, rather than only for those involved in languages education. Figure 3 provides a model of operation that presents languages learning at the forefront of a modern, responsive and innovative education system that acknowledges our globalised world and diverse multilingual contexts. Created by the author, it identifies the importance of languages education, literacy, literacies and multiliteracies as theories that are usually treated separately, but clearly their intersection is important for reconceptualising what might be the umbrella term of ‘languages education’.

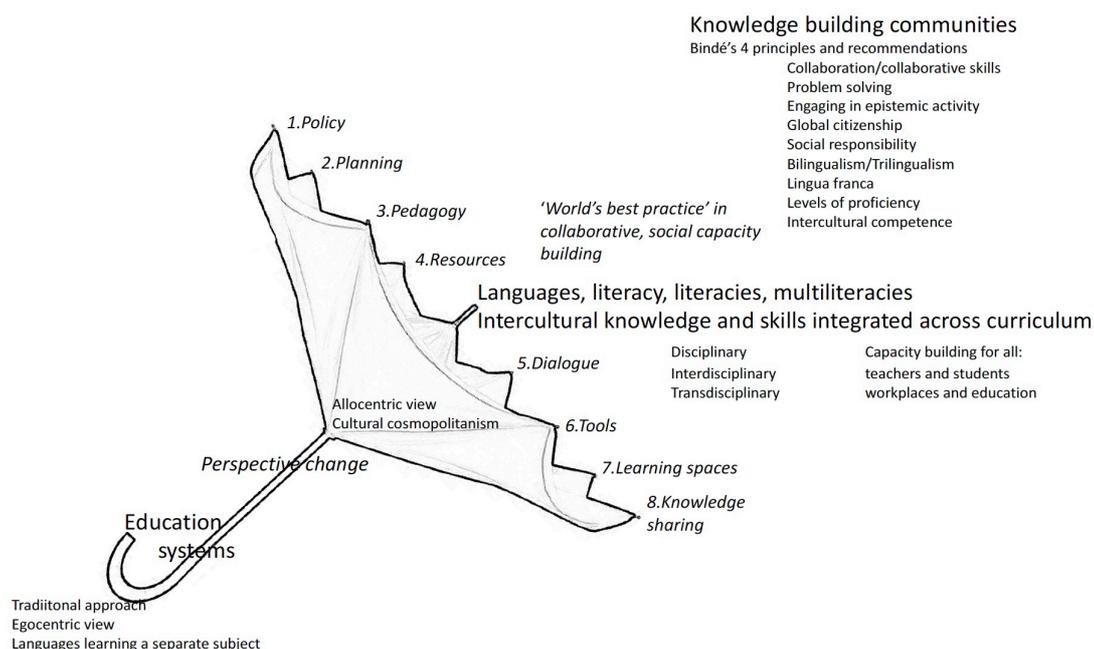


Figure 3: Graphical representation of the concept of ‘turning languages education inside out’.

(Source: The author)

This umbrella model aspires to inform world’s best practice in collaborative, social capacity building. This is achievable by making languages education an essential part of—and integrated into—the different education sectors’ curricula and pedagogy. Since educators, including those in other disciplines, need to have acquired the necessary underpinning knowledge, allocentric view and skills for implementation, there is a need for change. This includes policy change, glocal planning, upgrading of

educators' knowledge and pedagogical skills, the highlighting of resources available, and a heightened understanding of the importance of a dialogic approach. As well, there is the need to ensure that learners have both access to and the ability to use today's new digital tools.

Moreover, educators and their students and workplaces need to be aware of the new learning spaces available and their advantages, including those spaces that support virtual communication, with the ability to access knowledge and share it accordingly. These elements appear on the umbrella spokes that signify their need for implementation. This implementation would be contextualised and in keeping with a problem-based and project-based learning approach that is intended to be interdisciplinary as well as transdisciplinary (Tochon 2014).

By turning languages education inside out, these eight elements are released from their traditional constraints to broaden their application. Their relevance to communities regarding the need to adopt a global view along with a sense of responsibility and acquisition of skills to more effectively address the world's challenges is central to the model. The model also recognises that this approach depends on participants adopting an allocentric view within the context of cultural cosmopolitanism and global citizenship where social capacity is 'built in'. This includes both education and workplace spaces and positioning of dialogism and skills for collaboration at the core. In keeping with Bindé's (2005) advice, the global citizen needs to acquire the lingua franca, such as English, and should learn at least one other language but ideally three. The advantages of such an approach need to be demonstrated and widely promoted. Additional languages need to be carefully selected for their relevance to community/global needs, which means that education systems need to be more strategic in their management of resources and particularly in meeting workforce demands—for instance, ensuring sufficient language teachers according to the demand for a particular language. With respect to schooling, this model allows for and advocates for teachers across the disciplines being educated sufficiently to integrate a language and culture into their teaching as part of a school-wide approach to the selected language/s. As a result, the traditional narrow notion of 'the language teacher' would be changed to a teacher who is able to teach across the curriculum in primary school and in other disciplines in secondary, including language/s. Bindé (2005, p. 148) argues that multilingual education should begin early, with teachers being able to reap the benefits of global exchange. Importantly, in keeping with this view, this model is also supportive of the preservation of languages, other than the lingua franca in vogue, evident across communities so vital to members' identity, wellbeing and voice:

preserving the plurality of languages translates into enabling the largest number to have access to the media of knowledge ... [along with] the command of at least one widely spoken lingua franca ... is not per se incompatible with the safeguarding of mother tongues and Indigenous languages.

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