

Pensée et expression plurilingues en Europe.

Quelle manière d'être aux langues ?

Plurilingual thinking and expression in Europe.

Which way of being with languages?

Implementation of the Council of Europe language policy

- **"French-German Quality Charter for bilingual day-care"**
50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty (2013)

Let us question this presupposition: why go through childhood? The political objective (european educational area, european unity) may still seem very distant; for children even more so. Is Europe not something external to children, something that does not exist, in terms of their experience, their subjective consciousness? How does this exteriority impose itself on the intimacy of the subject? Our purpose: plurilingualism and early language learning, these notions of intimacy and exteriority require a connection with the topics *langue, langage, parole*.

What is the link between nursery schools and the unity of a political people?

The central question: intimacy of the subject and language acquisition

- **Michel Leiris: "le mot écorché/the flayed word", a childhood memory (Leiris: 1948)**

The exteriority of language imposes itself on the intimacy of the subject.

Experience of dispossession that the child has when the adult intervenes.

The value of speech of a language is measured with the intersubjectivity of the us. Speech is singular, language universal.

- **Lacan's neologism "Lalangue" in its relationship to the world (Lacan: 1967 & 1975)**

=> fusion of the signifiers "*langue*" and "*la*".

"*lalangue*" is not a language. Whereas "*lalangue*" speaks a certain music of love, it remains untamed by the frame of language that speaks otherwise through its laws: rules, limits, and thus castration. "*lalangue*" should be interpreted as an unidentified voice object in psychoanalysis.

Christine Fourcaud / Matthias Springer

**Frühkindlicher
Fremdsprachenerwerb
in den « Elysée-Kitas »**

Schnupperstunde Französisch in den
Münchner städtischen Kindertageseinrichtungen



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The psychoanalytical perspective is necessarily coupled with a phenomenological one.

Merleau-Ponty: *Phenomenology of perception* (1945) & *Signes* (1960)

- How does the child pass from consciousness to language?

« La pensée n'est rien d'intérieur. Elle n'existe pas hors du monde et hors des mots. Ce qui nous trompe là-dessus, ce qui nous fait croire à une pensée qui existerait pour soi avant l'expression, ce sont les pensées déjà constituées et déjà exprimées que nous pouvons rappeler à nous silencieusement et par lesquelles nous nous donnons l'illusion d'une vie intérieure [...] » (Merleau-Ponty: 1945, 213-214).

Thought and expression are constituted simultaneously

« La parole est un véritable geste et elle contient son sens comme le geste contient le sien. C'est ce qui rend possible la communication. [...] Ce n'est pas avec des « représentations » ou avec une pensée que je communique d'abord, mais avec un sujet parlant, avec un certain style d'être et avec le « monde » qu'il vise. » (Merleau-Ponty: ibid).

The speaker does not think before he speaks, nor even while he speaks.

His speech is his thought. The meaning devours the signs.

Speech never refers to a pure thought without words.

« Beaucoup plus qu'un moyen, le langage est quelque chose comme un être, c'est pourquoi il peut si bien nous rendre présent quelqu'un. [...] Notre pensée traîne dans le langage [...] elle le traverse comme le geste dépasse ses points de passage [...] La parole est une perfection sans modèle, elle est la pensée. » (Merleau-Ponty: 1960, 53-54)

In the acquisition of language another question arises: **the symbolic relationship to the object**.

- **S. Freud** highlighted this aspect in the **fort-da**. (*Essais de psychanalyse: 1971*)

➤ **Clinical case of Sonja: autism or attrition in the adopted language?**

S. Freud had highlighted how, in place of the mother's absence, the child substitutes the opposition of signifiers (the **fort-da** couple). The very young child articulates these phonemes and the presence of these signifiers allows him to master (symbolically) the absence, to play with it and thus to relieve his anguish. He re-establishes his symbolic relationship with the object that is no longer there; the phonemes will make the link now.

«Le mutisme de Sonia était à la mesure de la violence que lui faisait vivre son immersion dans une langue distincte de sa langue maternelle. [...] La privation du recours à sa langue maternelle la laissait sans instruments dans son rapport à l'objet, d'où les marques de désorganisations psychiques qui avaient suscité les inquiétudes initiales.» (Forget: 2008, 122-127)

This psychoanalytical case study supports our empirical observations in the "french-german daycare".

In our case study, we had children who ideally illustrated the fear of attrition (total loss of the family language).

This child experienced a decentring of himself (**Piaget**), that allowed him to regain contact with the intimacy of his family language, "lalangue".
ustrates the fear of attrition (total loss of the family language).

Lacan considers language as "**parlêtre**" = "being". What does this neologism mean?

"**Parlêtre**" designates the fact of being human, as a creature whose existence passes through speech. Lacan made a rereading of Freud; language, and thus the unconscious, is no longer considered as an object of communication but as jouissance. The parlêtre is the Lacanian unconscious, in so far as it is jouissance.

If we consider interaction from a **pragmatic perspective**, speech is always addressed. It always brings **intersubjectivity** into play. For **E. Benveniste** (1966), we never reach humans separated from language. To speak about instrument for the language, would be **to put in opposition human and nature**. The language is not a production of humans, like a pickaxe or a wheel. It is not secondary, but constitutive of humans. Hence the primacy of language. This idea clashes with the classical conception of a hypothetical genesis of language: a gift from the God Thoth among the Egyptians, among Christians God would have given language to Adam (Adamic language): the Creator presents the animals of the Creation to Adam, and asks him to find a name for them. The naming is then done in the performative mode, with Adam "baptizing" the creatures.

Like **Benveniste**, we consider that the idea of a state of nature where humans would live separated from language is an undue abstraction, a pure fiction.

The human is always already speaking to another human. Language is in the nature of the human.

1. Shouldn't allophone children first focus on learning their language of schooling before coming into contact with another European language (German/French)?
2. Between minimal thresholds of competence and developmental interdependence, aren't they overwhelmed by the acquisition of a 3rd or 4th language?
3. Doesn't multilingualism have a negative influence on linguistic, cognitive and social development?

It is important to distinguish between

- family language (L1 or L2),
- language of instruction and schooling (L1 or L2),
- academic language of learning (register of L1 or L2)
- and foreign language.

This relevant question, in fact, concerns **access to the language of instruction and schooling (L1 or L2), often assimilated to the academic language of learning (L1 or L2 register).**

There is concern that children do not have adequate means of communication, but this is **not only due to a deficit in L2 German, but rather to the fact that the whole educational canon, including general language skills, is deficient.**

If allophone or plurilingual children with immigrant backgrounds are to develop substantial linguistic skills in education, they **must acquire the conversational habitus that should give them access not only to the language of instruction & schooling, but also to the academic language of learning.** Trying to make them monolingual by confining them to the language of schooling will not be enough.

Plurilingualism, revealing “the fantasy of origin” (Sciara: 2015)

« L'enjeu majeur est de rendre compte du **caractère polyglotte de l'inconscient** : il est fait de plusieurs langues. **Le plurilinguisme n'est pas que l'affaire des enfants qui ont affaire avec plusieurs langues. Il concerne tout sujet humain.** Ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'il ne faille justement s'intéresser à ces cas de figure que nous rencontrons de plus en plus souvent dans notre clinique, ces enfants issus de langues et de cultures différentes, qui baignent dans un univers linguistique hétérogène, comme d'ailleurs dans un environnement familial, social, particulier, surtout s'il est marqué de misère sociale. Ces enfants sont amenés à composer, peut-être plus que d'autres, avec le multiple qui interroge et travaille le Un sur lequel ils ont à se constituer comme sujet. Cela se paye d'un symptôme, entre autres un retard de langage, un retard de parole, un problème d'apprentissage, mais aussi parfois une inhibition verbale, dont certaines électives, comme ces cas de mutisme extrafamilial, chez des enfants dont les parents manient une ou plusieurs langues étrangères, et qui se confrontent à **l'Unheimlich de la langue française à l'école.** »(Sciara: 2015)

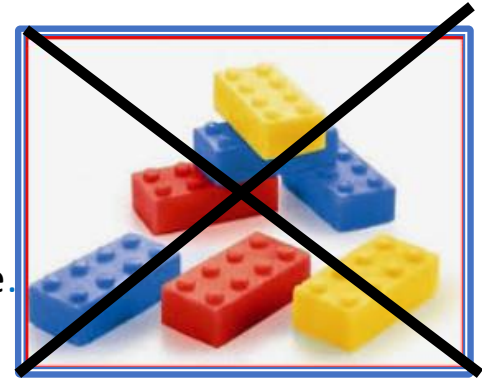
Linguistic transversality and internal plurilingualism

Languages are not closed systems.

Early learning of a foreign language is not an additive sequence of languages (L1 + L2 + + L3 + Ln...).

It is a mobilisation of potentials which allows the transfer of knowledge and (meta-)linguistic skills.

Our methodological approach turns its back on a 'compartmentalizing' vision of competences, language by language.



From unity to plurality: existing as a subject for the other

If we consider with **E. Benveniste** that the singular word is primary, "*nihil est in lingua quod non prius fuerit in oratione*" [Nothing is in language that was not first in speech], the word evokes, addresses itself, calls another voice (vox), a voice that responds. The word is waiting for a response. It is in the dimension of intersubjectivity.

We speak to exist as a subject for the other

« *Ce que je cherche dans la parole, c'est la réponse de l'autre. Ce qui me constitue comme sujet, c'est ma question* » (Lacan: 1967 & 1975)

Europe, an act of collective imagination for very young children?

For the philosopher **Philippe Mengue**, *« le peuple (européen) est absent, faute de pouvoir se fabuler et assumer ses particularités propres et, de façon positive, sa propre histoire / the (european) people is absent, because it is unable to fabricate and assume its own particularities and, in a positive way, its own history' ». Peoples don't exist like things, they reflect and represent themselves, thanks to the characteristic of human language, which lies in its power to represent. Taking up **Paul Ricoeur's** concept, he considers that identity is above all ipseity: «L'identité est avant tout ipséité. C'est celle d'un sujet qui se réfléchit, quand il dit moi-même» . (Ricoeur: 1990 & 2000).*

«[L'identité est indissociable d'une narration.]. Elle s'ancre dans un acte de discours, de récit, de narration par lequel les peuples se racontent. Par là, ils se forgent, se créent, s'inventent, se donnent une identité distincte, plus ou moins imaginaire par rapport aux faits de l'histoire et de la sociologie. Ce récit renvoie à un peuple l'image de ce qu'il est ou croit qu'il est. Pas de peuple sans récit, sans mythe. Nous dirons donc que le peuple est inséparable d'une fabulation, d'un acte de fabulation [...]. Aussi délirant & historiquement fabuleux que soit cet acte de fabulation collective, il est nécessaire. Or le grand drame des peuples européens est qu'ils sont interdits de fabuler. La seule identité autorisée est basée sur la fidélité à des principes juridiques démocratiques et constitutionnels. Comment dans ces conditions l'Europe pourrait-elle naître ?» (Mengue: 2005)

What could bind Europeans together today to make them a political people? And how can this work in a post-migration context? This design raises a number of new questions:

1/ Does the political exterior have a status similar to that of language learning, as a dimension external to the ego? Does this mean that, for the child, learning about Europe and a foreign language is a process equivalent to that of language acquisition? Yes, no doubt: uprooting from the mother, from the mother tongue, to attachment to the father, to the new united homeland that would be Europe, etc.

But what is the value of these equivalences made between heterogeneous levels?

3/ A central question is that of the mother tongue (of origin or of identification) in its relationship to other languages. Should it remain the main language? Is it in the mother tongue that fabulation takes place? Or can it be born in a common language adopted?

A Nation, a People, is therefore a soul, not a convergence of interests. As a spirit, a nation is made as much of memory as of will, of memories of things done together, as of pact, of contract, of actual consent. A transversal language of communication, English, lingua franca, as long as it remains a simple tool, cannot fulfil this role of collective fabrication. On the other hand, if French or German are taught as part of the 'speaking' practised in Franco-German kindergartens, children are structured in a 'way of being with languages'.

3/ Finally, what objective could educational policies aim at? Which telos? Are we not going too fast when we make the equation **Nation = Language? To make a Nation, you need more than a language.** What is a Nation? Isn't **Ernest Renan's** answer still relevant?

E. Renan's *Conférence en Sorbonne* « Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? »

« Une nation est une âme, un principe spirituel. Deux choses qui, à vrai dire, n'en font qu'une, constituent cette âme, ce principe spirituel. L'une est dans le passé, l'autre dans le présent. L'une est la possession en commun d'un riche legs de souvenir ; l'autre est le consentement actuel, le désir de vivre ensemble, la volonté de continuer à faire valoir l'héritage qu'on a reçu indivis. » (Renan: 1882)

Making children aware of the arbitrariness of the sign, stimulating their meta-linguistic awareness, structuring their search for the symbolic relationship to the object, between singularity and universality, emancipating them from the illusion that there would only be salvation in "the perfect language", the single language of monolingualism. This is all very commendable.

But it is above all urgent that children become protagonists of a European narrative, a narrative ipsity re-anchored in space (topos) and time (chronos - kairos - aion).

L. van Middelaar "Europe's Geopolitical Awakening, Great Power Narratives ", 4th conference College de France

« le récit, cette ancestrale et magistrale forme qui permet de lier passé, présent et avenir [...] dans un temps qui fait sens [...]. Vingt-cinq siècles séparent la construction du Parthénon à Athènes et l'adoption de la loi des Douze Tables dans la République romaine de notre époque ouverte. Il y a là, pour nous, Français, Hollandais, Allemands, Italiens et autres Européens, la matière dans laquelle forger un imaginaire et porter un récit qui nous permettra d'avancer avec confiance, sur notre bout d'Eurasie, entre nos amis, nos voisins, nos rivaux, dans le grand théâtre de l'Histoire » (Middelaar: 2022)