

Transforming Second Language Learning for a Sustainability Mindset: A Case for a Global Challenge

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Biographical Note

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Abstract (500 words)

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Recent theoretical advances in language learning gave rise to mindset-sustaining considerations in language education (Coyle & Meyer, 2023). There is growing recognition that grammatical, lexical, and communication rules no longer constitute a major hurdle in language use. Rather than focusing on fragmented learning goals and outcomes, more holistic, critical pedagogies (e.g. pedagogy of pluriliteracies, Coyle & Meyer, 2023) strive to engender 'responsible activism' as a plurilingual and pluricultural endeavour that enables to engage in deeper reflection and embrace uncertainty for global citizenship. We present first results of the project DaFZ mit Nachhaltigkeit (TU Braunschweig) whose goal is to challenge pedagogical practices beyond the

pure study of linguistic systems towards the complexity of meaning construction in a multilingual and multi-modal world.

We draw on the results of a practical session with Civil Engineering students who had to negotiate the meaning of basic terms in group interactions during subject-specific problem-solving activities (Scheidt & Edeleva, 2023). Their interactions were audio-recorded and transcribed using speech-recognition algorithms. We inspected their group interactions for the incidence of basic terms and their co-occurrences in an ontological relation. We discuss how contextonym maps (i.e., basic terms and their immediate environment) representing emergent 'knowledge patterns' in student interactions can be used to transform material and task design for deeper learning involving key competences like critical thinking and problem-solving. Second, we present the results of a survey of pre-service L2 German teachers for their "values, knowledge, and competency" that constitute the sustainability mindset (Kassel et al., 2018). Teacher dispositions are an essential pre-requisite to transform their actual teaching practices enabling them to create plurilingual learning spaces across disciplines. Finally, we discuss how a conceptual shift in the view of language learning and teaching affects language assessment along the vector of the alignment between the needs, goals, and practices.

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