

A FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DE PROFESSORES NAS HUMANIDADES

REFLEXÕES DIDÁTICAS

ANA R. LUÍS
ADÉLIA NUNES
CRISTINA MELLO
JUDITE CARECHO
ANA ISABEL RIBEIRO
(COORDS.)

IMPRESA DA
UNIVERSIDADE
DE COIMBRA
COIMBRA
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

MARK J. R. WAKEFIELD

orcid.org/0000-0002-3069-8310

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra

INTERCULTURAL DYNAMICS: GLOBALISATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON HABITUS

DINÂMICA INTERCULTURAL: GLOBALIZAÇÃO E SEUS EFEITOS SOBRE O HABITUS

ABSTRACT: Globalisation can be seen to play a role in affecting change upon the habitus of individual language speakers as they acquire specific cultural capital through exposure to pedagogical practices and published materials present in scholarly resources and global media. This paper seeks to explore the dynamics of a developing relationship between building tolerance through language education and the globalisation process.

Key-words: interculturality, globalisation, tolerance, language, cultural capital

RESUMO: A globalização pode ser vista como um fator que afeta a mudança no habitus de falantes individuais de línguas na medida em que adquirem capital cultural específico através da exposição a práticas pedagógicas bem como a materiais publicados nos recursos educativos e nos media. Este artigo procura explorar a dinâmica de uma relação em desenvolvimento entre a construção da tolerância por meio da aprendizagem de línguas e o processo de globalização.

Palavras-chave: interculturalidade, globalização, tolerância, linguagem, capital cultural

1. Introduction

Since the time when human society developed sufficiently for system interactions between peoples, communities and continents to occur, the dominant themes, aside from war, have been trade (including exchange and bartering) and diplomacy, widely defined as political, interpersonal and cultural relations. Together, these two themes constitute the bedrocks of the global economy and universal human rights (...) (Kinley, 2009: 6).

It can be argued with much credibility that we live in a world heavily characterised by the process of globalisation. From a cultural perspective the term globalisation has come to represent such a large number of phenomena that it has become largely devoid of meaning with one obvious exception: it is significant for this wide array of expressions and a 'superabundance of content' (Niezen, 2004: 35). In such cultural contexts globalisation involves a transnational proliferation of common codes and practices (i.e. homogeneity) as well as a situation whereby many global and local variables intermingle to form a variety of cultural hybrids (i.e. heterogeneity) (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003: 569-71).

Thus, globalisation has evolved in meaning in a manner so as to now represent the creation of 'tradition-and nation-transcending, cosmopolitan way of life' that involves the accommodation of varying accounts of a single selfhood. Therefore, given such an extensive constellation of meanings, globalization can represent several particular and separate things that is devoid of any external distinguishing elements between them (Niezen, 2004: 36).

In a more concrete sense, globalisation has been interpreted as expressing fundamental aspects of time-space distancing, which involves an ongoing relationship between distancing in the context of the extreme malleability of local circumstances and actions. Given the power and extent of this process, it is impossible to remain immune to the transformations delivered by modernity processes. So extensive is this process that the human experience is now faced with the unprecedented reality of 'self' and 'society' being connected in a global milieu (Giddens, 2014: 21-2, 32). Globalisation may be understood as situation whereby social life takes place beyond the recognised frontiers of individual national polities (Sklair, 2010: 184). The role of the nation-state has been significantly reduced in the modern era, where a new transnational space fills the void that has arisen as part of this process. In turn the state is superseded as the 'locus of social life' while simultaneously serving as a conduit for the propagation of the kind of living that persists within this incongruous system of transnational relations (Robinson, 2010: 180).

It would be foolhardy to discuss the phenomenon of globalisation in the absence of giving consideration to the issue of the role of language in the

spread and evolution of transnational cultures. Few would dispute the central role played by the English language in the process of cultural globalisation and as such, the matter merits serious attention. While on the one hand, globalising processes form a fundamental part of the ideologies and processes that provide the momentum which support the proliferation of the unidirectional flow of cultural globalisation. On the other hand, such networks of organisation supply a means by which culture can be mediated as against pragmatic preoccupations such as economic efficiency, that in turn open the furrow for an economistic and technocratic agenda. The net effect of this reality is that economic globalisation cannot be extruded from its cultural counterpart (Mandal, 2001: 1001-1012).

Acknowledgment can be given to the convergence in perception on a number of important points in respect of the existence and influence of globalisation and its effects on cultural affairs in the world at large. At the same time, however, a worthy and necessary target of critical reflection would arguably be an area of major consequence and genuine concern, namely to what extent does globalisation affect the habitus of an individual in the modern world? This question is particularly pertinent in respect of individuals in their formative years who have yet to complete their journey through the educational system. It could further be argued that these matters are of great import to both educators and educational administrators at all levels. There is a wealth of evidence to strongly support a position that holds that such issues are worthy of extensive reflection and requires genuine engagement.

Since the term the 'global village' was first employed by McLuhan in 1962 (Logan, 2011: 45) a great deal of postulation has been occupied by interest in international communication and transfer of cultural practices and knowledge across and between entire continents. To a certain extent it is possible to assert that the effects of globalisation are as broad in geographical extent as culture is in its theoretical construct. Moreover, recognition must be given to the enormous utility the term (i.e. globalisation) provides to enquiries directed toward reaching a more wholesome understanding of the contours and consequences of human behaviour in the modern world. Neither can one discard the possibility that this strategy may also prove instrumental in predicting the evolving nature of social and cultural values.

Much of what is believed as being 'part of who we are' comprises key strands of the fundamental norms and practices of individuals and groups common to the same community. These norms form part of a larger system that is regarded as being part of what is termed culture. A more refined definition or 'descriptive conception' of culture may be summarised as follows: "the culture of a group or society is the array of beliefs, customs, ideas and values, as well as the material artefacts, objects and instruments, which are acquired by individuals as members of the group or society" (Thompson, 1990: 129). Taken together, these customs and norms form the fundamental basis of the cultural systems that underpin particular societies.

2. Contours of Culture: reference or dissonance?

As stated above, it can be said that a consensus has formed in respect of the presence and magnitude of globalisation and its associated processes. However, it must also be acknowledged that this consensus begins to fragment relatively quickly once it is confronted with questions pertaining to the exact role, depth and penetration of this process in respect of any one domestic state of affairs. Moreover, inter-state and intercontinental communication, i.e. communication in the context of the passage of information and a continuing exchange of ideas and dialogue between such entities (e.g. countries and continents) has grown enormously as a result of globalising processes. Thus, if a further exploration of such a process were to be undertaken it would be unsurprising to note that matters touching upon cultural politics will inevitably arise (Goodman & Ritzer, 2004: 569). Under such circumstances it is arguable that the question quickly evolves to become: how is this issue to be examined without provoking the injury of opinions or indeed occasioning accusations of cultural bias and insensitivity? Matters of this nature are infrequently uncomplicated affairs and demand careful attention and reasoned judgement in order to reach at least a point whereby a working relationship based on mutual respect and a willingness to adopt more flexible positions can be established between, for example, a person or parties from different cultural contexts – regardless of whether these con-

texts are constituted on the basis of legal structures or cultural edifices (or a conglomeration of both).

In recent times, respected opinion has gravitated toward the intercultural strategies developed by Byram (2008). Byram and fellow researchers have engaged in extensive research on the experiences and problems faced by language learners as they come to terms with differing cultural standards and value systems when they spend varying periods in contact people from alternative cultural and linguistic communities. These reflective endeavours have asserted that linguistic ability must be regarded as an essential tool in such situations, where the same can be used to engage in a process known as intercultural communication. A more expansive definition of this practice is heavily dependent on the concept of 'intercultural competence' and includes 'mediating' between one's own culture and other 'external' cultures. Engaging in contact across and between cultures is described as engaging in behaviour that "is to bring into relationship two cultures" (Byram, 2008: 68). In such situations it may prove prudent to moderate one's own conduct as the against the values and beliefs that forms the basis of one's own habitus in respect of another system of beliefs associated with other individuals or groups who are not regarded as forming part of local or national community.

Byram further recognises that an essential part of 'acting interculturally' requires genuine motivation to moderate or suspend one's own personal values to such an extent which would facilitate the formation of empathy with members of other cultures (Byram, 2008: 69). Moreover, since a very significant amount of language socialisation takes places within a community (local or national) within the context of the education system, it is this sphere of influence that should be subject to intercultural initiatives. A pertinent observation by Edwards (1994) recognises the powerful role that is play be the education system where: "...awareness and tolerance must...become an inextricable part of the whole educational enterprise" (Edwards, 1994: 189). Thus, if an individual, i.e. a language learner, wishes to fully benefit from such a progressive paradigm, efforts would need to be made to recognise the dangers of encouraging the proliferation of cultural imperialism. Critics have noted the dangers of more dominant cultural and linguistic domains diluting other, less potent (or those perceived as such) cultures which may exhibit a

deficit of capabilities to resist erosion of identity through such contact, a situation may arise whereby:

If the two languages, along with the two cultural domains of which they speak, are not kept separate in a complex intercultural exchange, then the weaker of the two cultures in that contact setting may have its unique values and concepts watered down when they are rendered into words and expressions of the more dominant language. This is a thorny problem for intercultural relations (Corson, 1995: 186).

One of the most remarkable features of the current era is the exponential propagation of the process of globalisation. The existence of this phenomenon is not contested, but no single cluster of meanings express an uncontested representation of how it works. However, there is little doubt as to the fact that globalisation has and continues to act as a fundamental catalyst in cultural change. As such a catalyst, the process of globalisation brings many features and elements of cultures into contact with others and thus facilitates clarification of meaning as Parekh (2000) in his work *Rethinking Multiculturalism* remarks:

However rich it may be, no culture embodies all that is valuable in human life and develops the full range of human possibilities. Different cultures thus correct and complement each other's horizon of thought...inassimilable otherness challenges us intellectually and morally, stretches our imagination, and compels us to recognize the limits of our categories of thought (Parekh, 2000: 167).

In this way, it can be said as Boon (1982: 22-26) notes: "Culture materialises (through language) only in counterdistinction to another (language)/culture." Accordingly, globalisation plays a vital and complex role in supplying the medium and the means by which this process can be realised. Arguably, navigating such complex situations requires what Guilherme (2000) judiciously affirms as being a central element of intercultural competence which can be defined as: 'the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as being different from our own' (Guilherme, 2000: 297). While it would be foolhardy to discount the obvious necessity to adopt an intercul-

tural stance in tandem with the sentiments set out above. An approach of this kind is born of situation whereby 'Differences are born when reason is not fully awake or falls asleep again...' (Bauman, 2006: 168).

In a world where there is a vast array of diverse social and cultural practices held within and between different languages and cultures, an active and fertile imagination would appear to provide a sound basis for building understanding and empathy between members of differing and different cultures. A faculty of great power, the imagination has now taken on a new and unprecedented force in social life (and by extension, the culture in which it subsists). Contemporary imagination in the social sphere, however, has acquired a new potency. In comparison with times past, exponentially greater numbers of people across the globe are empowered to conceive a much broader set of possible lives than have ever done so previously. A fundamental source of this transformation is the mass media, which offers a fertile font of transmutable reserve of alternate lives, some of which make their way into the active imagination of quotidian citizenry. Experiences from migrants who have made their lives in distant communities may feature in news or rumours within one's own immediate neighbourhood can also contribute to changing perceptions of distant lands. Where the media forms the primary influence in this respect, it does so in manner that not only through providing direct examples of new lifestyles, but also through its distinguishing characteristics of robust import. The latter modulates social contact with metropolitan influences from the world at large (Appadurai, 2005: 53).

One of the major shifts in the global cultural order was created by symptoms of the globalised world that manifest themselves in the form of media such as cinema, television and other video technologies. These media also enjoy a close association with the role of imagination in the context of social life which has had the effect of superseding previously limited perspectives offered by inert traditions. Once this new set of possibilities (facilitated by a global cultural network and media outgrowths) took hold it has been possible for such important elements such as imagination and fantasy to correct the insufficiencies of a previously finite social experience. As a result many more people regard themselves as global citizens and adopt perspectives on their lives which are heavily enabled by the mass media presenting a multitude of

prospective alternatives that facilitates and encourages the manufacture of social lives across societies (Appadurai, 2005: 53).

An agent of particular potency which performs a central function in propagating hierarchical values of governing classes within individual cultures is the education system. This agent is frequently supplemented in its objective by efforts of the media industry in marketing cultural practices and products, which have now come to occupy a prominent place in distilling cultural identity heavily tinged by dominant interests. Thus, it can reasonably be claimed that the mechanism of mass communication and interactive exchange of ideas, knowledge and cultural products facilitated by the media industry is both driven and symptomatic of the process of globalisation itself.

3. Cultural Capital

However, prior to the propagation of such values and ideas across international boundaries they must first be formulated in more domestic and immediate settings such as a national community and the schools. Defining the purpose and natures of such values profits greatly from deferral to Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital*, which, for the more immediate purposes of the present discussion pertain to the "linguistic and cultural competence" that relates directly to an extensive knowledge of culture more commonly found among membership of the upper social classes and conversely, it is less prevalent in lower social classes (Bourdieu, 1973: 80). Variance in levels of cultural capital are actively exacerbated by an educational system that prioritises styles that are in accordance with institutionalised values and thus causing disenfranchisement for lower classes faced with a very low likelihood of benefitting from social mobility (Dumais, 2002: 44-45).

Cultural capital is closely linked with another of Bourdieu's concepts, namely that of habitus. He understands the habitus as being a person's disposition, something which conditions both the behaviour displayed and the decisions taken by a person. Moreover, the habitus is regarded as "... necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions..." which ensures the "...

principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world...” (Bourdieu, 2007: 166). So, the key feature of this principle is that the habitus has the effect of providing people with a set of dispositions which incline to act and react in certain ways. The net effect is that a person learns to recognise their position in the social structure and in so doing come to a realisation of the limits imposed on their expectations and possibilities. In this way an individual’s behaviour is conditioned and such practices are absorbed into the mind and begin forming part of the habitus in an unconscious process originating in early childhood (Bourdieu, 1991:12).

Bourdieu held that the habitus possessed by a person develops in tandem with the level of cultural capital a person has. For instance, a member of the lower social classes realises that people from that stratum are usually in possession of a low level of cultural capital and that in the absence of higher levels of this capital, educational attainment and success is unlikely to be a realistic possibility for such people. Accordingly, students originating in lower social classes are inclined to self-filter themselves away from higher education as a result of their perspective of what is considered to be a viable life prospect or otherwise. However, while it is rare and unusual, it is also possible that highly motivated and capable students from modest backgrounds may come to a position whereby they regard the accumulation of cultural capital as a means of surpassing others at the same level of the social stratum (Bourdieu, 1973). Observation has demonstrated that in everyday practice, each person’s perception of his or her own culture is predominantly unconscious. The cultural meanings ‘absorbed’ through the acquisition of different kinds of cultural capital permeate a person’s thinking at a great depth and tend to be beyond the reach of conscious recollection. Acting outside the parameters established by the norms of the specific cultural capital thus causes discomfort within the individuals who venture beyond recognised linguistic and cultural meanings (Rivers & Houghton, 2013: 91).

The agenda of such a practice is determined and propagated by dominant groups or classes in a society, the said agenda is then delivered via delegated authority so as to ensure circulation on a wide-scale throughout the community at large. Authority to engage in large-scale inculcation is entrusted to the

educational system. Pedagogical work of this nature involves a practice intended to act as a catalyst ensuring long term instruction in order to secure manifest and robust training that is capable of altering the habitus. This is carried out in such a way as to achieve the internalization of the principles set out by the cultural arbitrary causing the perpetuation of such principles and ideals beyond the duration of the said training. Enduring change in the habitus can only be assured by long term action designed to impose and inculcate an arbitrary, an end that is best achieved by means of the appropriate utilisation of pedagogic work (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990: 31).

Pedagogical action confers its affects over a very considerable length of time, such a chronological interval is necessary for it to be effective in its assigned purpose beginning in the early years in the life of a person. This purpose is taken to be the incubator and protector of the values comprising recognised tradition that are regulated by an inertia found in educational institutions, whose objective seeks to reproduce themselves involving as little change as possible (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990: 32).

Navigating social life with a high level of cultural capital frequently yields a positive return where the effort is properly structured and is focussed. Additional deployment of other forms of capital such as linguistic capital can produce higher returns in specific interactive situations. Possession of appropriately sophisticated linguistic capital can be a key factor in unlocking social meanings that may otherwise never materialise. Habitus also affects speech patterns and conditions discourse as according to its own character found in the individual possessing it. As Bourdieu explains:

On the one hand, there are the socially constructed dispositions of the linguistic habitus, which imply a certain propensity to speak and to say determinate things (the expressive interest) and a certain capacity to speak, which involves both the linguistic capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in a determinate situation (Bourdieu, 2007: 37).

As this quote highlights, the speaker needs not only an appropriate knowledge of the standards of different kinds of discourse, but also the whe-

rewithal to apply this skill in such a manner as to fit the situation at hand. Thus, maximisation of their knowledge and cultural capital moderated by their own habitus furnishes the means by which such speakers can control meaning and manipulate the agenda to reflect established priorities. Supervision of the discourse in this way acts as a way to infuse the narrative with ideological concerns that merit direct, if subtle attention. An enterprise of this kind seeks to conduct debate and interaction within the parameters of the legitimate language, outside of which discussion is not entertained.

It is then by means of this so-called 'legitimate language' that then forms the basis of the hegemonic narratives that are infused into modern examples of cultural imperialism delivered through globalisation processes. Consequently, it is possible that intercultural communication strategies designed to promote mutual respect and understanding between different nations and distinct linguistic and cultural communities may, in fact, form part of the problem in stoking resentment if such intercultural initiatives are imposed or accepted under duress by the communities concerned. There is also the possibility that where such initiatives are embraced by communities without prior critical reflection on what they likely implications may be for the community, problems will inevitable arise in the foreseeable future.

There are a number of practical examples that attest to this reality: 'Brexit', individuals like Anders Brevik in Norway, increasing racism across European nations in response to the arrival of Syrian and refugees from other parts of the world, the slow death of the Schengen agreement in Europe, etc. However, while we must be wary of possible and real dangers of coercive intercultural dialogue, be it in the context of the expansion of international trade or the future of the integrity of the European Union, this should not mean the automatic abandonment of awareness programmes and international cultural and educational enterprises.

4. Conclusion

Moreover, while it is undeniable that globalisation is a phenomenon that can neither be ignored nor escaped, it also represents an opportunity to chal-

lenge hegemonic narratives encountered as different cultures interact and sometimes criticise one another at varying levels of intensity and duration. As Sir Francis Bacon once so aptly remarked:

(H)e that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator; and if time of course alter things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end? (in Vickers, 2008: 387).

Indeed, in the context of teaching and learning, one could reasonably argue that if education is designed to enlighten and liberate the mind, broaden the conscience and structure one's thinking in a more refined manner all towards the overarching objective of seeking greater levels of knowledge and to reach a more liberal way of life. Indeed, in this same spirit of tolerance toward different ways of thinking and alternative ways of life. In order to ensure any degree of notable success, such an objective requires a fertile mind and an enlightened conscience, an attitude which allows one to conclude on the following note: *In an age of ever decreasing absolutes, conscience is increasingly our last court of appeal.* It stands to reason, then, that education should be the source of the enlightenment necessary for just such a conscience.

An individual's (e.g. that of a language teacher) conscience can work in tandem with the specific habitus which comprises a fundamental element of a person's character. Thus, great care must be taken to ensure the content of teacher training courses and the material they teach is conceived with the utmost care and good judgement. In this way, it may be possible to filter meaningful levels of much of the undifferentiated material delivered by communication systems directly connected to global media and publishing networks. After all, transnational values affect transnational attitudes, thus greater tolerance becomes possible. This is the key strength that can be extruded from globalisation: global thinking requires multilingual communication (i.e. the acquisition and application of linguistic capital) which can be used to promote intercultural awareness and mutual respect. Hence, mutual respect may then form part of the by-product of language instruction and acquisition, a value that remains more important than ever in an era of uncertainty that permeates all cultures.

References

- APPADURAI, A. (2005) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- BAUMAN, Z. (2006) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BOON, J. (1982). *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1973). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change: Papers in the Sociology of Education* (pp. 71-112). London: Tavistock.
- BOURDIEU, P. & Passeron, J-C. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London, Newbury Park, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1991) *Language & Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (2007). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London and New York: Routledge.
- BYRAM, M. (2008). *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and Reflections*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- BYRAM, M. (1989). *Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matter
- CORSON, D. (1995). World view, cultural values and discourse norms: The cycle of cultural reproduction. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 19(2), 183-195.
- DUMAIS, S. (2002). Cultural Capital, Gender, and School Success: The Role of Habitus. *Sociology of Education*, 75(1), 44-68.
- EDWARDS, J. (1994). *Multilingualism*. London: Routledge.
- GIDDENS, A. (2014). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press [1991].
- GOODMAN, D. & Ritzer, G. (2004). *Sociological Theory* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- GUILHERME, M. (2000). Intercultural competence. In M. Byram (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 297-300). London: Routledge.
- KINLEY, D. (2009). *Civilising Globalisation: Human Rights and the Global Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LOGAN, R. K. (2011). McLuhan misunderstood. Setting the record straight. *International Journal of McLuhan Studies* 1, 27-47.

- MANDAL, S. K. (2001). Reconsidering cultural globalization: The English language in Malaysia. *Journal Third World Quarterly* 21(6), 1001-1012.
- NIEZEN, R. (2004). *A World Beyond Difference: Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- PAREKH, B. (2000). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- RIVERS, D. J. & Houghton, S. A. (Eds.) (2013). *Social Identities and Multiple Selves in Foreign Language Education*. London/New York/Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- ROBINSON, W. (2010). *Global Capitalism Theory and the Emergence of Transnational Elites*. WIDER Working Paper 2010/002. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.
- SKLAIR, L. (2010). Transnational practices. In G. Ritzer & Z. Atalay (Eds.), *Readings in globalization: Key concepts and major debates* (pp. 184–194). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- THOMPSON, J. B. (1990). *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Stanford University Press.
- VICKERS, B. (Ed.) (2008). *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press [1996].