Konin Language Studies
Faculty of Philology, State University of Applied Sciences in Konin, Poland
KSJ 4 (4). 2016. 373-389
http://ksj.pwsz.konin.edu.pl
doi: 10.30438/ksj.2016.4.4.1

The ecology of empowerment as manifested by student critical language awareness

Hadrian Lankiewicz
University of Gdańsk, Poland
hadrianlank@interia.pl

Emilia Wąsikiewicz-Firlej
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland
emiliawf@amu.edu.pl

Abstract

Drawing on critical theories in linguistics (Fairclough, 1989, 1992), the concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971/1991) and mostly ecological linguistics, the authors aim to revisit the process of foreign language learning from the perspective of how learners position themselves in relation to the target language they learn/use (Firth & Wagner, 1997). Questioning the native speaker norms in second language acquisition, as indicated by theoretical considerations and empirical research (Cook, 1991, 1999; Kramsch, 2002b), and sociolinguistic reality of multi- or plurilingual communities (Kramsch, 2008; Maher, 2005, 2010; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Pennycook, 2010), which exhibit translingual practices (Canagajarah, 2013), the authors of the present paper delve into critical language awareness of foreign language speakers. This, as they claim, may be indicative of power relations inscribed in language use and manifested by learner positioning either as a legitimate language user (empowered) or, alternatively, as an incompetent learner/user (disempowered and self-marginalized). The included research is a replica of the study carried out on foreign language teacher practitioners (see Lankiewicz, Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, & Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2016), which in its turn concentrates on learners. Consequently, it allows seeking for parallels and differences, and offers a more complete picture of ecology of empowerment in the context of foreign language learning.

Keywords: ecology of language learning; critical language awareness; marginalization; empowerment; linguistic normativity; political autonomy in language learning

1. Introduction

Elaborating on the initial article (see Lankiewicz, Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, & Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2016), we, the authors of the present paper, with the permission and full support of the third contributor, decided to continue the research on the notion of empowerment in foreign language learning. In this context, the problem oscillates around the issue of a vaguely defined language standard (Brand et al., 2010, p. 3) and the domination of a pedagogical norm in foreign language teaching, fashioned after the idealized pragmatic reality of a target language community. The glorification of the native speaker norms may be misleading and the attainment of native competence, as we accentuated elsewhere, seems unfeasible in psycholinguistic terms (Cook, 1999), sociologically unsound, if one allows for translingual practices (Canagajarah, 2013), and also unrealistic in terms of communication needs of non-native speakers, who many a time communicate on an international arena rather than in the target culture context (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2013). An additional issue constitutes the position of English as an international means of communication of a pluricentral nature.

Thereby, drawing mostly on the critical ecological perspective in language acquisition and language pedagogy, we delve into the language awareness of the FL student, who in the words of Catherine Wallace (1992, p. 62) represents the most "marginalized" and "patronized" group for the fact that any text is mostly seen as a norm-driven collection of structures and words, not a means of authentic communication. By analyzing students' cognizing of language and its learning on the basis of a questionnaire built around the concept of critical ecological perspective, we aim at measuring basic assumptions which demarcate the perception of the student as a legitimate or illegitimate user of a foreign language. We chose to refer to this continuum as the ecology of empowerment. The latter notion is measured by a set of subscales which exhibit students' declarative awareness of the nature of language and its learning. Thus, we try to map out the potential for empowerment, understood as emancipation practices which allow for a very constructive use of a foreign language, recognize the principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972/1996, 1974) and debunk the "domesticating" function of schooling, as gravitating towards hegemonic practices in an indiscriminate or naturalized use of language. Furthermore, comparing students' cognizing with that of teachers from the former research, we obtain additional insight into power relations, as marked by self-marginalization standing for uncritical and indiscriminate use of a foreign language, manifested by passive and unreflective conforming to the norm and thus demonstrating little critical language awareness or political autonomy in language use and its learning.

2. Theoretical background

It would not be much exaggerated that the history of psycholinguistics has perceived language as a neutral instrument for coding and decoding messages, as characteristic of the 1950s, or a grammar system, as dominating the research in the 1960s and 1970s, or a discursive practice (guided by pragmatic conventions), as evident in the 1970s and 1980s, or Universal Grammar, highlighted by researchers particularly in the 1990s to manifest representative function of language and the very reason for human cultural and social development (Kurcz, 2005, p. 17). In particular, treating language as a biological predisposition has cemented the neural perception of language. The Chomskyan idealized speaker operating the *langue* (system) has come to the forefront of attention, overshadowing *parole* (actual language production). The latter regained its due attention only in research classified as sociolinguistic initiated by William Labov (1966; 1972) in the USA and Basil Bernstein (1971) in the UK. Accentuating variationism and social inequalities communicated linguistically, they basically laid foundations for social motivation for language use. This, in turn, gave an impetus for the concept of power distribution in language use. Dell Hymes (1972) accentuated the shortcoming of the concept of language competence and juxtaposed it with communicative competence, which accounted for the context of language use recognized in the notion of language appropriacy. Nonetheless, as articulated by Fairclough (1989, 1992), the notion in question was heavily flawed since it naturalized power relations embedded in language.

The so-called critical Frankfurt School inspired linguists to debunk ideology inscribed in research on language and ultimately gave rise to critical linguistics with the aim of making explicit wider social connotations of language use since language research cannot be separated from society and language itself should be treated as a practitioner of social activities. Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992), a conspicuous representative of critical thinking in linguistics, perceives language as a tool for gripping control or power. The focus of attention has become critical discourse analysis to demonstrate the sublime ways of maintaining hegemonic forces in society without coercion (Gramsci, 1971/1991) or, in other words, how societal power relations are maintained through discursive practices.

The turn of the 21st century witnessed the application of the critical slant in linguistics into language learning, including the field of second language acquisition. Power relations pertaining to language learning have been articulated by academics focusing on various aspects of second language acquisition. The complete account of contributions in this area is beyond the scope of this paper so we decided to mention only a few illustrative examples: revision of fundamental SLA concepts (Firth & Wagner, 1997), re-examining research methodology

(Larsen-Freeman, 1997), autonomization of the learning process (Benson, 2001; Benson & Voller, 1997), or reformulation of the comparative fallacy inscribed in the concept of interlanguage, as highlighted by the notion of multicompetence (Cook, 1991). Debunking of the native speaker norm was also supported by research on plurilingualism and multilingualism (Kramsch, 2008), metrolingualism (Maher, 2005, 2010; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Pennycook 2010), the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2007) and translingual practice (Canagajarah, 2013). Yet it needs to be stressed here that the application of ecological metaphor into language learning allowed reconceptualization of the position of the second language learner as the operator of a legitimate semiotic system (Kramsch, 2002a, 2008; van Lier, 2004).

The above-mentioned research calls for a new type of language awareness, far beyond its initial understanding "as enhanced consciousness and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language" (Carter, 2003, p. 64). Such a conceptualization of language awareness was ingrained in the positivist, conduit metaphor of language as a conveyer of meanings (Swain, 2006) and the recognition of a linguistic standard as an objective representation of linguistic reality. On the other hand, sociolinguistic and particularly the critical line in educational theories and linguistics maintain that neither the act of learning, nor the language are free from a "political" burden. Hence, it is important that both the educators and the learners are aware of the fact that the concept of a linguistic norm is politically sensitive. Consequently, a blind application of it into the language learning process may result in the construction of inauthentic voices for the second language users and stand in conflict with their social identities. Alternatively, as maintained by Duff (2007, p. 311), "[a]dditional-language (e.g., L2) socialization does not necessarily lead to the reproduction of existing L2 cultural and discursive practices but may lead to other outcomes, such as hybrid practices, identities, and values; the incomplete or partial appropriation of the L2 and status within the L2 community; or rejection of target norms and practices". Critical language awareness, as postulated by Fairclough (1992), or critical ecological language awareness, as put forth by Lankiewicz (2015), with the central position of a critical filter unmask the neutralization of the language use and adjust subject-matter cognitions (nature of language and metalinguistic knowledge embedded in the concept of multicompetence) to the living in the globalization era.

A common denomination for both concepts is the notion of how language can empower or disempower people. The above-mentioned sociolinguistic and ecolinguistic research demonstrates that language is a powerful tool effecting people's perception and cultures, as manifested by the theory of linguistic relativism of Whorf-Sapir, which has been rediscovered by sociocultural theory (Caughlan, 1995), and subsequently by the ecological perspective for the language study.

Treating language as a living tissue, constructing and being constructed by multidimensional discursive practices, ecolinguistics sees the relationship between language, people and environment in a verbatim way as a multilayered ecosystem, reverberating with power relations in a biological sense. Hence, contextualized language use is always power-ridden. Most often, however, insights into language awareness of foreign language speakers may be indicative of potential power relations, manifested by positioning themselves either as legitimate language users (empowered) or, alternatively, as incompetent learners (disempowered and marginalizing themselves). The following research replicates the study carried out on foreign language teacher practitioners (see Lankiewicz, Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, & Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2016) but concentrates on learners. Consequently, it allows seeking parallels and differences and offers a more complete picture of classroom ecology of empowerment.

3. Research

3.1. Goal of the study, main hypothesis and research questions

The present research is a quantitative survey study pertaining to the field of second language acquisition (Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2003), based on a questionnaire (see Appendix) containing 21 closed questions. The respondents – students of applied linguistics, learning at least two foreign languages – were asked four open-ended questions in order to verify the main hypothesis that learners of foreign languages are strongly guided by normative perception of linguistic events and celebrate nativeness. In this way, they marginalize themselves as deficient language users. The study addressed the following three research questions:

1. How much is normative perception of language rooted in students' perception of language and its teaching?
2. Is language normativity predicted by the number of language systems the students are acquainted with?
3. Do students perceive themselves as legitimate and empowered language users?

The problem is delved into with recourse to four differential subscales (Dörnyei, 2003) referring respectively to: perception of language as such (questions 1-5), the myth of nativeness in language learning (questions 6-11), the place of normativity in language learning and classroom behavior (questions 12-15), and the use of materials (questions 16-21). Additionally, the respondents were asked to specify the number of foreign languages they study, the length of learning experience and the assumed level of proficiency of each of the enumerated foreign languages in accordance with the *Common European framework of references for languages* (CEFR).

The research instrument applied in the study offers insights into student language awareness and specifies the extent to which languages are perceived as isolated systems subject to prescriptive rules of grammar, enforced by educational contexts of their acquisition. This, in consequence, is reflected in students' linguistic behavior in the classroom and their perception of the quality of instruction provided by native and non-native speakers of a foreign language.

3.2. Context and participants

The questionnaire was distributed among 122 students of applied linguistics at the University of Gdańsk (60 respondents) and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (62 respondents), the institutions represented by the co-authors of this paper. According to Dörnyei (2003, p.74), in L2 studies the size of such a sample is sufficient to be of statistical significance. The selection of participants for the study was based on convenience sampling. The reliability figures for internal consistency (Anderson, 1985) within the subscales, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, were calculated by means of IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 22, in order "to compute correlation coefficients for each potential item with the total scale score and to retain the items with the highest correlations" (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 69). Since the coefficients within the subscales in the study oscillated between 0.69 and 0.73, they were found acceptable and the questionnaire was assumed to be reliable.

All the respondents were students of applied linguistics studying at least two foreign languages. Additionally, 63% of the respondents studied a third language and 11% a fourth one. The majority of them (86%) specified English as their first foreign language (FL1), while the remaining 14% indicated German. As far as the second foreign language (FL2) is concerned, 55% of the respondents chose German, 29% English, 7% Russian, 4% Spanish and 3% French. The most frequently selected third foreign language (FL3) was Spanish (39%), followed by French (26%), German (14%), Russian (12%) and English (9%). The selection of the fourth foreign language (FL4) was more varied and encompassed less popular languages, such as Swedish, Norwegian, Japanese or Turkish. The respondents defined their proficiency level of FL1 as predominantly C1 (67%) or, subsequently, B2 (25%). Only 8% of the respondents evaluated their proficiency level as C2, which might be striking in view of the fact that the average number of years of learning FL1 amounted to over 12, reaching in single cases even 17-19 years. Even though the number of years of FL2 instruction was not significantly lower (9 years on average), the declared proficiency levels were not paralleled: most of the respondents specified their FL2 level as corresponding with B2 (33%) or C1 (31%). As a matter of fact, every tenth respondent indicated C2 level, but there were also those who opted for B1 (9%), A2 (6%), or A1 (7%). The

proficiency levels for FL3 were even lower – A2 (45%), A1 (25%), B2 (12%); B1 (10%); C1 (6%) – which, taking into consideration the average length of FL3 study that amounted to 4 years, did not come as a surprise. Finally, the proficiency level of FL4, studied on average 2.5 years, was defined as A1 by the vast majority (72%) of the respondents.

3.3. Findings and discussion

The general hypothesis draws on the assumption that language awareness is influenced by the existence of a linguistic norm, which, as Harris (1981) puts forward, is a deeply-rooted myth of language as a fixed code. Also Jenkins (2007, p. 9) proposes verification of the status of English as a Lingua Franca that she finds inadequate in the contemporary globalized world. Due to the fact that the native speaker norms are apparently well-ingrained in the teaching profession (Kramsch, 2002b), it appears well-substantiated to corroborate the commonsensical belief that foreign language learners are strongly influenced by this normative perception of linguistic reality of the target language community.

Table 1 juxtaposes responses to research question one within the four subscales which, primarily, encompass Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient for each subscale for the whole sample. The coefficient figures confirm the reliability of the applied scales. As regards the numerical rating scale, the higher score reflects the more normative perception of language it represented. The arithmetic means for each subscale (6.0-7.3) demonstrate that student language awareness is strongly guided by the assumption of linguistic normativity (6.3). A lower figure for pedagogical reality (5.0) may be interpreted through the prism of the existence of moderators between students' beliefs and their learning experiences, including both external (e.g. classroom context) and internal factors (e.g. student capacities, etc).

Table 1 Normative perception of linguistic reality

Scale	Reliability Cronbach Alpha	Arithmetic Mean N=122	SD
Theory of language	0.73	6.3	1.9
Myth of nativeness and language teaching/learning	0.69	6.4	2.4
Correctness (normativeness) and language teaching/learning	0.70	5.6	2.3
Class behavior (pedagogical reality) in the classroom	0.72	5.0	2.4

Generally, low figures indicate high critical language awareness manifesting the level of consciousness that language normativity may be interpreted as a reflection of ideologies and power relations embedded in discursive practices (e.g., Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1989; 1992; Foucault, 1982; Gramsci, 1971/1991). On

the other hand, high figures suggest that language awareness is strongly guided by linguistic normativity and thus little informed by sociocultural and sociopragmatic reality of language use, as it is the case in the present study.

Formulating research question two, we assumed that a normative approach to L2 education may be moderated by the number of language systems the learner is acquainted with. In other words, plurilingualism was expected to generate a more critical approach to linguistic normativity owing to raised linguistic awareness. The major languages studied by our respondents encompassed English, German, Spanish, Russian, French. The arithmetic means representing the perception of linguistic normativity with regard to plurilingualism are displayed in Table 2. Contrary to our assumptions, plurilingualism has not turned out to generate a more critical approach. In fact, the obtained results suggest the opposite trend. For example, the myth of nativeness seems to be particularly cherished by the most plurilingual respondents. A strong correlation might also be observed between the number of studied languages and a definite slant towards normativeness in language teaching/learning and class behavior. By comparison, in our previous study of teachers of foreign languages the value difference for this variable was so insignificant that it did not allow us to formulate definite conclusions (see Lankiewicz et al., 2016). However, the trend observed in our current study makes us lean towards a rejection of the hypothesis that a critical attitude to linguistic normativity is predicted by plurilingualism.

Table 3 Aggregate figures presenting attitudes towards normativity with reference to plurilingualism

Scale	Two foreign languages	SD	Three foreign languages	SD	Four foreign languages	SD
Theory of language	6.4	1.7	6.2	2.0	6.3	1.8
Myth of nativeness and language teaching/learning	6.3	2.3	6.3	2.5	6.9	2.0
Correctness (normativeness) and language teaching/learning	5.3	2.4	5.7	2.2	6.2	2.1
Class behavior (pedagogical reality) in the classroom	4.8	2.3	5.1	2.5	5.4	1.9

The results of our study have supported our assumption that the respondents' linguistic beliefs and corresponding teaching practices are formed by a strong attachment to linguistic norms and the myth of nativeness. The students, as well as the teachers in our previous study (Lankiewicz et al., 2016), tend to ignore the fact that that bi- and multilingualism is not concomitant with monolingualism, as emphasized by the concept of *comparative fallacy* (Cook, 1999). Despite ample evidence provided by research on language awareness pointing to certain advantages of non-nativeness over nativeness in the field of L2 teaching (Andrews, 2007), the pursuit of native-like standards characterizes both teachers and learners. Realistically, this ambition is rather illusive and inaccessible (Cook, 1999) and may be interpreted as a manifestation of the "paradigm of

marginality", representing the monoliguistic principle pervading ESL/EFL teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 542). Nevertheless, the answer to the last research question whether the foreign language students perceive themselves as legitimate and empowered language users is not explicit. As the respondents' voices to the four open-ended questions concluding the questionnaire (see Appendix) imply, celebration of nativeness and pursuit of normativity do not automatically translate into self-marginalization of a FL user and teacher.

What are your weak points as a non-native user of a foreign language?
Similarly to FL teachers who took part in our previous study (Lankiewicz et al., 2016), the vast majority of respondents (81%) express their primary concern with non-native pronunciation and "strong Polish accent". Additionally, the responses reveal students' preoccupation with a deficient use of grammar (52%) and unsatisfactory fluency (24%). The respondents also indicate problems concerning vocabulary, especially its limited range, often insufficient for effective self-expression, as well as the use of collocations and idioms and a lack of the "linguistic intuition and feel" that in their opinion characterizes native speakers. Several respondents consider unfamiliarity with the cultural context of the target language a serious drawback that hinders communication and self-expression due to an improper use of vocabulary. The respondents also show their sensitivity to sociolinguistic aspects of the use of language in different contexts. As one of the respondents puts it (R24): "Although I pass as a native speaker when it comes to German, I tend to use complicated words, which makes me come across as stiff. In English, it's the opposite – not knowing certain words or structures keeps me from expressing complex thoughts". Generally, the respondents feel at ease with the use of more formal register, required in the academic setting, as opposed to everyday or slang language that they are not exposed to in their classroom interaction (mentioned 20 times).

In what way are you better than a native speaker in the use of a foreign language?
In contrast to FL teachers who tend to marginalize themselves, both as teachers and FL users (see Lankiewicz, 2015; Lankiewicz et al., 2016), the students who participated in the current study do not automatically position themselves as inferior to native speakers in terms of language use. A strong sense of superiority of native speakers was only recorded in 5.5% of the responses. The respondents almost unanimously emphasize their considerable concern with grammatical correctness and knowledge of grammatical rules that directly translate into their higher teaching potential. This stance might be exemplified by the following extracts: "I know grammar better than some native speakers. I use language consciously" (R29), "I've got some specific knowledge that regular native speakers

don't have" (R5), or "Sometimes I have a feeling that we know English grammar better. For example, a lot of Americans mistake 'your with 'you're' and that is unbelievable for us :-)" [*sic*] (R45). However, only one respondent observed that the knowledge of grammatical rules is not always concomitant with a "better use of grammar" (R35).

Positioning themselves as FL teachers, the respondents believe that they can explain possible grammatical problems to their potential students more effectively than native speakers. Additionally, they perceive their possible use of the mother tongue to elucidate more intricate linguistic issues as a blessing rather than a curse. It is also possible to single out a number of voices suggesting certain superiority of educated non-native speakers able to use more sophisticated grammatical structures and formal vocabulary to less educated native speakers. Such sociolinguistic concerns might be, for example, traced in the following extract: "I suppose not every native speaker (especially those from rather poor neighbourhoods) knows formal vocabulary to such an extent" (R24). In sum, most of the respondents are able to identify their weaknesses and strengths as FL users without depriving themselves of the status of legitimate language users, as was the case in our study of FL teachers (Lankiewicz et al., 2016).

What are the weak points of a non-native teacher of a foreign language?
As we already signaled elsewhere (Lankiewicz et al., 2016), despite being aware of sociolinguistic diversity in speech habits and a rather insignificant role of accent in evaluating language competence fueling language pedagogy, the majority of respondents in the current study (88%) still identify accent as the major deficiency characterizing non-native FL teachers. Another shortcoming of non-native FL teachers appears to be their insufficient knowledge of the target culture and social reality (36%). The respondents (8%) also raise the issue of the use of vocabulary, especially concerning too formal register and improper collocations. Nevertheless, despite teachers' concerns voiced in our previous studies (Lankiewicz, 2015; Lankiewicz et al., 2016), the respondents do not really show any preference for being instructed by native FL teachers or claim their superiority.

In what way is a non-native teacher of a foreign language better than a native teacher of a foreign language?
In fact, the respondents almost unanimously agree that non-native FL teachers offer certain advantages in the didactic domain. First of all, they provide better explanations of grammatical and lexical problems due to their more profound linguistic knowledge. Despite the dominating trends in FL pedagogy promoting the sole use of the target language in class, almost half of the respondents agree that occasional use of their mother tongue for explaining complex aspects of

grammar or vocabulary appears to be one of the most essential merits of non-native teachers. Although teachers are by no means expected to conduct instruction in their mother tongue, the very possibility of resorting to it in case of any serious difficulty seems to have an emotionally soothing effect as it reduces students' anxiety and acts as a peculiar "safety valve". Thus, from the student perspective occasional code-switching in class is seen as a bonus rather than a flaw. Additionally, the mastery of students' first language enables the teacher to predict a specific positive or negative transfer and is essential in teaching translation and interpreting skills, that are usually of the utmost importance to students of applied linguistics.

The respondents also emphasize the significance of similar experiences with learning a particular FL shared with their non-native teachers who, in their opinions, could identify students' possible problems and difficulties and deal with them in a more efficient way than native teachers. This sense of commonality of the mother tongue and FL learning experiences transpires to be a significant "added value" of non-native FL instruction. Thus, despite teachers' laments concerning their incapability to meet all students' expectations, such as, for example, answering all questions posed by students (Lankiewicz et al., 2016), the surveyed students do appreciate better methodological preparation of non-native teachers and their higher metalinguistic capital. However, single critical voices accentuate teachers' slavish concern with correctness and formality, as well as ignorance of dialects and slang.

4. Conclusions

In sum, the answers to the four open-ended questions, to a certain extent, confirm subscale arithmetical averages gravitating towards a rather moderate celebration of normativity. In contrast to non-native teachers (see Lankiewicz et al., 2016), the surveyed students of applied linguistics do not seem to be overwhelmed by the myth of nativeness or superiority of the native teacher. Non-nativeness is by no means seen as a significant obstacle in the effective use of language or professional career. Being aware of their own certain limitations, the respondents do not, however, marginalize themselves as incompetent language users. Neither do they marginalize non-native teachers. Quite the contrary, the respondents are able to identify their weak and strong points in an unbiased, rational way and show appreciation for their methodological preparation and declarative linguistic knowledge. The use of students' mother tongue is not only seen as an occasional facilitator of class instruction, but even as an indispensable tool in the process of educating future translators and interpreters. Finally, the respondents might be seen as plurilinguals who are far less attached

to the myth of the native speaker and the pursuit of nativeness as the ultimate goal of FL learning than the teachers.

Lastly, comparing research on teacher critical awareness with the study of student critical awareness pertaining to the issue of empowerment, it needs to be stated that high linguistic normativity popular among teachers and in teacher education is in no way shared by students who plan their careers outside the teaching profession (the respondents specialize in translation studies). This, in turn, is corroborated by our former study in which the hegemony of pedagogical, normative discourse was evident in teacher-students interviews (Lankiewicz et al., 2014). Yet a sojourn of those students in a multilingual community, in A Coruña, triggered a potential for a discursive change away from rigid normativity or the desire for native-like proficiency. Thereby, it can be concluded that the ecology of empowerment in the use of a foreign language is teacher-sensitive. A quick explanation hinted by us elsewhere (Lankiewicz et al., 2014) may be that language education in Poland seems to be dominated by *enculturation*, with students being culturally and linguistically indoctrinated to socialize to the target language community. This state of affairs may derive from the tradition of foreign language teacher education which has been guided by the dictates of academic institutions and academic forms of discourse and foreign language methodology. The input from second language research "progressively subverted FL methodology" (Kramsch, 2002a, p. 60) but, promoting authentic native speaker norms, helped work out an expectation that the teacher assimilates socially to the target language community and functions as a cultural mediator. In the case of English, its teaching as a foreign language has been only marginally informed by the sociolinguistic reality of the so-called concept of World Englishes or the mainly misunderstood idea of English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2007). As proof, it suffices to mention the strong position of British examination syndicates.

In this respect, the popularity of pedagogical, highly normative discourse may be construed as committing symbolic assault by subduing the voice of the disempowered (Szkudlarek & Śliwerski, 2009, p. 19), in our case those who are not eager to conform to the native standard. It is high time language education assumed a more critical turn, as stipulated by Lankiewicz (2015), to meet the challenges of the globalization era. It is vital that language education is not only a mechanical skill-oriented training but also a way of developing general linguistic awareness, including the critical one, accounting for the fact that the selection of linguistic means has vital repercussions for our ways of being.

References

Anderson, L. W. (1985). Attitudes and their measurement. In T. Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of education* (Vol. 1, pp. 352-58). Oxford: Pergamon.

Andrews, S. J. (2007). *Teacher language awareness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. Harlow: Pearson.

Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Autonomy an independence in language learning*. London and New York: Longman.

Bernstein, B. (1971). *Codes and control: Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brand, C., Brato, T., Dose, S., & Gotz, S. (2010). Norms in educational linguistics: An introduction. In S. Dose, S. Götz, T. Brato, & C. Brand (Eds.), *Norms in educational linguistics. Linguistics, didactic and cultural perspectives* (pp. 1-7). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice. Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. New York: Routledge.

Carter, R. (2003). Language awareness. *ELT Journal*, *57*(2), 64-65.

Caughlan, P. J. (1995). Sociocultural theory, second language discourse, and teaching: An interview with James Lantolf. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, *6*(2), 137-145.

Common European framework of references for languages. Retrieved from https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

Cook, V. (1991). The poverty-of-the-stimulus argument and multi-competence. *Second Language Research*, *7*, 103-117.

Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(2), 185-209.

Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum.

Duff, P. (2007). Language socialization as sociocultural theory: Insights and issues. *Language Teaching*, *40*, 309-319.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Critical language awareness*. London: Longman.

Firth, A., & Wagner, J. (1997). On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA. *Modern Language Journal*, *81*(3), 285-300.

Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, *8*(4), 777-795.

Freire, P. (1972/1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Gramsci, A. (1971/1991). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Harris, R. (1981). *The language myth*. London: Duckworth.

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). London: Penguin.

Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2002a). Introduction. How can we tell the dancer from the dance? In C. Kramsch, (Ed.), *Language learning and language socialization. Ecological perspectives* (pp. 1-30). London and New York: Continuum.

Kramsch, C. (2002b). Standard, norm, and variability in language learning: A view from foreign language research. In S. Gass, K. Bardovi-Harling, S. Sieloff Magnan & J. Waltz (Eds.), *Pedagogical norms for second and foreign language learning and teaching* (pp. 59-80). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.

Kramsch, C. (2008). Ecological perspectives on foreign language education. *Language Teaching*, *41*(3), 389-408.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Critical language pedagogy: A postmethod perspective on English language teaching. *World Englishes*, *22*(4), 539-550.

Kurcz, I. (2005). *Psychologia języka i komunikacji*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lankiewicz, H. (2015). *Teacher language awareness in the ecological perspective: A collaborative inquiry based on languaging*. Gdańsk: University of Gdańsk Press.

Lankiewicz, H., Szczepaniak-Kozak, A., & Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, E. (2014). Language learning and identity: Positioning oneself as a language learner and user in the multilingual milieu. *Oceanide*, *6*. Retrieved from http://oceanide.netne.net/articulos/articulos 6-en.php/url

Lankiewicz, H., Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, E., & Szczepaniak-Kozak, A. (2016). Insights into teacher language awareness with reference to the concept of self-marginalization and empowerment in the use of a foreign language. *Porta Linguarum, 25*, 9-20.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1997). Chaos/Complexity science and second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics, 18*, 141-165.

Maher, J. C. (2005). Metroethnicity, language, and the principle of cool. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 11*, 83-102.

Maher, J. C. (2010). Metroethnicities and metrolanguages. In N. Coupland (Ed.), *The handbook of language and globalization* (pp. 575-591). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Otsuji, E., & Pennycook, A. (2010). Metrolingualis: fixity, fluidity and language in flux. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *7*(3), 240-254. Retrieved from http://www.acaemia.edu/4889733/metrolingualism_fixity_fluidity_and_language_in_flux/url

Pennycook, A. (2010). Critical and alternative directions in applied linguistics. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, *33*(2), 1-16.

Swain, M. (2006). Languaging, agency and collaboration in advanced second language proficiency. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced language learning: The contribution of Halliday and Vygotsky* (pp. 95-108). New York: Continuum.

Szkudlarek, T., & Śliwerski, B. (2009). *Wyzwania pedagogiki krytycznej i antypedagogiki*. Kraków: Impuls.

van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Wallace, C. (1992). Critical literacy awareness in the EFL classroom. In N. Fairclough (Ed.), *Critical language awareness* (pp. 59-92). Harlow: Longman.

Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, E. (2013). English in the global workplace: A narrative approach. *Discourse and Interaction*, *6*(1), 69-92.

Appendix

Questionnaire

The following questionnaire does not test your linguistic or methodological knowledge. It rather aims at getting to know your attitudes and beliefs regarding some selected issues. Please mark you answers sincerely since they will be processed in an academic study.

What foreign language(s) do you study?

FL1..... FL2.....

FL3..... FL4.....

How long have you been studying the foreign languages specified above?

FL1..... FL2.....

FL3..... FL4.....

Please indicate the degree of your competence in each of the foreign languages specified above in accordance with the proficiency levels defined in the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR).

CEFR level of FL proficiency					
*A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
beginner	elementary	Intermediate	upper intermediate	advanced	proficient (near native)

Circle the right answer.

FL1: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 FL2: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2

FL3: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 FL4: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2

How much do you agree with the following statements. Circle the figure which most closely expresses you views. 0 means "I totally disagree", 9 stands for "I cannot agree more".

1. Language consists of culturally shaped grammar rules and words, hence we all use the same grammar and designate things with the same words. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. The existence of a linguistic standard is a sociocultural necessity. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. We communicate because words have firmly established meanings. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. Speakers understand each other because they interpret the linguistic signs in a similar way. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. Language would not be able to function without socially accepted grammar rules; they function in a similar way as a road code, i.e., without them there would be communication chaos. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. Teachers of a foreign language should identify themselves with the culture the particular language represents. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
7. When you are in a linguistic doubt, the best solution is to ask the native speaker. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8. The foreign language teacher should use one chosen standard, e.g., British, American, Canadian in the case of English or a national standard of the target language, in the classroom. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. When speaking the target language, the teacher should not have a strong accent (e.g., due to his mother tongue interference). 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10. The use of Polish in the foreign language classroom should be forbidden because it deprives students of opportunities to communicate. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11. More advanced language learners (B2, C1) should be instructed by native speakers. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
12. Teaching simplified (International English) or dialectal versions of the foreign language is a waste of time. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
13. One cannot learn a language without knowing the culture of the target language. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14. The top attainment in a foreign language is when you can pass as a native speaker. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
15. Grammar and words should be used only in the way they function in the target culture. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
16. Playing with language in a language class is a waste of time. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
17. I prefer when our teacher makes us stick to the foreign language even if we do not express our real feelings or desires (e.g., when describing their breakfast, they mention pizza and milk despite the fact that it is not true). 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. The teacher should explain grammar in the target language to increase the amount of language input in the classroom. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. Authentic material is the material used for educational purposes that has been created in the context of the target language culture and originally addressed at native speakers. 01 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. The use of materials prepared by students in the language classroom poses a danger of learning mistakes. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
21. Texts recorded by non-native speakers have lower educational value than the ones which present authentic national language use. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Please answer the following questions.

What are your weak points as a non-native user of a foreign language?

In what way are you better than a native speaker in the use of a foreign language?

What are the weak points of a non-native teacher of a foreign language?

In what way is a non-native teacher of a foreign language better than a native teacher of a foreign language?

Thank you very much for you answers. If you wish to see the results of this survey study, please leave your email address to which we may send you a synopsis of the results or the information about the availability of the text after its publication.