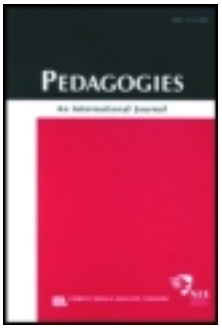

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Language and intercultural education: an interview with Michael Byram

Melina Porto [a]

[a] School of Humanities and Sciences of Education, Institute of Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, National University of La Plata and CONICET, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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Language and intercultural education: an interview with Michael Byram

Melina Porto*

School of Humanities and Sciences of Education, Institute of Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, National University of La Plata and CONICET, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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This article reports an interview with Michael Byram, Professor Emeritus, University of Durham in the United Kingdom, during his visit to Argentina in September 2011. Michael Byram is one of the main international referents in intercultural education. The interview addresses issues such as language education, intercultural and citizenship education, education in general, formal schooling, critical pedagogies, political and economic factors involved in education, teacher education and research in education, among others. Even though Byram specializes in foreign language education and focuses upon language education in particular at certain moments in the interview, the connection with other subjects in the school curriculum surfaces at all times, as does the connection with general aspects of education, which are relevant to all the actors involved in this field.

This interview is framed within current understandings of the cultural dimension of language education and education in general. In order to introduce the reader to this framework, the article first addresses the connection between language and culture in a historical perspective, which makes Byram's work relevant to all educators (not only language educators). It goes on to provide an outline of Byram's model of intercultural competence for the description of cultural understanding. Topics of general interest emerge such as the role of emotion, affect and imagination in education as well as the interconnection among culture, language, imagination and literature – something that Byram and his colleagues have put forth. The discussion is permeated by identity issues which are involved in the learning and teaching of any language, and in the learning and teaching, in a given language, of any discipline. The centrality of language in education becomes manifest, and consequently the relevance of Byram's work to all the actors involved in education in one way or another. Throughout the political and ideological dimensions of education are touched upon, along with a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the various theoretical considerations addressed in the article.

Keywords: Michael Byram; intercultural education; (foreign) language education; criticality

Initial clarifications

In this article, I intertwine theoretical considerations with my questions as I formulated them in the interview, and with Byram's responses. For the sake of clarity, it has been impossible to respect the order of the questions–answers in the original interview. In addition, the reader may notice that similar topics are mentioned at different points in this

*Email: melinaporto2007@yahoo.com.ar

article, rather than developing each topic one after another. The reason for this is that these topics were approached from different angles and points of entrance during the interview, making it impossible to stitch the interview extracts that addressed similar issues together. Moreover, the interconnection and complexity of the issues involved in intercultural education have contributed to this impossibility. For example, the topic of attitudes is mentioned initially in general terms and is later explored in more depth as the ethical, political, ideological and moral dimensions of education are addressed.[1]

Introduction: why become familiar with the work of Michael Byram?

Language is central in education and the reason is commonsensical: teachers teach content in their specific disciplines through a language, whatever that language might be. This centrality of language in education is something that may pass unnoticed to the teacher. The language of instruction is a given, except in certain contexts, and may be an unproblematic aspect in many settings. However, in the classrooms of the twenty-first century, where multilingualism and multiculturalism are unavoidable, languages can open or close doors. Consider the case, for instance, of learners whose native (and/or home) language is different from the language of instruction. These learners may be at a disadvantage if the language of instruction is not seen and taught as a second language, with appropriate methodologies/pedagogies. In some areas of the world such as Argentina, educators tend to be highly unaware of the extra demands that this situation poses on these learners.

This centrality of language makes the work of Michael Byram relevant and useful to all those involved in education in one way or another. In the framework of multilingual and multicultural classrooms, the connection between language and culture that Byram highlights pertains to all languages, whether native, foreign or second. For example, Guiora (2005) says: "Years ago . . . I proposed that native language is the prime vehicle for the transmission of psychological and cultural essence, it is an ever-present embodiment of self-representation incorporating a view of the world and of ourselves, carrying a national-cultural epistemology" (p. 187). Given this scenario, current discussions about education are necessarily traversed by language and cultural issues which are pertinent to theorists, researchers and educators in general, not only those involved with languages.

In attempting to bring this relevance to the foreground, let me refer to Love (2010), who proposed the need for secondary school teachers to have deep literacy pedagogical content knowledge, in any subject of the school curriculum. In this specific regard, Byram expressed in the interview:

> MB: I've become much more aware of how teachers of other subjects need to be aware of and take into consideration language as a tool for learning through the work of the Council of Europe in the last five years or so. In Britain, there was a big report in the 1970s, which said how important language is for life. That was the title, "A Language for Life", where the emphasis, amongst other things, was upon making sure the teachers of sciences in particular became aware of the linguistic demands that they were putting on learners. At the time, it was always thought of in terms of vocabulary, special vocabulary that learners need to know, but I think the research more recently, which is revived in a sense, particularly in Germany, has shown that it's not just the vocabulary. In fact, that's only the surface, but there are a lot of other things beneath the surface: discourse capacities, some of which are specific to each subject and some of which are transversal but which you can't expect learners just to pick up, they need to be taught. Some will pick them up, clearly when they weren't taught, some had to pick them up, and those became the

> successful learners and the successful scientists, and so on. But for the ordinary average pupil, they need to be taught.

The centrality of language in education necessitates awareness of other related aspects involved in teaching and learning, implied by the simple fact that whatever it is that teachers teach, they do so through a language. Between content and language lies culture, which will be the focus of what follows.

A bit of background: language and culture

A bit of background is useful at this point. The importance of cultural factors in foreign/second language education as well as in literacy in general is well documented (Byram & Grundy, 2003; Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Risager, 2007). These factors are important in education in general too, and we shall have Byram's view on their relevance later. When we trace its history, the cultural dimension of foreign/second language education began to be given attention at the beginning of the twentieth century in Germany with the concepts of *Landeskunde* (or area studies) and *Kulturkunde* (or the study of culture and civilization) (Byram, 2000; Risager, 2007). Interestingly, the reasons for its rise were mainly political rather than educational. Political and military events in Europe during the inter-war years and particularly in the 1930s, using it to bolster the notion of national identity, led to later discussions in the second half of the twentieth century about the nature of *Landeskunde* (purposes, context, content, characteristics, etc.). In the second half of the twentieth century too, other social, political and cultural factors (migration, communication beyond national borders, etc.) paved the way for an increasing awareness about the importance of cultural aspects in language education. It is interesting to see that this political side of language education, and of education in general, continues to be prominent among theorists and researchers nowadays, as Byram shall explain later.

Furthermore, this discussion about *Landeskunde* and *Kulturkunde* is also relevant at present because both concepts inevitably intersect. For instance, the geographical context may contribute to the development of specific cultural traditions in a certain setting, which then are appropriated in different contexts worldwide irrespective of the geographical determinants which may have led to their origin. Think of a trivial Christmas tradition in the icy and glacial United States and Europe such as eating dry fruits, a custom brought by immigrants and transplanted to a burning Argentina in the midst of the summer in December.

This cultural dimension has been explored and developed since then (and so continues to be) by scholars in the United Kingdom such as Michael Byram and his colleagues, in the United States such as Claire Kramsch, in France such as Geneviève Zarate, in Germany such as Lothar Bredella and in Scandinavia such as Karen Risager. Investigations of this sort have involved English as a foreign and second language as well as foreign languages other than English. These developments have produced a significant body of work dealing with the theoretical and pedagogic underpinnings behind intercultural competence as well as issues of assessment and educational policy, among others.

Pioneering views: intercultural education

At the beginning of the 1980s, Byram advanced a ground-breaking framework for language teaching and developed it during the 1990s (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003, 2006; Byram, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1997; Byram & Morgan, 1994; Neuner & Byram,

2003). It is widely known as the Model of Intercultural (Communicative) Competence (Byram, 1997, 2009). This model was innovative because it moved the field of language education forward from the traditional notion of communicative competence, which had a strong linguistic and functional focus. The latter advocated the teaching of the language with the aim of allowing students to communicate by performing functions such as requesting something, asking permission, inviting, etc. In other words, prior to Byram's contribution, language teaching tended to focus mainly on the teaching of the system of any language (grammar, syntax, vocabulary) in the abstract, devoid of any contextual and cultural setting, with purely instrumental purposes, that is, be able to use the language in question to communicate. What Byram did was raise awareness of the fact that languages do not exist in isolation, and that there is much more implicated in teaching and learning a language, in particular the intercultural dimension. Moreover, if one thinks of the multilingual and multicultural classrooms[2] of the twenty-first century, it becomes clear that this intercultural dimension is implied in the teaching and learning of any school subject when learners with different languages and from different cultures get together within one classroom.

Byram's model consisted initially of five *savoirs* or dimensions of knowledge, skills and attitudes and was developed together with Zarate in work for the Council of Europe. Note the inclusion of skills and attitudes, not only knowledge (be it knowledge of the system of a language, factual knowledge about a culture, etc.), which was something totally innovative at the time. These savoirs are *savoir être* (for instance, attitudes of curiosity and inquisitiveness), *savoirs* (knowledge of different aspects of life in a certain society, such as work, education, traditions, etc.), *savoir comprendre* (involving the skill of interpreting and relating those *savoirs*), *savoir apprendre/savoir faire* (involving the skills of discovery and interaction) and *savoir s'engage* (involving critical cultural awareness). According to Byram, this last *savoir* is central in order to make foreign language teaching *educational* (i.e. beyond the instrumental perspective, which has traditionally highlighted the linguistic side of language education), it is captured by the notion of education for intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008, 2012) and it takes account of the ideological and political dimensions involved by necessity in foreign language teaching (Byram, 2001), discussed later in the interview.

Another important element that Byram and his colleagues have foregrounded is the *relational* aspect in cultural understanding, which Kramsch (1993, 1998), Bennett (1993, 2009) and others also highlight, and which has gained life in the figure of the intercultural speaker or intercultural mediator (Alred & Byram, 2002; Byram, 2009). This aspect transcends language education to reach other fields such as intercultural communication, civic and citizenship education, business, study abroad, tourism, au pair programmes, diplomatic service programmes and art, among many others. It is also involved in the day-to-day relationships in which teachers and learners engage within the classroom.

This body of work has been very influential from a theoretical and pedagogic perspective. Theoretically, the Model of Intercultural Competence changed the way in which language education was conceived as mentioned before. Pedagogically, since this change occurred, relevant methodologies, materials, assessment options, etc. have appeared. Byram referred to the model in this way during the interview:

MB: I've written in the handbook that Deardorff edited (2009a) that there are different kinds of models. This is a model which is something to aim at, and it's intended for teachers to be able to use as a starting point for defining their objectives of teaching,

but it's not a model in the sense of presenting a comprehensive explanation or comprehensive description of all the factors. It does not try to link all the factors.

Culture, emotion, affect, imagination and literature

The centrality of language in this discussion makes Byram's work relevant to anyone involved in education beyond language educators. Because content area teachers teach content through a language, using a certain language, this discussion concerns them as well. Involved here is the link with emotion and affect, also pertinent to all educators. The cultural anthropologist Rosaldo (1993) narrates his own experience in order to show the strength that an emotion can have in a certain culture and the incapacity of an outsider to understand it, no matter the effort invested in this aim. The author describes his own inability to conceive the power of the fury experienced by the Ilongots in the Philippines when faced with the death of a beloved. One common way of alleviating their grief and suffering was to cut off human heads under the circumstances. It was only after the experience of personal losses, first of a young brother and later of his wife, that the author was able to visualize the strength of the emotions the Ilongots must have felt and to recognize their sobbing as a form of rage. What remains in Rosaldo's description for those who have not gone through similar devastating experiences, however, is an anecdote about the decapitating Ilongots which seems to reinforce stereotyped conceptions of them as savages in need of blood.

This exemplifies the key role of emotion and affect associated with the contact between different languages and cultures, as it takes place for instance in the multilingual and multicultural classrooms of this century. It is important to highlight, however, that the centrality of affect has been argued for in other fields as well, for instance L1 literacy (Watkins, 2006). In addition, very specific proposals exist which take up this dimension and extend it to the sphere of pedagogy (e.g. creative imagining; McWilliam, 2010).

More specifically, Kramsch (1995) highlights the imaginative dimension of culture and its connection with literature. Byram and his colleagues have emphasized that emotion and affect are a key aspect in this imaginative dimension of culture (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). The idea is that literature can be a powerful vehicle to foster understanding among different cultures. One role of literature is to acquaint readers with a series of conflicts that will prepare them for future similar situations. Individuals will know how to respond to unpredictable situations thanks to the experience gained through reading. Byram addressed the fact that emotion, affect and attitudes are a key aspect in education in these terms during the interview:

MB: This notion of *savoir être*, of attitudes, and creating a sense of interest and curiosity, is crucial. The problem is that, at least to my knowledge, there is no proper pedagogy of how to change people's attitudes. You can't think of specific teaching methods to change people's attitudes, but you try to use your teaching methods to teach other objectives and hope that that will happen at the same time, rather than saying: "In this lesson we're going to develop your attitudes." That's not possible.

MP: Because they [attitudes] are quite fixed.

MB: And also because we don't have a kind of theory about attitudes. Obviously psychologists talk about attitudes, but [there is no] pedagogical theory which says how we can teach attitudes and how we can change attitudes by deliberate teaching.

Later in the interview Byram will refer to attitudes in more depth within a broader discussion about ideology and pedagogies.

Culture, identity and imperialism in language education

How is identity involved in language learning and language use, in particular when this language is not the native language? A whole body of literature addresses this issue. The current interest in identity issues as they relate to intercultural competence is well documented (Byram & Grundy, 2002; Byram, 2008, 2011; Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, & Méndez García, 2009). Byram et al. (2009, pp. 8–9) explore the idea that individuals have multiple identifications which are personalized, in the sense that they are "situated, contested, dynamic and fluid and heavily dependent on context." The notion of identity is nowadays seen as complex and fluid as well as pivotal not only in cultural understanding, but also in people's everyday practices (for instance, youth culture; Rogers, Winters, LaMonde, & Perry, 2010).

Theoretical considerations on identity are relevant to the field of education in general, particularly for classrooms of the twenty-first century, because all processes of teaching and learning, in any discipline, provoke changes in all the actors involved (teachers, students, supervisors, tutors, etc.). These changes involve new insights into these actors' identities through the contact with people from different cultures and languages within the classroom. Though such contacts have always been a feature of some classrooms, due to the impact of globalization they are nowadays no longer the exception but the norm.

Cultural and linguistic imperialism

Whereas in the past, it was assumed that it was the teacher's role to change his/her learners' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (and identity) to "mould" them to those associated with the members of the target culture (with the pertinent caveats as in Byram & Morgan (1994), and in the present interview later), one current line of thought is that English *per se* carries with it a more or less overt, a more or less covert, political and ideological agenda (Byram, 2001, 2011; Phillipson, 1992, 2001, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). The idea is that because English cannot possibly be dissociated from the social, cultural, historical, economic, political, religious and other relations in which it exists (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003), the teaching of English, or the teaching of any school subject through English, is far from a neutral and innocent activity. Byram (2001, 2010), Byram and Grundy (2002), Edge (2003), Markee (2000) and others have taken up this matter of agenda, bringing forward the political, ethical and moral decisions and dilemmas that (language) educators face nowadays given the current international scenario and the status of English in the twenty-first century.

This discussion permeates the teaching of all school subjects, beyond language education, because implied in content area teaching are decisions regarding the choice of the language of instruction, and discourse competences which are specific to each discipline, something that Byram mentioned before.

MP: In your article entitled "Language teaching as a political action" which appeared in 2001 in the book edited by Bax and Zwart *Reflections on Language and Language Learning* you say that "foreign language teaching inevitably involves the teacher in a political force-field and, whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are involved in a political activity" (Byram, 2001, p. 91) and you conclude that

"language teaching as foreign-language education cannot and should not avoid educational and political duties and responsibilities" (Byram, 2001, p. 102). Would you please expand on your idea about the political dimension of language education?

MB: I think what has happened and become more evident in language teaching as it became focused upon communicative competence and as it became theoretically dominated often by writers about English language teaching throughout the world [is] that the technical aspect of language teaching (how to develop students' communicative competence) has dominated. And perhaps that's inevitable when those people who write about communicative competence for English language teaching are not writing about a specific situation. They may not want to get involved in the politics of a specific situation. Although, having said that, Adrian Holliday has been very good about showing how you can't be only technical, you've got to understand the situation. So the political dimension with a small "*p*", as it were, has been evacuated from a lot of discussion about methodology, and the purposes and the outcomes. The competences (which are seen as the purposes) are seen as something that you can just do, or that you can just teach. This means, as Adrian Holliday says, the technical side. But you cannot think about mere techniques, or techniques of language teaching, without seeing them in context. But also you can't think about the techniques, about the methodology, without thinking about what the outcomes or the purposes are . . . There are other things that you can do and that you should do as a teacher, while you are teaching linguistic competence and while you're applying the methodologies, such as think about the values that you want to encourage.

MP: Pennycook and Coutand-Marin, in their article, "Teaching English as a Missionary Language", agree that English language teaching is a highly political project. However, they present a dilemma and I would like to have your opinion on it. Basically, their point is, and here I quote,

> This is a challenge often raised against proponents of critical approaches (critical literacy, critical pedagogy, etc.) in education: If one is prepared to argue for the right to pursue a political agenda in education, must this necessarily also include the right for all political agendas to be pursued?
>
> (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003, p. 349)

MP: Departing from the idea that education cannot be neutral, they ask (and I quote again): "how can we justify certain forms of political activity within ELT [English language teaching] and condemn others?" (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003, p. 349). How would you answer this question?

MB: That's one of my reservations about Giroux and critical pedagogy in that sense . . . I mean, criticality for me is criticality, it's not an agenda, it's a perspective. And you can be critical, and you can be evaluative. It's not a matter of saying "We, the teachers, should push and encourage our learners to be critical of the society and push them in a certain direction", but simply that we, the teachers, should encourage learners to think critically about what's around them, and to think critically about what they take for granted, and to think critically about the basis on which they might make evaluations. And it's up to them – that is, learners (and we are talking about older learners) – to decide where they think the society should go. But they should be much more aware. That's why I use that word *awareness* in "*critical cultural awareness*". They should bring to the surface the presuppositions they have

when they say "This and that is wrong in our society", or indeed "This and that is wrong in another society." Why are you saying that? What are the values that you are using when you say "This and that is wrong"? Because that's a moral judgement. The teachers should challenge them to say what the basis is for saying "This and that is wrong" rather than saying "I agree with you or disagree with you, and we should be moving in a certain direction". So it's the word "agenda" which is problematic. I don't think political agendas should be pursued, but I think criticality should.

MP: But you do use the words "political duties and responsibilities."

MB: Duties and responsibilities, yes, but I think that means what I've been saying about creating criticality, and not thinking of yourself as only a technician, who teaches something without any values attached to it, or teaches something else in a neutral way, teaches language in a neutral way.

MP: Then Pennycook and Coutand-Marin bring to the discussion Widdowson's questions and concerns regarding the spread of critical approaches to education.

> Whose ethics are we talking about? Whose morals? And how can you tell a worthy cause from an unworthy one? Critical people, like missionaries, seem to be fairly confident that they have identified what is good for other people on the basis of their own beliefs. But by making a virtue of the necessity of partiality we in effect deny plurality and impose our own version of reality, thereby exercising the power of authority which we claim to deplore.
>
> (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003, pp. 349–350; Widdowson, 2001, p. 15)

The questions posed by Pennycook and Coutand-Marin, which I would like you to respond if you may, are:

> Is Widdowson right that critical literacy or critical pedagogy is indistinguishable from missionary activity by dint of its emphasis on partiality over plurality? . . . If we accept that all teaching is political, on what grounds can we establish certain politics over others? And . . . how can we establish ethical practice in ELT?
>
> (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003, p. 350)

I would add that this is connected with the issue of attitudes, in particular how ethical it is to teach an attitude.

MB: The question of attitudes. The attitudes are the attitudes of curiosity and openness and so on, which are not attitudes or openness in a particular direction, so they are not political in the sense of a political agenda . . . If your political agenda is to be critical . . . I think the work of Ronald Barnett is appropriate. He would say that criticality is a characteristic competence or skill or way of thinking which may and should lead to some kind of action in the world. He talks about action in the world rather than political action in the world. But it's not the teachers' agenda. The teachers shouldn't. The teacher as a person may well have an agenda, but as a teacher, he/she should not, does not need to have an agenda. The teacher can develop criticality, a questioning attitude to whatever there is around you . . . But at that point, when you've encouraged and developed criticality in a questioning attitude, then your responsibility as a teacher stops. It's the learners who make their own decisions about what they want to do once they've realized and thought about what they think are problems in their society. The teacher simply pushes them to ask questions. Criticality doesn't have to have a direction . . . . You can be neutral

as a teacher, you can't be neutral as a person. You can encourage your learners to question constantly.

MP: Then we should be cautious with the words, I mean, because you do use the words "neutral" and "political". This is something to think about.

MB: Yes. I remember something from the 1960s or 70s where there was a project called the Humanities Project, for teaching humanities in schools, and a lot of interesting discussion was about what's the role of the teacher, and we were thinking about secondary schools and lower secondary in particular. So when you have a debate about something (it could happen in foreign language but this wasn't about foreign languages but about teaching humanities), then what is the role of the teacher? When there's a discussion, what is the role of the teacher? It needn't be a formal debate or discussion. Is the role of the teacher to be entirely neutral? Or is the role of the teacher to question or to push their learners to question what they are taking for granted? Or is the role of the teacher to include their own point of view, their own political agenda? So those are three possible perspectives . . . . My view would be that it is the second position [that should be encouraged]. It's still political, it doesn't have a political agenda, but it's political in the sense that (maybe I'm not using the word correctly) it's questioning and putting people in a questioning position about things in their society.

MP: Pennycook and Coutand-Marin (2003, p. 350) speak of "a situated ethics of ELT." Others in this journal have also addressed this notion beyond ELT such as Iftody, Sumara and Davis (2011), who have stressed the fact that ethics does not mean fixed moral principles but rather refers to the relational, contextual and procedural aspects of specific situations or contexts. I emphasize the word situated and ask you, can ethics be situated and how?

MB: Yes. The question is linked to: Is all this a western perspective? The notion of discussion and debate and questioning and so on, is that a western perspective? There's a lot of talk about east and west these days, much more than there used to be about north and south. I think there would be a lot of resistance in East Asia in particular (perhaps not in the South, not in India but in East Asia) to the idea of criticality. Not only in a one-party dictatorship like China, where the notion of questioning is threatening to the system, but also in a democracy like Japan, because of its history and its way of thinking, its culture . . . that you don't stand out. A number of people have said to me, quoted to me in various contexts, "We have a Japanese saying that the nail that stands out, gets knocked down, hammered in". So there's this notion of conforming as being the norm. That's what everybody should do, so the questioning in a society like that is very hard. Whether it's a western perspective or not, I would still say that questioning is important, and some Japanese people would accept that too. It might well be the majority view at the moment that nails that stand out get hammered in. My feeling from talking to people over the years in Japan is that even in universities, the notion of criticality is not well developed. But amongst some people it is.

MP: As always, you cannot generalize.

MB: No, you can't generalize.

MP: If you allow me to give you a very specific example here, Halpin (2010) proposes what he calls a "heroicizing pedagogy" by which he means exemplifying and explicitly fostering heroic qualities such as persistence, conviction, unselfishness, courage and a desire to change things for the better "through teaching and learning tasks that highlight and enliven certain genuinely transcendental features of the

behaviour of particular individuals" (p. 271) and not only this, but also that "pupils might learn to replicate versions of the actions of certain hero figures in their own lives, however humbly these might be lived now or in the future" (p. 272). Do you see any problems here? Are persistence, conviction, unselfishness and courage, among others, universal qualities? Would a pedagogy like this one become a form of indoctrination?

MB: At one level, you can say that all of those characteristics like persistence, etc. are obviously a good thing. I don't know whether they are universal.

MP: So you are not being neutral, you see.

MB: No, that's right, I'm not being neutral there, but in that sense they're obviously "a good thing", in inverted commas. But there's nothing new in that, in the education systems that we know, in other words, European origin education systems. Those are the characteristics that have always been developed in the elite sections of education, particularly in the UK.

MP: I don't see the difference, then, between what you are saying and having an agenda. This would be having an agenda.

MB: Yes, but this isn't a political agenda.

MP: Well, a moral agenda then.

MB: Oh, this is a moral agenda, yes, yes. And that's not new . . .

MP: Would it be ethical to have a moral agenda?

MB: Yes. It would. Whether you use heroes is a different matter, but I think I would guess that those characteristics would be universal, but I don't know. I don't know, but they have certainly, in European origins, established moral values in elite schools. In the lower state schools that we had in Britain before comprehensive schools, none of these things were particularly well pursued. You just had to learn your reading and writing and get on with it. But the notion of heroes, again, is not a new idea in the sense that in elite schools in Britain, the hero was always part of the thinking. I don't have any empirical and historical evidence, just from what I've learned of, or read about or thought about for a long time. There were always these heroes who were chosen out of British colonial history. These are people who were courageous, persistent, and sometimes they were doing nasty things to colonized peoples, and sometimes they were failures. I think that the most obvious example is Scott of the Antarctic, who failed, but nobody thinks about him as a failure. He's seen as a hero because he was persistent, courageous and so on. I think that tradition is beginning to disappear, because somebody like Scott is being reassessed as somebody who was actually incompetent, had the wrong material for the job he was trying to do. But in my childhood, I remember things on the television about Scott of the Antarctic, films about him, and so on. All that was creating heroes who had these characteristics. But I would be wary of a whole pedagogy based on heroes. Because heroes often turn out to have feet of clay.

Pedagogic developments in education

The theoretical discussions mentioned up to now have been accompanied by pedagogic developments. Byram's previous discussion about developing criticality and a questioning attitude in the classroom, and about heroicizing pedagogies, is relevant at this point. I have also already referred to the importance of literature for the development of an awareness of otherness. Allington and Swann (2009), Bredella (2000, 2003), Burwitz Melzer (2001),

Byrnes (2008), Carter (2010), Kramsch (1995), Matos (2005) and others have put forward the integration of language, culture and literature in a tripod.

More specifically, the intercultural dimension of foreign language education, and of education in general, favours certain pedagogies such as a focus on learners as researchers, learners as ethnographers, experiential learning, consciousness-raising (Alred et al., 2003, 2006; Byram & Grundy, 2002, 2003; Byram et al., 2001, 2002; Roberts, Barro, Byram, Jordan, & Street, 2000), critical cultural awareness (Alred & Byram, 2002; Byram, 1997, 2001; Byram et al., 2002; Kramsch, 1995; Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996), situated learning (Kramsch et al., 1996), the use of situated texts (Byrnes, 2008) and literature (Kramsch, 2003), the five Cs approach (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities; Byrnes, 2008), culturally responsive teaching (Garner, 2008) and critical discourse analysis (Byram et al., 2002). The underlying idea in all cases can be summarized in Byram's words (1997):

> in an educational framework which aims to develop *critical* cultural awareness, relativization of one's own and valuing of others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours does not happen without a reflective and analytical challenge to the ways in which they have been formed and the complex of social forces within which they are experienced. (p. 35)

The emphasis on criticality and reflexivity is central, as Byram expressed in the interview before, and is fundamental in the teaching of any school subject.

Reflecting upon the challenge for the teacher in teaching for diversity, Byram elaborates:

MB: There are very few places that I know of which don't have that situation [having students of different backgrounds in the classroom]. And I think the interesting thing, which is more emphasized here [in Argentina], is that the diversity that students are going to encounter in real life is around them, and the foreign language teacher has a role in that, whereas in the European situation, when you're teaching European languages, then you can think much more realistically of having encounters with people of other countries and languages, and the focus is on the diversity experienced in other countries.

MP: In your view, how can pedagogies address the intercultural dimension? You propose critical pedagogies and approaches based on your notion of education for citizenship. Could you please expand?

MB: This phrase "critical pedagogy" is interesting. Of course, it's associated with Giroux and other people in the United States. I've found the work of Ron Barnett at London University also interesting in his way of thinking about higher education. **The purpose of education is to develop a critical perspective, but also a willingness to take action** (emphasis added). That's the link with citizenship education. Barnett says that this is something for higher education only, but I think what he says, which is very good, can also be applied to upper secondary schools.

MP: How does the notion of education for citizenship relate to the notion of education for cosmopolitan citizenship? How can the notion be modified, or how is it modified, or should it be modified, in different settings, e.g. the Argentine setting, or the Asian setting? What is the connection with the engagement with new forms of identity?

MB: Personally I think that cosmopolitan citizenship, which implies that you give up any attachment to your national identity and see yourself as a citizen of the world, even if desirable, is not practical.[3] Because I think nationality and national identity

is something which is very tenacious. There are many examples of how national identities have been suppressed and then, as soon as the dictator has gone, as in Yugoslavia or Spain, those ethnic national identities (which are sometimes realized in new states or sometimes as regional autonomous entities) spring up again. But the problem about education for citizenship, as it's normally done, is that it only focuses upon the nation. I'm not saying that we should suppress national identity by any means, but what foreign language teachers (and others if they wish) can contribute to, is to extend the perspective to the international, and to find ways (it's not easy) in which an international perspective, and an international identification, can be created through cooperating and working with people of another country. Through the Internet is the obvious way, it doesn't have to be face to face. I'm not so sure that . . . there can be such a thing as cosmopolitan citizenship . . . where you have only an identification with the global society or the global village. Personally I don't think there can. But international citizenship – a sense of identification with people of other national identifications – is possible. And I don't know whether you need to modify this idea for different settings, but the basic principle is the same, whether it's in Argentina or in China, or wherever. What we're trying to do is move beyond the national borders and the restrictions in thinking that that creates into some kind of international citizenship rather than cosmopolitan citizenship.

MP: In this sense, Wells (2009, p. 37) argues that "young people in the contemporary world appropriate the cultural resources that enable them to participate in and contribute to the larger society" and sees a key role for formal schooling here to act as a bridge between the individual (in the sense of family/local community) and society. How do you see the role of the school in these terms, and which is the connection with your notion of education for citizenship?

MB: Of course he's right, that's what schools do. That has been established and talked about for a long time, that schools continue the socialization of the family or, if the family is not, as it were, mainstream and thinking in the same way and with the same values as the majority, the dominant values of the society, then the school actually might well be the first place where learners acquire new values. So it can be the continuation of what's happening in the family, but it can also be a diversion from what's happening in the family. The connection with my notion of intercultural citizenship would be that the school, in the classic definition, is secondary socialization, and family is the primary socialization. Today those distinctions are not as clear as they were at the time when those notions were identified, but they are still useful in broad terms. In addition, what one can also talk about is a notion of tertiary socialization, to encompass the idea that you go beyond and you critically analyse the things that you've learned to take for granted during your secondary socialization, so that by comparison and contrast with what other people do, say and think, you'll get a different perspective, an outsider perspective on what people around you take for granted, and what formal schooling in a sense is trying to make you take for granted.

MP: You write about that in your last book (Byram, 2008), I understand?

MB: Yes.

MP: In your article entitled "Linguistic and cultural education for Bildung and citizenship", you say:

> My own proposal is that the content in question should draw on citizenship education, enriching it with attention to intercultural communicative competence and giving substantial and meaningful content to language lessons, while providing opportunities for methodological innovation and cross-curricular cooperation. The acquisition of intercultural citizenship competences would be the aims and objectives realizing both educational and instrumental/functional purposes.
>
> (Byram, 2010, p. 320; see also, Byram, 2012)

How do critical and transformative pedagogies fit in with this proposal?

MB: Critical and transformative pedagogies, in the way that they are associated with Giroux, and other people around him, are pertinent to the idea that you bring content into language teaching. And you don't only do content lessons, but you bring content into the foreign language classroom. That content, the ideas for that content, can be taken from citizenship education. What citizenship education is beginning to do is focus upon the fact that learners in school are not just being prepared for life after school. They are alive, and human beings. While they're at school, they have a part in society, and therefore a school classroom, or its walls, should be broken down and learners should do things outside the school, and [the teacher should] bring them back into the school to think about what they have done. And that's what is important in citizenship education, which hasn't been thought about very much in foreign language teaching. So bringing the kinds of things that citizenship education suggests, as activities in the community, is important to give content to language teaching, both because the content itself is important, but also because the theory tells us that you acquire and internalize the language that you're learning much better if you're doing something with it, Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). But what criticality adds to TBL and CLIL is the questioning of what is taken for granted in (nationally oriented) citizenship education, and this is an over-generalization, but the citizenship education that I know doesn't encourage too much critical thinking about the state of society, because after all, one of its roles is to create people who live and belong in that society, and in a sense, fit into that society. So criticality is a counteraction to the fitting in that citizenship education emphasizes. But then, as I said before, the criticality can be acquired through looking outside their own society, and comparing and contrasting, so the comparing and contrasting with other societies, where the foreign language is spoken or another society altogether but using English as an international language, is part of the criticality process. You can "criticize" both in the good and the bad sense (both in the sense of noting what is working and what is not working) much more easily if you've got an external perspective, which challenges what you take for granted.

MP: What is the role of these pedagogies and approaches in the curriculum of primary and secondary school education, i.e. beyond language education? Do you know if this is a discourse that is dominant in the content areas?

MB: Well, I don't think so. It's very difficult to generalize but I don't think there are any people who have taken and put into practice the idea of criticality in other subjects. But you could imagine that they would or could in the teaching of literature, for instance. Perhaps not in something like the teaching of mathematics . . . but I don't know. But I don't have a sense that that has been much developed in the countries that I know. There is a role, but I don't think it's yet been realized and activated.

MP: Another area of attention in your work relates to the internationalization of education. Joel Spring (2006, p. 105) distinguishes between national school systems and pedagogies designed to serve an industrial–consumer state (most national school systems in his view) and "classical and progressive pedagogies that are often in conflict with the goals of the industrial consumer state". Where would progressive pedagogies fit in this framework?

MB: Progressive pedagogies have existed for a long time. I am interested in that and have been looking at progressive pedagogies since the beginning of the twentieth century, but in a way you can trace them back to Rousseau. Those do tend to focus more upon the individual and the *Bildung* . . . the personal development of the individual, whereas – and I would agree with the writer you refer to – in more recent times (in the last 20, 30 and 40 years) education has been thought about as a means of creating human capital. That phrase is used a lot. And I would agree that the danger in many national school systems is that they are made subservient to the economic needs of the society, and the whole definition of what needs to be taught and how it is to be taught and what outcomes there should be, tends to be determined by the needs of the economy or as it says in this quote, "the industrial consumer state", which is problematic if it casts aside the ideals of progressive pedagogy.

MP: Recent articles in this journal discuss very specific pedagogies which touch upon many of the theoretical underpinnings behind your work. I would like to ask you how you see these proposals, in particular how they connect with your own recommendations. Also, a concern here might be whether the profession is getting intertwined in complex formulations which could, ultimately, all be summarized under some basic principles. Do you see this as a source of concern? Let me mention some of these proposals. For instance, Zembylas and Michaelidou (2011, p. 250) discuss the role of what they call "forgiveness pedagogies" in troubled societies such as Cyprus. They argue that "An important contribution of forgiveness pedagogies is the creation of learning spaces which restore the humanness that is often lost in troubled societies". McClure and de Vasconcelos (2011, p. 104) talk about the value of "dialogue as a way to structure our classrooms as authentic sites of democracy, equality and community-building" and claim that dialogue must be recognized as "as a process of knowing and learning as it relates to both the content and the process of our work."[4]

MB: I didn't know that phrase, "forgiveness pedagogies", but I can imagine why that has been created, coined, in Cyprus. And the word "dialogue", which comes in the second quotation, is also very current. Clearly these are laudable things, that is, that you want to use the school and the education system as a means of restoring humanness, etc. I think that most teachers, certainly at the beginning of their career, all the ones I've met over 30 years, would be very much in favour of this notion. They may not know the phrase "forgiveness pedagogy", but the whole question of developing the individual person, of community building are important to them – all those things are what most people go into teaching to develop. But it's difficult when at the same time the education system, as determined by government and by ministries, focuses upon competences and outcomes, which are not only but largely thought about in terms of the ways in which these competences would be necessary for economic development. I say this because of the way in which in some countries, the whole question of schools being evaluated and put in league tables is very very strong, for instance in the United Kingdom. It's probably worse

in the United Kingdom [than in Argentina], but I think that the attitude is similar in some other places. But all that is in tension, or in contradiction with, the wish of teachers to engage with individuals and with people. The problem is that the teachers are judged on how well they achieve, how well the students can carry out the competences of different kinds that have been determined by government usually, by ministries. It would be a caricature to say that those competences are only focused upon the economic situation, but it's clearly something relatively new that education is seen as a part of economic policy, and the teachers find themselves caught in the middle.

Research in education: insider methodologies and a focus on the local within culturally specific settings

This last section focuses upon research in the field of education. There seems to be agreement among many in the field that the key resides in research methodologies which highlight the "insider" perspective, i.e. methodologies which acknowledge the importance of the individual and the local in classroom-based or community-based research efforts that describe how literacy (in English or any other language) is lived in peripheral countries. This urge to rescue the local within culturally specific contexts responds to "the goal . . . to describe what people do and say within local contexts" (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007, p. 29). In other words, this type of research addresses the need to "engage with the reality of language as experienced by users and learners" (Widdowson, 2000, p. 23).

MP: In connection with research, you have recently emphasized the importance of investigations aimed at understanding the experience of those involved in education as opposed to work which seeks explanation or change (Byram, 2011). However, it is also true that qualitative investigations have been seen as less worthy of value than quantitative research in some regions of the world. What is your opinion in this respect?

MB: This is about research and what kind of research is important. The explanatory and the interpretative paradigms. People talk about the distinction being quantitative and qualitative. I think that's misleading. There's quantitative data and qualitative data, but [the question is] what you do with it. Both kinds of data can be used for at least two kinds of things: one is to look for causal links between factors in education; and another is to use both kinds of data to try to understand how the people **in** education are experiencing it and how **they** think about it or even theorize about it. Both are important, but the explanatory (looking for causal explanations) is so dominant, or has been, and it's still dominant in some countries, apparently here [Argentina], but in other places too. In that case, you need to emphasize that there are other kinds of research which particularly teachers can do and which are important to get inside the thinking and get inside the experience of those involved, rather than see them as some kind of subjects that you're treating.

When asked about the limitations and difficulties involved in the investigation and the teaching of intercultural competence, Byram explains:

MB: In terms of investigation, there **are** means to investigate and carry out research about the teaching of intercultural competence, and there are ways of trying to

describe what intercultural competence is and there are lots of models, lots of people who have done that. So in that sense there are plenty of ways of doing things. About the difficulties, what I've often said about investigation and teaching or the investigation **of** teaching, is that a crucial area that has not been thoroughly investigated is assessment. Usually at doctoral level, I've supervised and examined theses which have investigated **teaching** intercultural competence in one form or another, but I don't know of any thesis focused upon assessment, even though there are theses which use tests to measure change in intercultural competence after a course of teaching or intervention of some kind. That is not the same as focusing on educational assessment, and that's the most obvious gap. It's an important gap because there are so many demands on teachers to prove that they can teach competence – competences which can be examined and measured. They [teachers] will, quite understandably, focus upon the things that can be measured, and intercultural competence is very difficult to measure in ways usable for educational assessment (as opposed to psychological testing). It would not be difficult to describe competences using qualitative data, but it's difficult to measure using quantitative data usable in educational assessment, in examinations or continuous assessment for example, and until that problem is resolved, I think that what happens in schools, where there is so much focus and emphasis upon measurable outcomes, is that intercultural competence as part of language teaching will continue to be fairly low status, or not low status, but will get little attention. It may be high status in the sense that all the teachers think it's a good thing and teachers can find ways of teaching within the classroom, but then they will say "Well, I haven't got time for this." I hear that all the time.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the centrality of language in education (not only language education) and the ways in which language-and-culture (conceptualized as "intercultural education") can and should become part of *all* educators' practices, irrespective of the specific disciplines they teach. As a recognized key scholar in this field, Michael Byram has shared his opinions on these issues in this interview. The central idea is that the "intercultural" is a perspective which traverses the school curriculum rather than a content to be addressed by language educators alone. This article has presented the width and complexity of the issues involved in intercultural education at the time that it has made a case for its relevance and need in education in general beyond language education.

Overall, there exist shared assumptions about cultural understanding which stem from the body of work on intercultural education cited and discussed in this article. By way of conclusion, I will highlight some areas of agreement in the literature in this field (Deardorff, 2009b), which are relevant to all educators for the reasons outlined throughout this article:

- a dynamic, fluid and heterogeneous view of culture, as opposed to classic conceptions as an accumulation of facts;
- attention beyond observable behaviours, involving attitudes, beliefs, skills and value orientations;
- the interrelated nature and inseparability of language and culture;

- a focus on interaction and communication in naturalistic settings (classroom settings less often);
- the integration of affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of learning (attitudes, skill and knowledge);
- a focus both on culture-specific aspects (i.e. those particular to a specific culture) and culture-general aspects (i.e. those generalizable and transferable aspects of culture);
- a focus on one's own culture as well as on other cultures (self-awareness of one's cultural parameters is as important as consciousness of other cultures);
- a reliance on the notion of difference on the basis of cultural similarities and contrasts;
- an emphasis on processes rather than facts (for instance, processes of observing, describing, analysing, relating, interpreting, etc.);
- a recognition of the importance of empathy, perspective taking and adaptability, stressing not only the individual or personal dimension (through identity issues) but also the relational facet;
- a central role attributed to language; "language expresses cultural reality . . . language embodies cultural reality . . . language symbolizes cultural reality" Kramsch (1998, p. 3); and fundamentally;
- a recognition of the difficulty and complexity involved in the field of culture learning.

As a final thought, my hope is that this article shall make a contribution on at least three fronts. First, it will raise educators' awareness about their own classroom practices as well as the other broader aspects of education touched upon here. Second, it will instil in them a desire to engage in their own process of criticality, both as educators and as citizens. Finally, if they are not already involved, they will get acquainted with interculturality as a framework which traverses the school curriculum. In this sense, this interview may serve as a point of departure in a continuous process of development along these lines. Here, our role as educators goes beyond our role as teachers of a specific discipline and needs to be connected with the education of our children, youth and young adults in democratic and pluralistic practices.

Notes

1. I have added clarifications where necessary between brackets. I use the initials MB to refer to Byram and MP to refer to myself.
2. This distinction between multicultural/multilingual and monocultural/monolingual is in fact theoretically untenable because diversity is inherently ingrained in any human context. The section about identity clarifies this.
3. There are also political and economic barriers which may make the notion of cosmopolitan citizenship unfeasible in certain contexts. Take the case of citizens from underdeveloped or "third world" countries and the limitations (restrictions) they face when they try to enter the United States or some countries in the European Union.
4. There is an interesting point in McClure and de Vasconcelos (2011), which is that citizenship education can be seen as having two dimensions: one dimension that looks outward, as Byram described before (learners "should do things outside the school, and [the teacher should] bring them back into the school to think about what they have done"); and an inward dimension, which is developed within the classroom, whereby learners "exercise", rehearse or put in motion democratic practices such as speaking out, making decisions within the classroom and the school, negotiating, etc. In other words, the classroom and the school become a place to learn to listen to oneself and others, to value opinions, to interact and to negotiate.

Notes on contributor

Melina Porto is a researcher at CONICET (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas) in the Instituto de Investigaciones en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales (Institute of Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities) from Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación (School of Humanities and Sciences of Education) at the National University of La Plata. She holds a PhD in Sciences of Education from the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (thesis supervised by Prof. Michael Byram) where she is now Professor in the Chair English Language II. She has published articles in *Journal of Further & Higher Education, Foreign Language Annals*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy (JAAL), ELT Journal, Education 3–13* and *Applied Language Learning,* among others. She is currently a member of the Language Diversity Committee of IRA (International Reading Association) and a member of the Editorial Review Board of *The Reading Teacher* and is involved in research on cultural understanding in EFL reading in Argentina.

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