

## Foreword

As I read these chapters, various memories came back to me. As a child, my grandmother lived in our house. She was my babysitter for five years until I went to school. I remember learning the prayers she taught me in German, her mother tongue; mine was English. “*Vater unser in Himmel*” echoes through the decades. God was German. The Grimm Brothers Fairy Tales and their Hansel and Gretel are strong memories. In the 1950s, the words opened another world, a world of imaginings, of stories, of people, and of family, at a time when Europe had not recovered from the German experience. With these words, a storied soul was formed. All the narratives were true, packed with values, ideologies, and mythologies. So vividly were the stories told that these may have been my first trips abroad. Language was at least informative and probably formative. These words forged relationships of care and recognition, and of curiosity. It was a biographical glue holding together a young identity and family with stories and interesting people and places. I might now even call it soul work. Later, my third language was Irish, the dominant language of school until university. Cicero was translated into Irish, not English. I remember in university not knowing the English words for sodium nitrate and other terms in chemistry and physics. Language, like travel, could broaden or narrow the mind! However, I always thought of other places and peoples as interesting and worth exploring.

Frames of reference seem to be constructed in these biographical and linguistic ways. One’s biographical story gets transformed in transformative language learning and teaching.

Frames of reference that are constructed in an individual’s life history are also embedded in a society and culture with values, histories, feeling, and ideologies. Academics or language students and scholars undertake research, develop teaching methods, create zones of proximal development, build abstract theories, read Freire, Mezirow, and Paul Tillich, and do all in the service of shifting the paradigm of teaching and learning. I have a sense that positing biographical experiences as over and against theoretical work is probably a false dichotomy. The relationship between theory and practice, thinking and doing, as well as teaching and learning, are reconfigured by Freire as *praxis*. They are also reconfigured by Dewey. This scholarly collection also locates language learning not only in the personal, the individual, and, as I suggest, the biographical, but also in the social, the historical, and the cultural domains. The social and personal collide in language teaching and learning.

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Transformative learning is a structural shift in the basic premises of thought and action, and in how we make meaning. The authors in this collection bring other friends to the discussion, including Vygotsky, O’Sullivan, Rogers, and Dewey. All help to redefine learning in ways that make connections that we do not normally make. Everything is connected.

Language learning and teaching in universities has been located in faculties of humanities. If language studies are a search for meanings or for translated words, then that may be appropriate; however, in this work, a case is made for language studies as a social science. Many of the chapters are located in the context of real-world problems where everything is connected, and connected knowing is the stuff of language learning. This is not just so that social problems may be expressed and translated into different words, but so that they can be understood more thoroughly as they are located in social, economic, and political contexts and embedded in language. The climate change debate or working with refugees are good examples of how a transformative vision of language learning and teaching may be better understood. Language learning is presented as fostering citizenship in a global community of activists and thinkers determined to make the world a better place for all. In a world of translation apps, there is more at stake now. We will not “Google translate” our way forward out of these challenges.

Charlemagne (d. 814) is credited with saying that “to have a second language is to have a second soul,” and Dirkx, a named ally in this collection, has defined transformative learning as soul work. Transformative language learning and teaching may be soul work and may be an antidote to misunderstandings and misrecognitions that define our age and that undermine self, society, and most likely the planet.

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