1

Introduction

Betty Lou Leaver, Dan E. Davidson, and Christine Campbell

Transformative Language Learning and Teaching presents a new philosophy of education for world language instruction intended for those with a commitment to the preparation of linguistically and biculturally competent language users who are ready to take ownership of their learning. Unlike in the field of adult education, where transformative education has been recognized for more than two decades, the application of transformative principles to the study and teaching of world languages has received relatively little attention. It is the absence of a comprehensive discussion of transformative education[1] within the language field that has provided the impetus for the present volume.

The contributors to this collection address the existing gap in the literature by drawing on their scholarly work and professional experience, supported, where possible, by available empirical data. In some cases, authors report remarkable levels of success in making use of the principles of transformative education in their teaching practice. In other cases, they share the challenges and varying degrees of success that they have encountered along the way. If the language field is to make sense of transformative language learning and teaching (TLLT) and benefit from its potential, the broad-ranging and frank discussion of the positions, applications, and results presented in this volume will be essential.

The chapters that follow explore various strands of TLLT, some clearly emergent or transitional, as reflected in current practice. How these strands will become interwoven in the future is, as yet, undetermined and, to a great extent, unpredictable. For that reason, the editors have endeavored to be comprehensive in approaching TLLT.

1.1 General Content of the Volume

This volume offers an overview of TLLT in language programs at the current moment. While some levels of education, for example, adult learning, certain institutions, for example, government programs, and certain fields like overseas

---

[1] In this volume, "transformative learning" and "transformative teaching" are used interchangeably, with "transformative education" sometimes serving as an umbrella term.

immersion (see Davidson et al., this volume) have moved into TLLT more rapidly than others, the editors have assiduously sought to include representation from a broad range of educational and proficiency levels, noting that contrary to popular misconception, TLLT is not limited to adults or to learners at the higher proficiency levels.

Thus, the volume addresses all levels of language education from pre-K through graduate school, adult learning, and teacher education in world languages, dual language immersion, English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education. Due to the newness of the topic, substantial attention is devoted to a discussion of the principles of transformative education as applied to language and cultural acquisition, including TLLT-influenced or TLLT-based curricular and program designs, learner autonomy, cultural learning, teacher professional development, assessment, education beyond the classroom, and study abroad. This volume also includes a wide range of languages from a number of language families.

Although one cannot speak about a singular approach for transformative programs, as previously noted, common features of transformative programs are often readily identifiable. Crucial to the successful incorporation of TLLT components has been an open, accepting, and creative faculty, since curricula alone cannot create change. All educational reform ultimately begins with the classroom teacher. Common features of TLLT as currently being implemented in a variety of educational settings and reflected in the chapters in this volume include the following:[2]

- Materials and daily communications are authentic and unadapted, beginning at the earliest levels of instruction.
- The classroom is immersive. Immersion in-country reflects the typical life of the native speaker of the same age to the extent practicable.
- Personal transformation involves cognitive, emotional, and cultural shifts occurring within the individual, that is, developing self-awareness, resolving disorienting dilemmas, identifying cognitive distortions, managing emotions, and integrating two (or more) cultures on their own terms.
- Highly individualized programs are informed by learning styles and strategies and the "invisible classroom" emanating from inherent personality variables.

---

[2] These principles are not immutable rules, but examples of common features observed across the wide variety of programs in this volume. For example, Fleming, Kokkos, and Finnegan (2019) point out significant differences in transformative learning in adult education between American expressions of transformative education, which encompass not only critical reflection, but also spiritual sensibilities, and European expressions, which reflect humanism and critical social traditions.

- Open architecture curricular design (OACD) (a term taken from a parallel concept in computer design that allows for interchangeable parts) supports increasingly textbook-free classrooms as learners develop greater proficiency and teachers modify syllabi corresponding to learners' changing needs.
- The grading system uses formative assessments and feedback, with occasional summative assessments (projects, presentations, contracted assignments, and portfolios), that integrate outcome and process, instead of separating them.
- Programs empower learners to take charge of their own learning.
- Program design and supervisors empower teachers to take charge of their own classrooms as advisors, mentors, coaches, planners, and strategists (Leaver et al., 2019).

Classrooms in TLLT often take on new shapes as flexible group organization with swiveling chairs and activities outside the classroom make for generally more fluid workspaces. The classroom is less *the* location of learning and more just one *auxiliary* location of learning, where scenario-based instruction takes learners into real-life experiences or simulations.

Given the need in TLLT for assuring appropriate levels of learner autonomy, the changing needs and interests of successive groups of learners, and the predominance of standardized testing measures across the modern language fields, transformative course planners and instructors are challenged to think differently about the learning process and the curricular tools available to them for ensuring greater levels of learner ownership over the learning process.

1.2 Structure of the Volume

This volume contains seven parts: Theoretical Framework; TLLT Applications in Government Programs; TLLT Applications in University Programs; TLLT in Immersion Programs; TLLT and the Learner; TLLT and Faculty Development; and TLLT and Assessment.

1.2.1 Theoretical Framework (Part I)

Part I (Chapters 2–4) explores theories of TLLT as applied to the three major subfields of language education: world language education,[3] second language education, and bilingual education. These studies examine existing and potential linkages between widely accepted communicative teaching methods and

---

[3] Terms used for this field include *foreign language education* and *L2*. We have chosen to use the term currently preferred by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

transformative principles and practices. The collection does not seek to present a fixed, overarching framework for TLLT. By its nature, TLLT avoids rigidity, focusing on the personal, the idiosyncratic, and the particular needs of groupings of learners, and understanding that transformation cannot be mandated or guaranteed by fixed protocols. Through learner involvement in the learning process and flexibility in curricular experiences, TLLT prompts and allows for transformation to occur. Predicting how and when transformation will occur for any given learner in any given program is imprecise at best, being a product not only of the individual nature of transformation, but also of the current early stage of TLLT development in the language education world. This volume points out the work of early adopters, who, for the past decade or longer, have shaped TLLT programs within their institutions, where TLLT principles such as open architecture course design, discussed in detail by Campbell (this volume), Corin (this volume), and Leaver (1989), have been implemented. For the most part, it should be noted that the Russian and German fields have led the way in TLLT (see Crane & Sosulski, this volume; see also Krasner, 2018; Leaver, 2018).

Leaver describes a series of paradigm shifts in the teaching of world languages that began in the 1970s and 1980s with replacing structural methods, focused on translation and accuracy, with what has been labeled *communicative approaches*, focused on using language for transaction. Increasingly, the teaching of world languages has taken on the characteristics of transformation, pulling from the fields of psychology, sociology, and adult education.

Oxford draws upon neurobiological research and dynamic systems theory, among other disciplines, to establish several linkages between Mezirow's cognitive-analytic approach to transformative learning and Dirkx's emotional-integrative approach. Cognition and emotion are different aspects of a unitary cortical phenomenon. Transformative learning can be both cognitive and imaginative; it can be collaborative and individually based; and it can include depth psychology alongside a more practical reflective approach.

Finally, Goulah explores the multilingual turn in transformative education in the collectivist vocabulary of the Buddhist-influenced writings of Ikeda and O'Sullivan. Inner transformation toward what Ikeda (2010a) calls the "greater self" occurs most completely through dialogic meaning-making, according to Goulah, and a resulting heightened awareness of the other, rooted in the principle of the oneness of all life and the natural environment.

1.2.2 TLLT Applications in Government Programs (Part II)

Part II (Chapters 5–7) focuses on the curriculum, classroom learning, and role of the teacher as experienced in government language programs, both US and European. Government institutions have served as incubators for TLLT because

of their relative wealth of resources, recurrent program cycles, relatively large numbers of participants, and strong emphasis on accountability, all helpful in researching the results of large and small curricular interventions.

Campbell provides a detailed overview of the concept of OACD. She addresses the challenges of its introduction and implementation by means of two case studies from a large-scale government language training institution.

Corin's study goes on to describe a TLLT-informed, OACD-based high-impact course template, produced by the author and his colleagues for use across various languages and proficiency levels within the same institution. In this case, the institution is the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center but the template would be applicable to non-government immersive-learning environments as well.

The final study in this section, by Cleret, describes the introduction and adaptation of TLLT principles within an entirely different institutional and national culture: an officer-level English language training program within the French War College, heretofore dominated by a traditional, grammar-translation teaching model. Cleret shares the challenges and successes of converting from a traditional model to a TLLT program.

1.2.3 TLLT Applications in University Programs (Part III)

Part III (Chapters 8–11) presents multiple examples of how the principles and key practices of transformative learning can be incorporated into existing university courses and programs. Johnson describes the effective use of accessible authentic cultural materials and critical reflection activities (oral and written) within existing language courses as a means of encouraging students to question their own cultural assumptions and integrate the perspectives of members of the L2 community under study.

Van Deusen-Scholl and Charitos make use of project-based learning and fieldwork research models to link the classroom directly with local multilingual and multicultural communities in order to engage students personally and critically with the social and historical spaces in which languages are used today. By comparison, Garza's chapter demonstrates the power and potential of virtual communities to stimulate cultural transformations among world language learners associated with successful study abroad, in this case, students of Russian at the University of Texas (Austin), where direct access to the L2 community is not available to the large majority of his language students.

Finally, Evans-Romaine and Murphy describe the range of academic, residential, and social learning environments, both face-to-face and virtual contexts, available within the domestic Russian Flagship program, seven of which are discussed in terms of transformative learning principles. The authors

stress the importance of fostering student engagement and student agency, skills that will be critical for their success in the Russian Overseas Flagship academic-year capstone program in Kazakhstan and future careers as global professionals.

1.2.4 TLLT in Immersion Programs (Part IV)

Participant and teacher reports of "transformative experiences" in the context of study abroad learning pre-date the concept of transformative education and continue to occupy a prominent place in much of today's study abroad literature. Lessons learned from successful study abroad experiences have, in turn, informed domestic classroom teaching and vice versa, building a closed-loop feedback system that has improved both classroom and extramural programs and helped to move them in transformative directions. Part IV (Chapters 12–15) focuses on this transformative symbiosis between learning and experience.

Davidson, Garas, and Lekic examine the affordances of intercultural development during the year-long overseas Russian Flagship program at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty. As the strongest example available in L2 in terms of long-term qualitative and quantitative data, this study takes up overseas where Evans-Romaine and Murphy's chapter leaves off in the USA, and shares examples of student reflections on disorienting dilemmas and the emergence of a more ethno-relativist and empathetic stance toward cultural differences.

Farraj looks at programs that prepare learners for study abroad experiences while in US-based government Arabic-language classrooms and then move into teacher-supported in-country experiences that focus on local community engagement and service learning, the result being documented increased proficiency, an enhanced understanding of underlying social phenomena, and changes of the native speaker in the native speaker's country through the development of work-based relationships. Likewise, Collin describes changed perceptions and deeper cultural understanding – and acceptance – of the French culture by officers from other countries studying in an immersion environment at the French War College.

Part IV ends with one of the most innovative emerging trends in K-12 education. Lyman-Hager, Fox, and Saydee examine the introduction and early-stage educational impact of Dual Language Immersion within the San Diego Public School System from a TLLT vantage point, reporting the role of TLLT in achieving necessary levels of teacher reorientation and the successes of the model, as measured by its subsequent expansion within the state of California. While K-12 learners, given their age and maturational levels, generally lack the experience with (and, some might argue, the capacity

for) self-regulation, critical reflection, and learner autonomy essential to the Mezirowan formulation of transformative education, Bloom (1956) argued that children as young as age five are capable of employing higher-order thinking skills, a significant component of transformative learning, and an increasing number of K-12 teachers and teacher educators have found ways of bringing transformative learning to the elementary school level in subjects other than language (Heddy & Sinatra, 2013; Pugh et al., 2010).[4] However, one wonders whether the resolution of the deeper disorienting dilemmas created by cross-cultural encounters, especially at pre-bilingual levels of proficiency, might require a greater cognitive sophistication than can generally be expected from younger children. Carefully implemented and researched programs like the dual-language programs in San Diego therefore have the potential to inform the TLLT and K-12 fields in important ways.

1.2.5 TLLT and the Learner (Part V)

Part V (Chapters 16–20) presents the more salient learner attributes addressed in the current pedagogical literature. Authors focus on learner autonomy, learner self-efficacy, and the interplay of cognition, affect, and transformation.

Kramlich's learners are like study abroad students to some extent in that they experience the disorienting dilemmas that come from immersion experiences. However, as migrants, their "immersions" are long-term, if not lifelong, which evokes another level of response to the disorienting dilemmas experienced by those entering and embracing foreign cultures. Kramlich presents the dilemmas and suggests ways in which an aware classroom teacher can help resolve them.

Fischer uses the latest technology to promote transformative experiences. The applications he describes are effective for distance-learning programs, classroom supplementation, and independent learning. He suggests that technology can provide infrastructure and scaffolding to support transformation in learning and teaching, particularly in bringing the distant world close and opening windows (and doors) to other cultures in ways likely to create a desire for a better understanding of the culture associated with the language being studied.

Kearney further enters into the mind of the individual learner with two studies that reveal learners' meaning-making repertoires, the disorienting dilemmas that arise in learning languages and encountering new meaning-making resources, and the ways in which the classroom environment and teacher can shape a learner's perspective transformation and semiotic empowerment.

---

[4] Girod and Wong (2002, p. 211) cite one such example in which a 4th-grader, after completing a transformatively taught unit on rocks, said "I think about rocks differently than I did before."

Moving beyond meaning-making to learner understanding of and controlling the mechanisms of meaning-making and meaning-imparting, Little summarizes the origins and theoretical underpinnings of the exercise of reflective agency as a transformative conception of language learner autonomy, and describes the learning dynamic, classroom procedures, and learning outcomes to which it gives rise, with reference to teenage Danish learners of EFL and immigrant English language learners (ELLs) attending an Irish primary school.

Finally, Salyer and Leaver delve into the cognitive and affective domain, and the strategies that appear – or do not – as learners are presented with disorienting dilemmas. Their chapter illustrates various forms of cognitive distortion and affective dissonance, and suggests ways in which teachers can assist learners in remediating them as they struggle with changing perceptions arising from their attempts to resolve disorienting dilemmas.

1.2.6 TLLT and Faculty Development (Part VI)

To move into a transformative mode of instruction, faculty must have a strong belief and trust in transformative learning and the tools to deploy it in their classrooms or distance-learning and study abroad programs. While some teachers intuitively develop such tools on their own, in the experience of the editors and contributors to this volume, most teachers benefit from faculty development and the sharing of the tools. Part VI describes two programs (different languages) that seek to provide such development for teachers.

Nyikos uses features of constructivist and social cognitive theory to help preservice teachers discover, unpack, critically analyze, and share core beliefs regarding cognitive and affective dimensions of their ongoing language learning and teaching. By closely scrutinizing critical reflection as a tool for reaching transformation, she notes the process and difficulty of shifting paradigms, the strong hold of habit, the hidden classroom, and the factors that intervene.

Similarly, Kubler uses transformative aspects of teacher education to train preservice instructors of Chinese and Japanese. He also notes the difficulty of creating/accepting paradigm change, particularly in teachers who come from traditional teaching environments in China and Japan.

1.2.7 TLLT and Assessment (Part VII)

While the formative and summative assessment of linguistic and communicative skills enjoy a rich tradition in many parts of the world, there is a growing understanding among educators of the limitations of most test instruments to capture (let alone measure) the full range of critical thinking skills, cross-cultural understanding, and empathetic and socio-pragmatic skill sets that

world language learners may acquire in the course of their studies. Authors contributing to Part VII (Chapters 23–25) look at testing models, self-assessment rubrics, and grading mechanisms that incorporate an assessment of transformation itself.

Beginning with the need for learner reflection and assessment in the classroom, Crane and Sosulski provide a review of best practices and guidelines for developing assessment tools that can help world language instructors identify and understand moments of perspective-shifting among their students, as well as the crucial skills that underlie the ability to transform one's meaning perspective: structured reflection, questioning strategies, narratives, and evaluation rubrics.

Clifford, who has done much to promote and refine proficiency testing, suggests that the proficiency tests currently in use are insufficient for measuring progress in transformative classrooms and suggests a new model, depending on the distance of transfer (perspective change) – whether it is "near" (less of a change) or "far" (more of a change, i.e., a greater step toward bilingualism/biculturalism).

Finally, King shares a grading rubric for programs based on the University of Central Oklahoma's approach to transformative education, which is now in use in multiple universities in a number of countries. While originally developed for learning in general, the grading rubric provides language teachers in TLLT programs with a useful matrix that has been tested and found to be successful.

1.3 Intended Audience

With this volume, the editors and chapter authors hope to promote reflection about the next generation of pedagogical models. It is designed for new and seasoned teachers, as well as for program directors, teacher educators, and decision-makers at any educational level and in any language.

1.4 Resources

This volume contains a comprehensive reference list. Given that a compendium of works about transformative education and language learning does not exist, the editors hope that unifying chapter references will create a rich resource for anyone exploring TLLT.