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Review of *Language, Culture, and the Embodied Mind: A Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning*



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Language, Culture, and the Embodied Mind: A Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning
by Joseph Shaules, Springer, 2019, XI+209 pp., \$139.99 (Hardback), \$99.99 (Paperback), \$89.99 (eBook). ISBN 9789811505867.

This book focuses on the deep processes of language and culture learning and argues for an integrated and deep learning approach to language and culture pedagogy. From the perspective of embodied cognition and the intuitive mind, this book suggests that learning is best seen as a transformational process of development and change in which language and culture are integrated at deep levels of the mind and the self. This idea is reflected in the word “linguaculture,” which emphasizes the idea that language and culture are two parts of a larger whole. The book argues that foreign language pedagogy can benefit from greater understanding of the role of the intuitive mind in the learning experience. It aims to present a novel theoretical framework that can inform educators’ understanding of learning as well as their pedagogical practices.

The book is written for three types of reader: (1) foreign language teachers interested in intercultural learning; (2) intercultural educators, for example, those training students for a stay abroad or teaching a course in intercultural communication; (3) scholars interested in learning theory as it relates to language and culture pedagogy. The book begins with an introductory chapter, introducing the main theoretical orientation and the aims of the book, including the relationship between foreign language learning and intercultural learning, the differences between models, methods, and approaches in pedagogy, the target readers, and the organization of the book. The rest of the book is organized into three main sections: (1) Background, (2) Theory, and (3) Practice. At the end, there is a brief list of influential further readings that cover related topics.

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Part One has five chapters, from Chapter Two to Chapter Six. Each chapter in Part I discusses a major theme related to deep learning, language and culture. While Chapter One serves as the introduction to the whole book, Chapter Two gives an overview of the notion of “Deep Language and Culture Learning.” It points out that although language and culture are often treated as separate domains of intercultural learning, they are necessarily intertwined. It argues that language learning itself should be seen as an intercultural endeavor and introduces a deep learning approach to understanding this process. This chapter also includes a brief introduction to the Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning (DMLL), which is the core contribution of this book. This DMLL model presents a view of learning which entails differing levels of complexity in the linguaculture learning process: 1) encountering; 2) experimenting; 3) integrating; and 4) bridging.

Chapter Three includes discussion of the background of globalization and deep culture. This chapter explores how emerging insights into cognition and mind can inform the understanding of intercultural learning objectives. It focuses on some contrasting visions of intercultural awareness proposed by Marshall McLuhan and Edward Hall. The former emphasizes the development of high-level cognitive processes, while the latter stresses a process of inner change and development that is largely intuitive. This chapter argues that increased human understanding of intuitive cognition resonates with the view of Edward Hall, who saw culture as deep patterns of mind that influence us outside our conscious understanding.

Chapter Four reviews ideas related to intuitive knowledge in intercultural education. This chapter claims that recent insights into the intuitive mind can help readers understand the deep processes of language and culture learning. Shaules points out that our everyday intuitive sense of the world is a result of highly complex cognitive processes that operate largely out of reach of conscious cognition. This chapter presents an overview of dual-processing models of cognition and examines the role that the intuitive mind plays in guiding our everyday lives. It makes the distinction between the contrasting forms of surface (explicit, conscious, conceptual) learning and deep (implicit, tacit, intuitive) learning. Shaules argues that deep learning can be seen as the integration of complex skills into the intuitive mind in a process that is personally meaningful for learners.

Chapter Five explores the notion of deep learning further at a theoretical level by contrasting it with similar notions found in SLA (Second Language Acquisition), such as implicit learning. The view of implicit learning in SLA is argued to be heavily influenced by the idea that language use is primarily a form of information processing. Deep learning is also contrasted with informal learning. Shaules suggests that deep learning is a challenging process because it involves the embodiment of complex sociocognitive patterns into the self. This makes an understanding of levels of complexity critical for taking a deep learning approach to language and culture pedagogy. This chapter explains the four levels of learning proposed in the Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning.

Chapter Six examines the psychology of deep linguaculture learning with the core proposition that both EFL learning and intercultural learning give rise to strong psychological reactions in learners. These psychological responses are recognized among foreign language educators but are yet to be well understood in theoretical terms. Shaules argues that much research into psychological resistance in the language learning process tends to imply psychological dysfunction. From the perspective of deep learning, however, Shaules argues that psychological intensity is an inherent part of transformative learning. The psychological experience of foreignness entailed in learning a language necessarily triggers human’s natural adaptive processes which are designed to help us adjust to the demands of our surroundings through engagement (approach motivation), and/or resistance (avoidance motivation). This chapter argues that the notions of engagement and resistance offer insights into foreign language learning motivation, which has parallels with the process of intercultural adaptation.

Part II of the book also includes five chapters, from Chapter Seven to Chapter Eleven. This part provides a theoretical description of the Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning in greater detail, building on the ideas that have been explored in the first five chapters. Chapter Seven places the DMLL model in the context of current language and culture learning research. This chapter reviews literature related to culture in foreign language pedagogy and describes what differentiates the DMLL model from current approaches. It argues that current approaches can be hard to put into practice as they tend to be additive—intercultural learning is seen as something that needs to be accomplished *in addition to* foreign language learning. Goals tend to focus on abstract notions that are difficult to reconcile with day-to-day foreign language learning practice, and they often do not clarify a developmental progression that can be related to foreign language learning. In this chapter, Shaules argues that the DMLL model helps resolve this dilemma. He introduces the role of dynamic skill theory (DST) in the DMLL and argues that the DMLL has the potential to serve as a unifying framework for understanding both foreign language learning and intercultural learning pedagogy.

Chapter Eight discusses ways in which the connection between language and culture is conceptualized. Although language and culture are commonly understood to be related with each other, they are traditionally seen as different spheres of knowledge. This chapter introduces the common conceptualizations of culture, with a stress on recent literature in the area of culture and cognition. It then discusses the different approaches to viewing the relationship between language and culture, including the idea of linguistic relativism. The notion of linguaculture—the idea that language is culture bound—is introduced. This chapter also explores the idea that shared meaning is central to both language and culture. The author views linguaculture in terms of shared meaning and emphasizes the systematic nature of both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Chapter Nine explores the relationship between language, culture, and cognition. It argues that current research in neurolinguistics and cultural neuroscience can help us better and further understand the inseparable language-culture connection. It looks at the contrasting ways to conceptualize linguistic meaning: (1) linguistic meaning as symbols or labels that reflect universal cognitive processes and (2) the idea that language reflects meaning localized to different cultural communities. The chapter discusses that linguistic meaning is not contained in a single place in the brain, and that the meaning of individual words is spread through regions of the brain responsible for different semantic categories. This implies that learning a foreign language requires more than new labels to be attached to existing thoughts or concepts. It introduces embodied simulation theory with the hypothesis that linguistic meaning is not primarily a treatment of symbols, but an embodied re-creation of lived experience. Linguistic meaning is grounded in experience and thus is also rooted in the shared experience of cultural communities. In short, the argument is that linguistic meaning is cultural by its very nature.

Chapter Ten sets out the theoretical assumptions of the DMLL model, including the notion that language and culture learning is an adaptive process that can be either a surface or deep learning approach. This chapter expounds and elucidates the purposes of the DMLL model and introduces dynamic skill theory as the fundamental managing principle of the DMLL model. Linguaculture learning is described as demanding, deep, and complex. The DMLL model, which describes how skills arise at higher and higher levels of complexity, suggests that learners foster additive cognitive complexity and mastery as their experience of learning progresses. This chapter also offers a developmental roadmap for both foreign language learners and educators. It regards the goal of both language and culture learning as increased intuitive understanding of linguistic and cultural patterns, and it also provides a developmental roadmap eventually to increasing creative mastery—the ability to express oneself in new linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Chapter Eleven further describes the road map to learning as depicted by the DMLL. It looks at the different levels of learning that lead to a more developed linguaculture self—the subjective sense that foreign linguaculture patterns are increasingly integrated, embodied, and experienced as a natural part of the self. The DMLL model assumes that fostering the learner’s linguaculture self is an important goal of language and culture pedagogy. According to the DMLL, the experience of the self develops as learners foster new linguaculture intuitions through the levels of encountering, experimenting, integrating, and bridging.

As the last section of the book, Part III has only three chapters, from Chapter Twelve to Chapter Fourteen. This part discusses some of the pedagogical implications of the DMLL model and gives examples of how the model has been put into practice. Chapter Twelve introduces the essential ideas from this book in a FAQ format. It acts both as a review of ideas from earlier chapters, or as a quick-start guide for teachers and educators, and it also serves as a review of the fundamental ideas covered in Part One and Part Two. It is written as a series of key questions that need to be explored if the understanding of language and culture learning are to be incorporated: What is linguaculture? How is culture defined? What is the intuitive mind? What is deep learning? How are language and culture related? What is the goal of intercultural learning? How can foreign language learning and intercultural learning be integrated? How is the linguaculture approach different? What is the role of the teacher and the educator? How can foreign language teachers incorporate intercultural elements into their teaching? What intercultural content can be included in foreign language learning? This chapter describes intercultural learning goals in terms of intuitive intercultural knowledge and preparation for intercultural communication.

Chapter Thirteen focuses on the DMLL model in the context of foreign language learning. It is intended for teachers who are primarily focused on foreign language learning objectives but who want to approach them from an intercultural perspective. This chapter explores what the Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning (DMLL) can offer foreign language pedagogy. It points out that a linguaculture perspective doesn’t require teachers to add intercultural goals to foreign language education which are divorced from the main business of learning the language. Instead, foreign language learning can be approached from a deep learning perspective, guided by the four levels of the DMLL model. These goals are described in terms of a roadmap to linguaculture learning. A four-step approach to course planning is introduced that conceptualizes foreign language learning in terms of a journey, and in terms of having a relationship with the target foreign language, complemented by example activities.

Chapter Fourteen focuses on the DMLL model in the context of intercultural learning. This chapter discusses how the Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning can act as an outline for pedagogy directed toward intercultural learning, as when training learners to study abroad, or as a content course concentrated on intercultural communication and intercultural awareness. It discusses intercultural learning objectives in terms of knowledge, skills, and awareness. It argues for the importance of distinguishing between surface and deep categories of cultural learning, and claims that knowledge, skills, and awareness can be understood as one part of a spectrum from the surface learning approach to the deep learning approach. It describes the four levels of intercultural understanding as conceptualized by the DMLL model in terms of how learners make sense of culture and culture difference. Intuitive understanding is regarded as an important goal of intercultural learning pedagogy. Sample materials are introduced that were designed using the deep learning approach.

Besides the three parts that are reviewed above, there is also a brief concluding chapter and some suggestions for further reading. This concluding chapter encourages readers to find their own ways to interpret and apply the ideas introduced and discussed in this book. It points out that effective

language and culture pedagogy is highly personal and is influenced by the insights and experiences of the teacher. This chapter argues that a deep learning approach to language and culture pedagogy is particularly important in this current era where globalization and information technology tend to promote superficial engagement with cultural differences. It explains that the DMLL model is simply one approach to deep learning pedagogy and calls for an ongoing discussion about different paths that can lead us to deeper varieties of foreign language learning and intercultural learning.

Against the background of what is reviewed above, on the whole, this book offers very valuable insights. What is really fresh and thought-provoking in this book is its neurocognitive perspective and its discussion that “linguaculture” lies in a deep, intuitive level of the mind. Informed by brain and mind sciences, the key principle of the DMLL model is that language and culture learning can both be seen as a single, interrelated process—the embodiment of dynamic systems of meaning into the intuitive mind. Therefore, teaching linguaculture is not adding culture teaching to language teaching, but rather integrating them by understanding that the learning of linguistic and cultural patterns calls for adaptive, embodied processes. Foreign language learners may find themselves losing themselves in the act of intercultural communication, while sophisticated intercultural EFL learners may find they are increasingly able to look at issues from alternative perspectives as they focus on meaning, self-expression, and intercultural perspectives, linking this systematic knowledge to other domains, creating understanding that is experienced at higher levels of abstraction and sophistication. With this DMLL model, Shaules provides a new lens with which to understand foreign language and intercultural teaching and learning.

There are some minor aspects of the book that can be critiqued. Firstly, since the author has mentioned in several places of this book that foreign language pedagogy should have an understanding of the self (including the linguaculture self or the learning self, for example, on pages 157–159, Chapter 11, Part 2), it would have been advantageous to discuss different theoretical conceptions of the “self” and “identity” in more detail so that the distinctiveness of the book’s position is clearer. Secondly, although the emphasis of the book is on foreign language learning, the author sometimes refers generically to “language pedagogy,” which could in fact be seen as a different (and broader) domain of theory and practice. In view of this, some consideration of the differences between “language learning,” “native language learning,” and “foreign language learning” may have helped the author delimit or extend his arguments. Thirdly, one thing that would have enhanced the discussion of intercultural learning is more explicit consideration of theoretical models of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. Although the author did want to avoid compartmentalizing intercultural learning, some more explicit engagement with existing constructs would have been beneficial. Two further minor issues are that there is some inconsistency in use of the terms “linguaculture” and “languaculture” (e.g., page 94, chapter 7, Part II) and that the book would have benefitted from further editing and proofreading to eliminate errors (e.g., from pages 105, 114, 117, 121, 128, 130, 138, 146, 151, 157, 171, 179, 225, 227, etc.).

Nevertheless, this book is a significant addition to the literature of intercultural education and should be of interest to readers, students and professionals going to live and work abroad who are interested in the intercultural learning process they face. Interdisciplinary study is now gaining popularity among professional, educational as well as academic circles and there is growing interest in this area because of contemporary developments in humanities, engineering, science, natural science, and social science in the age of globalization. In effect, intercultural communication itself is interdisciplinary and this book is an interdisciplinary study of intercultural education. This book reflects an interdisciplinary linguistic and cultural study of language, meaning and mind integrating academic disciplines including neuroscience (neurocognition), educational psychology (motivation, pedagogy) and cognitive neurolinguistics (neuro-cognitive foreign language learning) and so on. The

book helps foreign language teachers integrate intercultural awareness into foreign language teaching, bridges the gap between theory and practice in foreign language learning and intercultural education, and provides a learning model for educators interested in a holistic, developmental approach to language and culture learning.