

10. Afterword - The promise of CLIL: Discourse, practices and selves

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Abstract

This chapter takes issue with the promise of CLIL as a pathway to a better future. It argues that schools' hopeful orientations to make CLIL work resonate with three broader disciplinary inertias of knowledge production fuelled by this promise, namely, embarking into unknown futures without looking back; finding the right pedagogical formula via detaching knowledge from the everyday making of institutional life; and delivering employability as a measure of personal development. Drawing on the notions of language policy as a discourse on language and society, ecological validity and employability as a technology of government, it offers avenues for further research.

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we have seen Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL, hereafter) emerging as an umbrella framework that is envisioned as helping to bring about – or realise more fully – linguistic diversity in educational settings in India, Australia, Spain, Colombia, Austria and Argentine. Presented as an innovative solution to institutionalise multilingualism by flexibly integrating language learning and subject-based knowledge, this framework is officially deemed to achieve a number of things. These include: disrupting the dominance of English as the Medium of Instruction in postcolonial educational systems where other languages are spoken (Chapter 2); shifting imported English Language Teaching (ELT)-type language instruction into locally grounded ways of knowing in Latin America (Chapter 4 & 5); and offering learning-teaching environments once associated with elite schooling and now available to state schools that align with rationalities of parental choice (Chapter 3), learner's access to an internationally-oriented labour market (Chapter 6 & 7), school organisational autonomy (Chapter 8) and teacher professional development (Chapter 9) in Western anglophone and non-anglophone contexts.

In other words, CLIL is packaged as a promise for a better educational future for school communities across regions, one that presents researchers and practitioners interested in (bi and multi)lingual education with an irresistible clear path for (inter)action and collaboration. CLIL initiatives, we learn from the concerned authorities, have the potential to enhance upward social mobility for everyone involved if adequately implemented. But as Ahmed's (2010) points out, promises of this sort always entail a future-oriented emotion "that perceives something that is not yet present as being good, imagining a future enjoyment" (p. 218) while at the same time contributing to social actors' self-exclusion from certain spaces/experiences in the pursuit of an imagined and desired (always-before-us-yet-never-reachable) happiness. Thus, we may want to ask: what is it that we may be missing when all our well-intentioned and collaborative efforts are directed at this promise? What is it that we are not asking? What is it that we are not looking for instead?

Inspired by the accounts provided in this book and what they reveal to us, and in line with Ahmed, I propose that we displace the focus away from only discussing what CLIL is/should be or how it should be done, towards a closer look at what this promise does to those involved. I argue that school actors' hopeful orientations to make CLIL work resonate with broader disciplinary inertias of knowledge production in CLIL scholarship that are fuelled by this promise. For the purpose of this commentary, I detail three main inertias, namely: (1) embarking into unknown futures without looking back at the relevant disciplinary histories; (2) finding the right pedagogical formula via detaching knowledge from the everyday making of institutional life; and (3) delivering employability as a measure of personal development. In what follows, I address each of these inertias through the lens of work that conceptualises language policy as a discourse on language and society, engages with the question of ecological validity in the study of social institutions, and examines employability as a technology of government.

Revisiting pasts, reimagining futures: Language policy as discourse on language and society

The implementation of CLIL is very often authorised by discourses that, as attested in this book, highlight its origins in the European Union and the values of scientific soundness that this is said to bring with it. Yet, as outlined in Chapter 1, the history of CLIL in Europe is more complicated than just a scientific celebration of diversity with no ideological grounding. In contrast, CLIL is a language policy with roots in European modernity which, therefore, cannot be detached from larger State-based governmental technologies that have historically aimed to produce and police linguistic and cultural difference at the service of long-standing economic markets and the political interests of those who have sought to establish them. In this regard, any attempt to keep CLIL discussions moving forward may benefit from the careful rooting of such histories. And a useful way to do this is to engage with calls that in the wider social sciences and humanities have urged us to participate in the making of more equitable and safer futures through examining how ideas about the social world (including people, territory, culture and language) unfold over space and time in ways that contribute to the (re)making of social difference and social inequality (see Williams, 1989; Wynter & McKittick, 2015; Heller & McElhinny, 2017).

Rather than just embarking ourselves into unknown futures without looking back, these calls invite us to interrupt unequal histories into the present by acquiring a different understanding of the past, one that exposes the injustices produced by such ideas and which acts as a strategy to then begin reimagining an alternative future. In light of this, Blommaert's (1996) conceptualisation of language policy as discourse on language and society provides a useful entry point to rethinking some CLIL research and practice principles. He argues that any form of language policy and planning, including language-in-education policy, should always be seen as "full of images, preconceptions, and assumptions about language, communication and societies, but also about efficiency, rationality and so on" (p. 206). Rarely spelled out, these presuppositions tend to be assumed by language "experts" and are thought to constitute the basis for theory and practice: "[t]hey represent the historical level of theory — these assumptions are often particular to a historical period, and are most often shared by other scientific disciplines as well — and hence the ideological level of theory" (p. 206).

By examining the historical conditions under which language planning emerged both as a scholarly tradition and governmental practice, Blommaert points out three key premises that have persistently underpinned language policy scholarship and which we need to attend to critically. These are: the understanding of language planning as a rational-technical activity; the idea of language as an organic entity; and the assumption that linguistic ordering leads to efficiency and integration. The understanding of language policy as rational-technical is anchored in nation-building projects that followed worldwide processes of decolonisation during the 1960s. Drawing on the principle of scientific neutrality, language policy initiatives have often served “developmental” projects whereby newly created states have been expected to model on wealthier countries since the aftermath of World War II, a practice that language policy research has more recently exposed as continuing colonial legacies. Indeed, these initiatives – including those in educational settings – are on many occasions presented as carried out by ‘apolitical experts’ with no vested interests even though many of them have traditionally been based in North America/Europe or have received funding by US-based global corporations involved in the global expansion of liberal democratic and industrial capitalism (e.g., Rockefeller and Ford Foundations) (see also Tollefson 2011, Heller, 2018).

The idea of language as an organic entity understands languages, cultures and ethno-national identities as bounded objects that can be mapped onto each other harmoniously. Based on modern nationalism as the principle for socioeconomic and political organisation, it informs language policy actions aimed to ensure that such a harmonious equilibrium is not broken with undesired (i.e. unmanageable) forms of diversity / multilingualism. As such, this idea is deeply embedded in the one-language-one-culture-one-state ideological framework and the unequal forms of citizenship that it (re)produces and naturalises (see also Hobsbawm, 1990, for an in-depth overview). Likewise, a conceptualisation of language as an organic entity has also been mobilised at the service of anti-colonial efforts taking language usage in education and administration as a domain for targeted actions that can undo the colonial legacy of social inequality, domination and restricted access to education via making room for local needs and forms of knowledge – i.e., as a precursor of upward social mobility and a more equal society:

“[L]anguage also played another role. As a classical ingredient of "culture", it had also often been symbolized during the anticolonial struggle. In particular, the language of the colonial oppressor (or that of the previous ruling class in general) was often seen as a vestige of colonial oppression. The local language or languages, on the other hand, were constructed as part of the essence of the people and as a symbol of their strength, cultural greatness, intellectual capabilities and so on. As a consequence, many new states started programs for the indigenization of language use in the public sphere, stimulated and encouraged by the 1965 UNESCO Conference on the Eradication of Illiteracy, which launched an experimental World Literacy Program based on functional literacy in indigenous languages. In some cases, local languages were introduced in the lower levels of the education system; in others, the whole state system was made to function in one (or various) local language(s)” (Blommaert, 1996: 201).

Notwithstanding this interest in local needs, Blommaert reminds us, language planning initiatives have traditionally been concerned with “special” situations of outspoken multilingualism that are considered problematic and thus warrant careful regulation. This is linked to the third premise anticipated above, the assumptions of efficiency and integration: driven by the aspiration to reduce sociolinguistic complexity to a “workable” number of languages, cultures and ethno-national identities, these assumptions posit that linguistic “order” is necessary for local administrations to function “properly” in creating national

unity. In independent States created after decolonisation processes, for instance, emphasis on efficiency and integration has framed multilingualism as an obstacle to administrative and educational governance, this favouring diglossic situations whereby the former colonial language has retained official status in key public governmental settings (including schools) while other linguistic varieties have been cornered to private spheres of social life. In Europe, on the other hand, the predominant view of multilingualism as a problem has enabled the political denial of speakers of minoritised languages who are prevented from access to (and control of) the institutions of the State.

On the whole, these premises place the State as the major agent and beneficiary of any institutional form of language planning. As Blommaert (1996) insists: “the assignment of roles, domains and functions to languages cannot be seen as something which could be discussed solely from the perspective of “objective” features of languages and social groups. State power, state structure and state interests are likely to be mirrored in what happens to languages” (pp. 213-14; see also Williams, 1992). As a form of language policy, CLIL should thus also be examined historiographically with attention to the ideas of language and content integrated learning that it serves to produce and circulate over space and time as well as the State-based socioeconomic and political arrangements facilitated by these ideas. In this book, for example, the initiatives described can hardly be detached from specific historical junctures as regional and national governments shape their education systems in accordance with rationalities of deregulation and competition.

At times, this takes the form of values around “free choice” that specialist CLIL programs within mainstream schools come to embody and which contribute to the increasing differentiation within the government sector by encouraging competition among schools (see Chapter 3, for the Australian State of Queensland). On other occasions, governmental policies institutionalising CLIL in secondary schools bring with them the unquestioned view of CLIL as a means of preparing for a professional, English-speaking future regardless of whether it is associated with prestigious engineering-oriented careers (see Chapter 6, for Austria) or blue-collar professional futures (see Chapter 7, for Spain). More generally, CLIL has come to signify ideas of pedagogical autonomy and innovation that are very often accompanied by local reforms aimed to make the management of human and material resources in the State sector more flexible and which, in turn, help naturalise the hierarchisation and precarisation of labour within schools (see Chapter 8, in Catalonia) while at the same time shaping CLIL teachers’ personal/professional identities (see Chapter 9, in Castilla-La Mancha).

Meanwhile, supranational infrastructures created by and for States also play a major role as illustrated in the branding of CLIL as “European” at a moment in which the European Union attains greater influence in the globalising economy. This is clearly seen in institutional efforts in India to appropriate CLIL as the cutting-edge pedagogical innovation from Europe to improve language learning and palliate sociolinguistic complexity (Chapter 2) as well as in the well-entrenched belief in Colombia that the European ways of English-language learning are far better than the own localized educational agenda (Chapter 4). It also emerges very vividly from the active search for innovative ways of teaching that in Argentine have recently

been more explicitly aligned with European initiatives in the field of language education (Chapter 5).

But this complex web of stakeholders and their vested interests can easily be misrecognised by discourses of CLIL that only appeal to neutral science as a proxy for social mobility and the promotion of indigenous languages and forms of knowledge. And although a historiographical lens may help us reimagine future language (in education) policy scholarship through avoiding reification of unequal pasts, this may not be just enough. Indeed, Blommaert himself emphasised the importance of combining this focus with a much-needed close-up grasp of the daily situated practices, trajectories and experiences of individuals and institutions involved in the very language policy initiatives that we study. Nevertheless, this type of grasp can be hindered when CLIL disciplinary efforts centre excessively on finding the right pedagogical formula to efficiently handle multilingualism in the classroom, as we shall see next.

Ecological validity: Language, practice and the everyday making of social institutions

Although educational settings have always constituted a privilege window onto the study of social organisation in institutions, mainstream educational research has often been critiqued for a predominant epistemological approach to social life in schools as an object that can be detached (and studied independently) from lived experiences, practices and processes. Building upon a long-existing disciplinary preoccupation with the design of effective pedagogical models, this approach is in many occasions seen as providing the adequate validity conditions for researchers and practitioners to efficiently apply and replicate classroom techniques across a variety of contexts. That said, they can also be understood as failing to meet the requirements of what Cicourel (2007) terms ‘ecological validity’:

Validity in the non-experimental social sciences refers to the extent to which complex organizational activities represented by aggregated data from public and private sources and demographic and sample surveys can be linked to the collection, integration, and assessment of temporal samples of observable (and when possible recordable) activities in daily life settings (p. 736)

Taking issue with mainstream sociological and psychological research carried out in educational and health-care settings, Cicourel (1982, 1996, 2007) challenges the view of interviews, questionnaires and surveys as transparent windows to meanings and social relations or, in other words, as autonomous objects that can be fully extracted from the ecology of the institution under investigation. These fragments of discourse materials removed from naturally occurring activities and relations, Cicourel emphasises, are always “shaped and constrained by the larger organizational settings in which they emerge (...) despite the convenience of only focusing on extracted fragments independently of the (...) complexity of daily life” (ibid., 2007: 736). As a result:

The mental models of isolated individuals (...) are seldom studied in daily life or practical ecological settings (...) The presumed universal cognitive and linguistic capabilities attributed to individuals can be compromised in several ways. For example, there are not only individual differences, but the focus on individual problem solving is not reexamined during collaborative activities that rely on distributed cognitive efforts (Hutchins 1995). We also neglect our necessary reliance on distributed knowledge resources based on constraints, beliefs and practices inherent in folk theories of “appropriate” performance or participation expected of persons associated with socially organized positions and roles in a group or society (Cicourel 1996: 257)

Cicourel's focus on distributed knowledge thus foregrounds the importance of locating meaning, not in individuals but rather in social activities and relations upon which organisations get discursively (re)arranged in everyday life (see also Codó & Pérez-Milans, 2014). This is relevant to CLIL research – both experimental and qualitative – where meaning tends to be investigated through denotational analysis of accounts generated by teachers, administrators and students in the course of interviews and questionnaires without closely attending to the webs of practices, actors, forms of knowledge and artefacts that make certain frameworks of action and interpretation (non)intelligible in a given institutional ecology. But while the notion of distributed knowledge is a solid foundation to address such ecological concerns, research and practice in CLIL may find particularly useful the epistemological elaborations encapsulated in Smith's (2005) take on language as coordinating individual actions and in Heller's (2007) concept of "discursive space".

Smith's (2005) work showcases what a distributed knowledge approach can look like in research of institutions by way of foregrounding how people's activities or practices are co-ordinated. She outlines a four-part framework that rests on the assumptions that "[i]ndividuals are there; they are in their bodies; they are active; and what they're doing is coordinated with the doings of others (p. 59). The focus of research, she highlights, "is never the individual, but the individual does not disappear; indeed, she or he is an essential presence. Her or his doings, however, are to be taken up relationally" (ibid). More specifically, this relational emphasis pushes us to explore meanings performatively and not denotationally and, therefore, to take language as embodied social action rather than as an enclosed system of signs with ready-made meanings inscribed:

To annul the ordinary sociological divorce between action on the one hand and ideas, thought, concepts, meanings, and so forth on the other, the latter have to be brought out of a transcendence that has elevated them above action. One move is to insist that ideas and so forth are also doings in that they happen at actual times and in particular local settings and are performed by particular people. They must therefore be taken on as phenomena in language, particularly since it is in language that people's ideas, concepts, theories, beliefs, and so on become integral to the ongoing coordinating of people's doings. Hence bringing phenomena of mind into the action requires also an account of language that does not reproduce the separation. To bring phenomena of language and in language within the scope of the social (...) means shifting focus from what is within the psyche or within language as a phenomenon in and of itself to what is going on among people (p. 76).

Such an epistemological angle recognises the distributed nature of knowledge in institutional settings since it examines the making of meanings and social relations as they get enacted and made sense of by social actors in conventionally arranged practices mediated by language and communication. A notion of language as coordinating individual actions offers, in Smith's view, "a way to avoid using concepts that hide the active thought, concepts, ideas, ideology, and so forth in people's heads" (ibid, p. 77). While recognising that people think, have ideas and conceptualise, she is mainly concerned with what enters into the social and hence "with (a) ethnographically practical ways of finding concepts, ideas, and so on in people's local activities (in this case in language) and (b) bringing such phenomena within the social (...) where they can be recognized as people's doings in particular actual settings, as in time and as in connecting or co-ordinating with others' doings, whether in language or otherwise (p. 76-77).

This is well illustrated in contributions that in this book grapple with the situated enactment of collaborative action, both in and out of the classroom, between teachers and head teachers (e.g., Chapter 8), language teachers and teachers of other disciplines (e.g., Chapter 5), teachers and students (e.g., Chapter 6), including explicit attention to the analysis of life projects (e.g., Chapter 7) and professional trajectories of ‘becoming’ (e.g., Chapter 9). While accounting for how school actors navigate their own institutional ecologies, these chapters shed relevant light on instances whereby what counts as (in)appropriate integration of language and content, (in)adequate expertise, (ill)legitimate (linguistic) knowledge and (un)desired futures gets performed, negotiated, re-defined (or undermined) within the logic of school-based projects of pedagogical re-organisation that are, in turn, embedded in wider regional and national educational reforms. In so doing, pedagogy is not reified as a set of detached techniques but is rather taken as an assemblage of practices, categories and forms of knowledge socially recognised as emblematic of ‘doing CLIL’.

Heller (2007) accounts for how distributed knowledge often gets unequally distributed. She invites us to think of the daily communicative practices that carry out concepts, ideas and coordinated social activities as entrenched with existing hierarchies that operate in specific locations and which tend to work well for some socioeconomic groups at the expense of others: “[r]esources are unequally distributed in ways that position people differentially in terms of their access to them, and to the spaces where they are produced, where their circulation is regulated and their meaning and value are defined” (p. 635). To zoom into the analysis of these processes, Heller introduces the notion of “discursive space” which focuses on the interactional, moral and institutional orders that get (re)instituted through temporally and spatially arranged activities in social organisations. As such, she lays the ground for a close-up description of: a) emerging moral categories (i.e. “appropriate” / ‘inappropriate’) about participants, forms of participation and forms of knowledge as social actors engage in daily institutional practices; and b) the consequences that these practices and categorisation processes may have in terms of these social actors’ access to spaces and to the symbolic/material resources that are available in them:

Discursive spaces have their histories and trajectories, as do the social actors who participate in them, more or less centrally. What gets constructed as counting as knowledge in and across those spaces is not neutral; it reflects the interests of some participants more than others, and certainly more likely of those who have access to those spaces than of those who are excluded, directly or indirectly. Distributed knowledge, then, takes the shape it does because of interests surrounding both its forms and its circulation, and because of the ability of participants to mobilize resources in those spaces in ways that have consequences for their own access to what goes on there (and what that might lead to) and, at least potentially, for the access of others (p. 635).

The attention to the embedding of these practices, processes and hierarchies of access in this book complexifies the collaborative forms of action among teachers, head teachers and students referred to further above. That is to say, contributors in this volume do more than just describe the situated enactment and negotiation of such forms of collaboration. They also examine how the daily making of ideas concerned with (in)appropriate integration of language and content, (in)adequate expertise, (ill)legitimate (linguistic) knowledge and (un)desired futures allows the systematic socioeconomic reordering of schools, teachers and students based on their categorisation as (non)-prestigious institutions and (un)successful professionals/learners. However, this reordering is likely to be concealed when – as it too

transpires from the pages in this book – employability as a measure of personal development becomes the ultimate target of CLIL’s promise.

Employability as a technology of government: The responsabilised self

The notion of employability has risen to prominence over the past 25 years, having gained remarkable traction in policy-making, organizational life, and society more generally (Artess *et al.*, 2017). Even so, defining employability remains a highly contested terrain, with different perspectives available depending on whether the emphasis is placed on societal employment rates, organisational issues about employees in a given company, or individual indicators of a person’s probability of gaining employment via accumulation of new knowledge and experience throughout his/her lifetime (Thijssen *et al.*, 2008). Yet, the understanding of employability as personal development has gained considerable momentum. This is seen at governmental level where the use of this notion has been increasingly linked to depictions of the economic market as global, “knowledge-driven” and competitive which requires specific public policy initiatives aiming to help individuals realise their potential, enhance their skills, and become successful citizens (Joynes *et al.*, 2019).

Informed by this understanding, the packaging of CLIL as a promise for a better educational future becomes indissociable from the idea of English as a key emblem of the successful professional. This figure of personhood is automatically linked to the mastery of the English language as part of a bundle of skills that teachers and students are expected to acquire throughout their lives in order to enter the labour market (or to progress through it). Despite these prospects, though, a number of teachers in this book endure unemployability, precarity, incommensurable work hierarchies or labour exploitation (e.g., Chapters 5, 8 and 9). This also affects students and their families as they have to accommodate the desire to learn English as a form of anticipation of future needs, on the one hand, and their available place in the current workforce order, on the other (cf., Chapter 7). Thus, it is rather urgent that we adopt a critical lens to ideas of employability intertwined with CLIL, for such ideas are constitutive of the inequalities that school actors encounter.

In fact, employability as a “keyword” (Williams, 1976) can hardly be decoupled from a larger body of knowledge originated in the neoliberal political economic policies of the global centres of capitalism since the 1980s, these being understood as part of “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p.2). Against this background, the word clusters and metaphors associated with employability contribute to a common-sense understanding of social reality that replaces the historical commitment of the welfare system to “full employment” with that of “full employability”, therefore deresponsibilising the State and employers from having to provide those they govern and/or employ with lasting and secure jobs (see also Holborow, 2015; Block, 2018).

Based on this common-sense understanding, individuals’ capacity to become employable is explained as depending on their willingness to be flexible and adaptable to a changing, unstable and precarious labour market while engaging relentlessly in updating and improving their knowledge and skills (Rose, 1989). They are made responsible for the labour market

conditions they find themselves in, while governments and employers are positioned as just ‘enablers’ that maximize individuals’ abilities and choices in the increasingly transnationalised labour market without guaranteeing a job (Gazier, 1999; Levitas, 2005; Holmqvist, 2009). Employability is also at times invoked as a path towards social integration, with “migrants”, “women”, “the elderly” and “people with various disabilities” invited to self-determinedly step out of their “marginalization-cum-idleness”, all of this despite long histories of unequal access to (and participation in) the labour market that continue to disproportionately and systematically affect racialised, gendered and socioeconomically struggling groups (e.g., Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

And not only that, employability also becomes a “technology of the self” (Foucault, 1988; Lemke, 2002), a political rationality that shapes how social actors regulate their practices, choices and ways of rationalising such practices and choices in order to be recognised as becoming employable throughout their engagement with study and work. Beyond specific governmental policies that exist “out there”, this rationality has pervading effects on all domains of social life via a re-ordering of ground-level social relations and subjectivities. It drives people’s orientations towards desired objects in ways that require a great deal of (self)regulation through (re)imagining, defining, and embarking on desirable outcomes, future aspirations and life projects (see also Del Percio, 2018; Martín Rojo, 2019). From this critical angle, institutional logics that separate individuals as “capable-and-competitive” or “incapable-and-noncompetitive”, depending on their degree of engagement with the neoliberal demands of continuous flexibility and self-actualisation, are viewed as instituting a “regime of anticipation” (Adams *et al.*, 2009). They are seen as projecting a preferred subject that is expected to enhance her quality of life through her own decisions, acting as an expert on herself and becoming responsible for managing her own human capital to maximal effect (Fraser, 2003). Therefore, and given that some of the key features of an “employable self” include being “skilled”, “flexible” and a “learner”, as well as “sellable” and “enterprising”, a refusal to correspond to them is perceived as leading to unemployment (Williams, 2005; Fogde, 2007).

But individuals are not only invited to realize themselves by becoming (ever more) employable: their realization as selves is also turned into a prerequisite for their employability *per se*. By this token, employability is also viewed as setting the standards of normalcy and, in turn, pushing individuals to conceal the characteristics that they think do not fit into what is deemed to be employable, such as shyness or mental illness (Elraz, 2013). It too can be understood as a never realizable “project of the self” (Chertkovskaya *et al.*, 2013): “[t]he ‘principle of potentiality’, which is in the exhortation that every individual ought to see itself as always capable of ‘more’, may result in tragic consequences for the individual, as the constant striving for ‘more’ goes hand in hand with a permanent sense of failure” (p. 706). Altogether, these rationalities are said to reinforce segmented forms of governmentality, with co-existence of responsabilised self-regulation from some and brute repression for others: “[i]n this ‘dual society,’ a hypercompetitive, fully networked zone coexists with a marginal sector of excluded low-achievers” (Fraser, 2003: 169).

If the above-mentioned forms of knowledge and (self-)regulation are viewed as embedded into materialised arrangements of space, then meanings and subjectivities concerned with

employability are also mapped onto larger infrastructural spaces (Esterling, 2016) or global circuits of professionals, knowledge and labour (Sassen, 2001) which are enabled by such meanings and subjectivities. In this sense, a critical lens to ideas of employability considers daily communicative practices as more than just purely symbolic activities since “social relations do not disappear in the ‘worldwide’ framework [but rather are] reproduced at that level [v]ia all kinds of interactions [through which] the world market creates configurations and inscribes changing spaces on the surface of the earth” (Lefebvre, 1974: 404). It overpasses theoretical separations of “micro” and “macro” as two different realms, and assumes that “[s]pace’s (...) does not operate solely on the ‘micro’ level, effecting the arrangement of surfaces in a supermarket, for instance (...) nor does it apply only on the ‘macro’ level, as though it were responsible merely for the ordering of ‘flows’ within nations or continents” (ibid, p. 412).

Ultimately, this lens allows us to attend to spatialising dynamics whereby notions of citizenship are semiotically (re)defined, (re)evaluated and (dis)protected (Ong, 2006: 16). Traditionally confined to the national space of the homeland, citizenship is now embedded in the territorialities of globalising markets, and thus its constitutive elements—rights, entitlements, territoriality, a nation – are seen as getting disarticulated from one another and rearticulated through the daily communicative arrangements of institutions that orient to transnational labour markets. In so doing, these organisations produce political spaces that are regulated differently compared to traditional institutions of the nation-state. This is significant in the case of educational institutions for its traditional goal of turning students into ideal national citizens is now shaped according to a new focus on delivering developmental skills and knowledge with which students can supposedly access international labour markets “freely”, this ultimately responsabilising the individual for her failure/success to make it happen.

A way forward?

The three inertias of knowledge production discussed in the sections above – i.e. embarking into unknown futures without looking back at the relevant disciplinary histories, finding the right pedagogical formula via detaching knowledge from the everyday making of institutional life, and delivering employability as measure of personal development – expose the necessity of an epistemological onslaught. By way of interrogating the promise of a better educational future that fuels such inertias, we are encouraged to move away from a view of CLIL as a taken-for-granted, ahistorical construct that can be detached from the social life of institutions in search of increasing individuals’ employability, towards closer attention to the logics of organisation, social categories and forms of personhood that become recognised as emblematic of CLIL work in the daily life of such institutions, with a focus on the social relations and unequal trajectories of knowledge and labour enabled by them. In this vein, an approach to CLIL that conceptualises language policy as a discourse on language and society, addresses ecological validity in the study of social institutions, and examines employability as a technology of government can offer a useful point of departure for concerned researchers and practitioners.

Nonetheless, such an approach does not yet exhaust all possible avenues for disciplinary conversations. Fruitful collaborations between researchers and practitioners could still be

further nurtured if CLIL scholarship engaged more explicitly with debates on the contribution of academic knowledge to larger histories of inequality. An engagement of this type requires an open discussion on how university-led research projects turn to CLIL as a desirable object of attention that make some research questions and paradigms readily available at the cost of others – a matter that is often regarded as part of the research kitchen but which could help avoid de-technification of CLIL research in the years to come. At the same time, the pondering of these issues also calls for more serious consideration of the growing frustration that many practitioners and researchers who work very closely with school-based educators have with regard to critical approaches. I believe that these concerns are still to be fully examined in CLIL research preoccupied with social justice and inequality, for they point out the urgent need for all of us to embark more decisively on (non-extractive) collective forms of action and collaboration cutting across the historically (and thus politically) constructed divide that separate the so-called ‘expert’ and ‘non-expert’. Contemporary research calls advocating for citizen science or public scholarship offer possible avenues for addressing such concerns more centrally, and to this aim more attention to them could certainly be a helpful point of reference.

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