Introduction – language learning and professionalization in higher education: where we are, where we need to be, and how we get there

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Institutions of higher education worldwide are facing the challenges of responding to global changes that sit at the junction of science and society today and of informing new modes of knowing and learning to know for the purpose of developing professionals who will be able to problem-solve these challenges successfully (Aspin, Chapman, Evans, & Bagnall, 2011; Milana et al., 2018; Slowey & Schuetze, 2012).

To meet these social and economic requirements, institutions of higher education have been called on to address the need for enhanced soft skills, which are now as valued as hard skills in the workplace. As a result, fostering learners' intercultural competence, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and capacity to communicate in multiple Foreign Languages (FLs) and to fully participate in today's networked communication practices has become a strategic focus with the goal to develop a globally competent workforce (ACTFL, 2011).

While broad recognition exists for the need to develop proficient intercultural multilingual speakers who can "negotiate complex demands and opportunities for varied, emergent competencies across their languages" (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 19), a discrepancy exists between current needs and current

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outcomes (AAAS, 2017; European Commission, 2012) and calls into question not only the ways in which FLs continue to be taught and learned (Chancelade et al., 2016) but also the content of FL courses.

Furthermore, in this globalized world, it is becoming increasingly evident that a paradigm shift from education to lifelong learning needs to take place. Lifelong learning now tends to be understood as a response to societal trends and improved understandings of how humans develop knowledge and skills. In response to this, the European Universities' *Charter on Lifelong Learning* (EUA, 2008) underscores the necessity to provide relevant programs, flexible learning paths, assessment, and recognition of prior learning, in a learner-centered approach. While there is recognition for lifelong learning opportunities for professionals across all academic areas and for people at all stages of their careers, the larger question remains whether institutions of higher education can see beyond the completion of a degree and consider the degree as a milestone that binds the student, the learning community, and the institution on the lifelong learning journey. With a view to investigating higher education modes of knowing and learning – in FLs in particular – and their link to professionalization, the following questions are explored.

- How can institutions of higher education expand FL teaching and learning offerings and help ensure that graduates continue to thrive in work environments shaped by accelerating change?

- What kinds of programs can institutions of higher education actively develop and implement to best serve continuing FL learning in professional contexts?

- Which processes can best facilitate this learning?

Language learning for professional purposes is here explored through themes related to postsecondary students' experiences and professional integration, (multimodal) communication, and (online) instructional design principles, and language teacher education.

Each chapter seeks to focus on how research results could/should inform training design in higher education (research-based recommendations, implications for pedagogy) so as to promote learning and sustain the link between FL education and professionalization in today's and tomorrow's society.

The present volume

The eight chapters of the volume are grouped into two interrelated parts: *Curriculum design and professionalization* and *(Multimodal) communication and professionalization.*

Part I, Curriculum design and professionalization*,* opens with a general reflection on key issues related to the teaching and learning of FLs relevant to the needs of the 21st century in Chapter 1. These various perspectives are echoed in the remaining contributions included in this section. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 coalesce around the challenge of designing a curriculum for professional FL courses so as to bridge the gap between institutional learning and workplace requirements, and the questioning of teachers' professional development in a context where FL programs are undergoing curricular changes to meet today's needs.

In **Chapter 1,** "Language learning in the 21st century: current status and future directions", **Betül Czerkawski** and **Margherita Berti** focus on the challenges higher education faces when coping with new realities. How do learners acquire the skills necessary for effective cross-cultural communication? What professional learning opportunities do universities offer to language learners? What are some present practices found in universities today, and how are these practices shaping tomorrow's FL language education? The key issues raised in this chapter center on the need to go beyond just language and focus more broadly on technology-supported communication in multicultural settings, the importance of better language teacher preparation, the necessity of FL curricula so they foster 21st century skills and lifelong learning, and the importance of instructional design to develop meaningful learning experiences that help people navigate complex realities and constantly evolving environments. The authors offer possible ways in which these issues can be addressed and end with a discussion of future trends.

In **Chapter 2**, "Needs analysis for the design of a professional English curriculum: insights from a French lifelong learning context", **Naouel Zoghlami** draws on needs analysis as a fundamental approach to inform the design of a professional English curriculum at the Cnam, a unique French research institution of higher education dedicated to lifelong learning. While needs analysis is still not widely used in the development of English for specific purposes programs in French higher education contexts, this study attempts to fill this gap by revealing the kinds of tasks adult professional learners studying at the Cnam say they need to perform in English at work. One of the strengths of this study thus lies in relying on data provided by domain insiders rather than assumptions held by the researcher-teacher about what adults need to learn to inform a professional English curriculum. Study data provide the information needed to improve the existing syllabus and the basis on which to build relevant pedagogical tasks.

In **Chapter 3**, "Questioning the notion of 'professionalization': LANSOD contexts and the specific case of a musicology undergraduate program", **Aude Labetoulle** addresses the challenge of designing courses that meet the needs of learners whose major is not languages in French universities – a sector usually referred to as 'LANSOD' (LANguages for Students of Other Disciplines). University language requirements are typically related to the increased importance of 'mobility' and 'employability'. Yet, French universities seem to struggle with the design of language courses that are relevant to the future professional needs of learners. To explore this issue, Aude Labetoulle first investigates how 'professionalization' has been progressively defined and implemented by French universities and stresses the tensions underlying the various interpretations of the ongoing movement toward the 'professionalization' of university courses in France. She then analyzes the specific case of a LANSOD undergraduate course at the University of Lille (France) and demonstrates how complex it can be to design an undergraduate English curriculum relevant to learners' future professional needs when learners have different disciplinary backgrounds and professional aspirations. This study provides LANSOD course designers with an approach to curriculum design and evaluation that addresses these challenges and offers transferable tools to, generally underprepared, LANSOD teachers.

In **Chapter 4**, "Graduate student teacher voices: perception of and apprenticeship in multiliteracies-oriented teaching", **Tara Hashemi** examines Graduate Student Teachers' (GSTs') perceptions of their professionalization in FL programs which have adopted a literacy-based approach to teaching French in the United States. Findings show that while some clear efforts are being made by language program directors to provide GSTs with a large panoply of tools, GSTs wish they had more opportunities for direct and personalized feedback on their teaching as well as more demonstrations of concrete lessons in which the concepts of the literacy-based framework are instantiated. It cannot be expected that GSTs will understand and apply complex notions of the multiliteracies framework and multiliteracies pedagogy without relevant, adapted, and ongoing professional development.

Part II, (Multimodal) communication and professionalization, provides case examples of how practices are sustained and enriched by the multifaceted nature of 21st century communications and the multiliteracies approach, thus informing instructional design principles in return.

In **Chapter 5**, "Digital storytelling for developing students' agency through the process of design: a case study", **Elyse Petit** compares two case studies that illustrate the potential of using a multimodal project (i.e. digital storytelling) in the FL classroom to enhance students' 21st ccentury skills and support their understanding of how their selection and orchestration of semiotic resources construct layers of meaning, promote multiliteracies, and foster language use and appropriateness. Findings suggest that students' selection of semiotic resources and the ways in which they arrange them reveal their ability to face and find solutions to circumvent challenges brought on by language and culture to convey their stories.

In **Chapter 6**, "Telling stories multimodally: what observations of parent-child shared book-reading activities can bring to L2 kindergarten teachers' training", **Pauline Beaupoil-Hourdel** presents multimodal and plurisemiotic analyses of storytelling activities in adult-child dyadic interactions at home in France and analyzes the extent to which this context can inform the professionalization of teachers in the 21st century. Findings show that spontaneous adult-child

interactions during storytelling and shared book reading at home provide valuable insights for kindergarten and primary school teachers to teach an L2, as well as new multimodal perspectives on fostering linguistic, narrative, and communication skills in young children at school.

In **Chapter 7**, "Informing language training with multimodal analysis: insights from the use of gesture in tandem interactions", **Camille Debras** explores face-to-face tandem interactions between undergraduate university students who are native speakers of French and English and the role multimodality plays in these. Drawing from linguistics research on the multimodality of tandem interactions, four multimodal interactional linguistics studies based on the annotation and/or qualitative analysis of data from a corpus made of audio- and video-recorded face-to-face tandem interactions provide evidence for the crucial communicative functions of gesture during exolingual interactions. Findings underscore the need to involve the nonverbal dimension in language learning and teaching and professionalization in higher education, so as to prepare L2 learners for the (international) workplace.

In **Chapter 8**, "The social dimension of learner autonomy in a telecollaborative project: a Russian course for apprentice engineers", **Elsa Chachkine** explores the social turn in autonomous learning through a telecollaborative project based on teletandems and the use of social media in a self-study Russian course whose aim is to familiarize future engineers with the Russian language and culture and to develop their autonomy as learners before their work placement in Russia. This research contributes to our understanding of the ways in which the social dimension manifests itself and its potential role in the development of autonomy, language and culture, and other skills valued in the world of work.

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