

EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF LANGUAGE – ITS MULTI-FACETED SCOPE AND ITS SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

The aim of this text is to envisage, relate to and systematize multiple perspectives concerning the intersection between language and education, with the blend of the two attracting interests of theoreticians, researchers and practitioners representing different disciplines and numerous subdisciplines. To achieve this, (1) the text outlines the scope within which the relationship between language and education can be studied, which is done from the perspective of pupil activity falling within four educational domains – this first step leads to recognition of four **AREAS** encompassing different approaches that are taken or could be taken with regard to the language-education link, with the areas proving to mutually reinforce one another; (2) then it imposes on the four areas the **SKILLS**-based orientation frequently adopted by teachers of foreign languages but significantly less employed for the purposes of other school subjects – the second step results in formulation of more specific (tangible) questions being posed, the joint tackling of which better serves verification of the areas delineated in the first section; (3) subsequently, it introduces four **REALMS** imposed on the four areas, separately and jointly with the four skills – this double step unravels two sets of problems, the former of which point to the gradability of linguistically-educational issues, whilst the former legitimise the very existence of the interdisciplinary studies; (4) finally, it closes with the metaphor of “a temperature control”, the different **POSITIONS** and the turning of which can be seen as representative of dissimilar approaches taken in various educational systems and cultures. The first three sections follow the same sequence: a pupil’s situation is considered from a language-based perspective and shown first as a brief (and continued) scenario (general outline) and then as an image (graphic outline), after which a set of questions ensue along with notes on expertise needed to address them (interdisciplinary problems); then, a brief subsection ensues remarking on the character of problems resulting from a given juxtaposition of concepts (implications). The conceptual sequence (partially drawn on a presentation given at the first ‘Educational Role of Language’ conference in 2016) additionally reflects chronology behind the ERL idea and network¹. There is a strong visionary edge to this text so as to consider openly the room and future of the ERL studies.

1. Four-faceted reality of language in education

Each instance of language coming into contact with education (or the other way round) generates room for the educational role of language – hence the title of this text. This being the case, **the position of language in education needs to be studied as comprehensively as education itself**. One comprehensive treatment of education is offered by the (now-somewhat-classical) rationale of four different educational domains, traditionally applied to the setting of objectives and the assessment of what pupils *think of* subject matter, what they can physically *do*, how they *feel* and how they *perceive* the world. The four domains complement one another and are viewed to cover all possible verifiable learning outcomes:

¹ The genesis and rationale of the ERL idea and network is presented in the Introduction.



Putting aside the strongly behaviouristic limitations of the approach outlined by the graph above and its partial failure to capture non-measurable educational processes, constructs and gains, it can still be applied as a yardstick in deciding about the extent to which schools (explicitly and implicitly) take all the domains into account and, as a result, strike such a balance that is conducive to their pupils' overall development. Being "a substance" that students use to act, in which they think, which they personally experience and which largely determines how they learn and think about the world in general, language seems to particularly merit such four-faceted comprehensive treatment. In other words, there being nothing else as powerful and crucial to pupils' education as language, its role within the four domains calls for systematic and in-depth consideration and research. **Fundamental though these issues are, studies addressing some of this extensive field (concerning, for instance, how pupils feel about their own language) remain few and far between.** Hence, it is imperative to grasp the scope of problems to be addressed at the intersection between language and education, which is the ambition that originally prompted organisation of the ERL conferences. We shall start delineating this overlap by observing what a pupil's contact with a school will quite inevitably entail with regard to language on all the four strata presented by the graph above:

1.1. General outline 1: areas

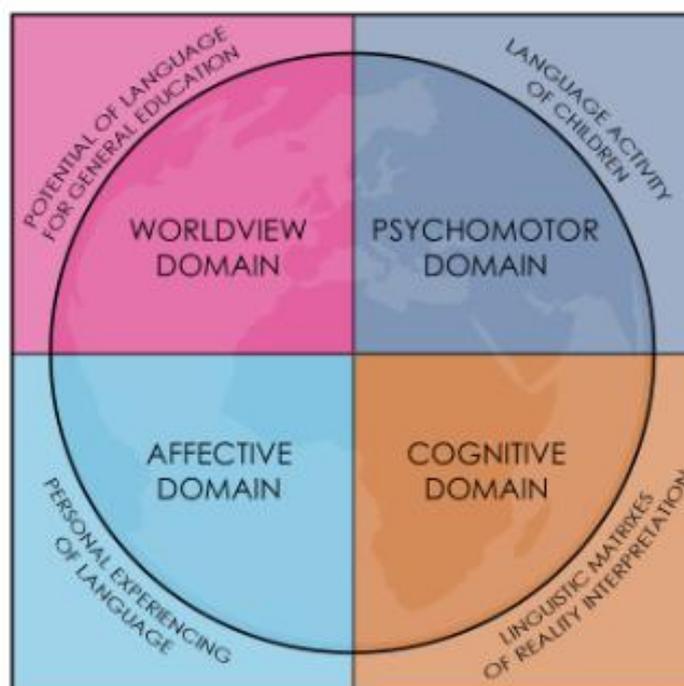
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|---|
| <p>Every school will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote some views concerning language, - entail experience with (physical) language, - generate emotions with regard to language, and - (co-)shape language image of the world. |
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Regardless of how conscious/deliberate or unconscious/undeliberate a school's language activity will be (most schools of today will lack a manifesto propagating the key role of language, its proper articulation, pupils' emotional attitude to it, or a specific world image regulated), **a school child, once s/he has crossed the school's threshold, will exist surrounded by its language and its influence, and his/her beliefs, actions, feelings and concepts will rest on language².** What follows is

² This sequence, i.e. language beliefs, actions, feelings and concepts can be seen here as one of the shortened forms of reference to the four-area build-up of the ERL framework. Another one (slightly longer, though) has

that in order to grasp the comprehensive and complementary nature of these four areas, to delineate the scope of the language-and-education contact, and to see how it holistically works in different schools and places, problems need to be posed and studies conducted both *within* and *across* the four areas, covering the generally educational, physical, emotional and conceptual side of language³. Such considerations give rise to the following four respective areas – originally devised for the purposes of the ERL I 2016 conference and viewed as calling for cooperation between multiple researchers, whose interests and findings will generally unravel only a small piece of the entire circle.

1.2. Graphic outline 1: areas



The division makes it clear how complicated an issue the educational role of language is. Putting aside difficulties that verifying particular areas is, we can observe that each “quarter” can be addressed in (hypothetical) separation or jointly with the other three. What makes the comprehensive analysis of the entire circle even more complex is that problems that need addressing may differ in terms of whether they concern the conceptual or the actual side of life. In other words, in order to obtain a full picture of the four-faceted scope, we need to take into account both what researchers say about what the role of language in education *is* and well as what theoreticians claim its role *should be*. Bearing this in mind, we shall recognise different types of questions (as was done originally done at the ERL I conference⁴),⁵ which are exemplified here with problems pertaining to

been used earlier: what they *think* of language, what they can physically *do*, how they *feel* and how they about it and how they *perceive* through language.

³ Another short ERL reference.

⁴ That presentation was partially prompted by questions which were posed by ERL members on the ERL projects participant forms and which were later placed in the ERL spreadsheet so as to stimulate international research in an orderly fashion.

⁵ The division can serve multiple purposes, two of which merit a mention here: firstly, it helps to ascertain that questions posed with reference to a given issue are comprehensive enough and do not lose out of sight any relevant problems, and, secondly, it may help to assess the character of studies or conferences (those scientifically inclined will address problems representative of the two former types above).

the same issues (i.e. pupils' speech and references to various school subjects) looked at from different perspectives and thus representing the actual-theoretical four-faceted spectrum):

Data-oriented questions (primary problems requiring empirical studies; as these questions pertain to the praxis of language & education as it is, they can also be referred to as 'practical' or 'objective')

- factual questions (FQ), meaning those addressing facts, situations or circumstances (e.g. *What is the ratio of the teacher's classroom speech to that of pupils?, or How often is new grammar of a foreign language introduced with references to subject matter of different school subjects?*⁶)
- phenomenal questions (PQ), meaning those addressing phenomena, processes or regularities (e.g. *What factors determine the number of pupils' classroom utterances? or How do references to the subject matter of different school subjects made during language lessons affect the learning of a foreign language or other disciplines?*)

Ideas-oriented questions (secondary problems inciting reflection; as these questions pertain to the conceptual side of language & education as it might be, they can also be referred to as 'theoretical' or 'subjective')

- reflective questions (RQ), meaning those addressing personal beliefs, preferences, convictions (e.g. *For what reasons should a teacher strive to increase the number of pupils' utterances in the classroom?, or Do references to the subject matter of other subjects made during language lessons constitute an extra benefit or burden of those lessons?*)
- argumentative questions (AQ), meaning those addressing logic, values, judgments (e.g. *To what extent do attempts to increase the number of pupils' utterances turn against teachers by reducing the scope of their influence on pupils?, or What speaks in favour of introducing the subject matter of different school subjects to language lessons at school?*)

(Although boundaries between the four types of questions will appear fuzzy with some questions (e.g. on (a) students' enthusiasm to learn in the case of data-oriented problems, or (b) reasons for teaching students to formulate definitions), with the former couple of problems it will be possible to resolve most doubts as to their classification by deciding whether the specific construct happens to be observable or latent, respectively, whilst a line between the latter group of problems can be drawn by following the criterion of whether questions are poised towards opinions or evidence, respectively.)

Owing to spatial limitations, in our analysis below of the scope of issues falling within the four areas, we shall confine ourselves to data-oriented questions only. The reason for this choice is that one of the primary aims of the ERL Conferences and the ERL Network⁷ has been to gather academics whose pursuits combine language and education and to initiate with their contribution all-round research (i.e. studies pertaining to all the four areas of the scope above) (rather than ungrounded reflection) shedding light on educational facts and linguistic phenomena and requiring technical knowledge and empirical expertise. Ideas-oriented questions, on the other hand, can – at least partially – be handled by application of logic and pure common sense, which makes reflective and argumentative problems more open to non-specialists and all groups of non-professional “educational stake-holders”. Thus, the order of the four types of questions above reflects the fact that for the language-education intersection to be effectively given due consideration and for the educational role of language to be

⁶ An approach postulating such references is presented by Mikołaj Rychło, a representative of the so-called Gdańsk School of EFL, in *Educational Approach ...*

⁷ Concept of the network

better understood, problems which are aimed at the examination of facts and phenomena are of primary importance, whilst those on arguments and convictions – of secondary. This hierarchy of questions is retained in this very text as well as within all the activities performed under the framework of the ERL conferences and network.

On the most general level, juxtaposition of the four areas against the categories of facts and phenomena gives rise to questions such as⁸:

1.3. Interdisciplinary problems 1: areas

Area	Problems raised	Expertise needed in *
General education	How do L1 and L2 interplay in education? (FQ) What mental facilities does language education require and foster? (PQ)	Theories of education; Ethnolinguistics; Integrational linguistics
Language activity	What are conditions of the development of the child's language competence at school? (FQ) How significant is the child's language activity for his or her cognitive, social and emotional development? (PQ)	Developmental psychology; Psycholinguistics
Language experience	How do different nations experience the ability to use a foreign language? (FQ) What makes the learning of language a personal experience? (PQ)	Linguistic anthropology; Cultural linguistics Psychology of individual differences
Linguistic matrixes	What is the place of language study perspective in research on childhood and school? (FQ) How are the relationships between language, reality and the experiencing subject interpreted in education? (PQ)	Sociolinguistics; Microlinguistics; Cognitive science; Language policies

* The broken line is meant to imply that expertise in a given field may help address several problems and vice versa, that is particular problems require may require expertise in several disciplines. The same applies to Tables 2.3 and 3.3a.

1.4. Implications 1: areas

Joint consideration of the problems raised with regard to the quarters distinguished unravels **mutuality** within and across the four areas, which can be seen as the first argument for coordinated aggregation of studies and analyses pertaining to education and language. Hence, findings obtained on the issue of the first problem (L1-L2 interplay) will support research focused on the second problem (re. mental facilities) (which exemplifies mutuality within one area) as much as data collected on different nations experiencing foreign language in dissimilar ways will aid studies concerning children's language activity (which shows mutuality across two areas). Similarly, any insight made into the personal experiencing of language will support studies on the significance of the child's activity for his or her development. Such further examples of mutual reinforcement between findings from various pedagogically-linguistic analyses could easily be multiplied here.

Suffice it to say at this point that what follows from the considerations above is that for the mutuality mentioned in the previous paragraph to be rendered feasible (within and across different systems and cultures), studies falling into the interdisciplinary scope of language and education need to

⁸ The questions were originally formulated for the purposes of the ERL conference with a view to reaching professionals specializing in the four areas and commencing their joint work. The problems included in the table has thus been placed on the website of the Educational Role of Language conferences and network.

pertain harmoniously to all of the four recognised areas. Without such a balanced treatment of these issues we shall overlook a vital component and make our studies detrimentally fragmentary.

2. Four-skill language development

Aspiring to comprehensively envisage the scope of the language-and-education overlap, we can look more closely at what pupils *think of* language, what they can *do physically* with it, how they *feel* about it and how they *reason* with it by imposing on our analysis of the four-area scope the four-skill orientation traditionally followed by foreign language teachers⁹. Following such a perspective, we recognise that the schools' impact on pupils with regard to the shaped views, experience, emotions and images will concern those pupils' four language skills. Accordingly, a pupil's contact with any school will imply the following:

2.1. General outline 2: (areas and) skills

Every school will (deliberately or not):

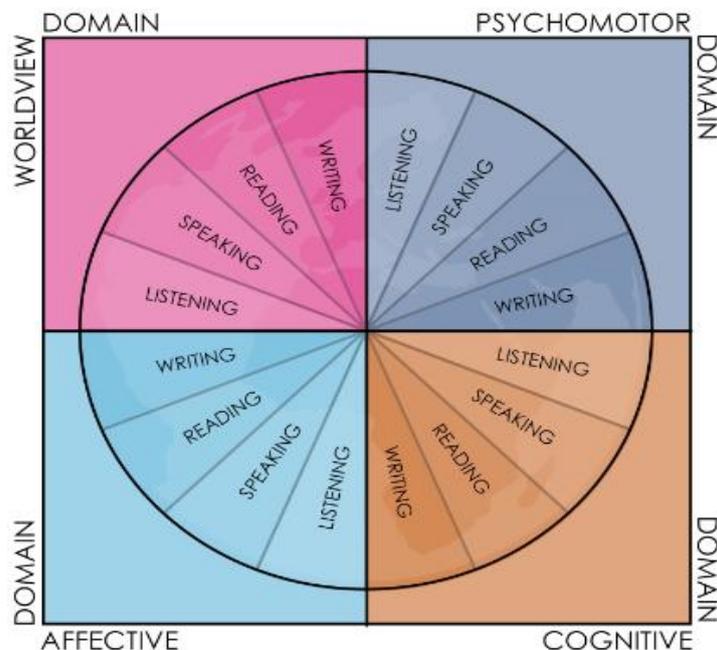
- promote some views concerning listening to, speaking, reading, and writing language,
- entail experience with (physical) language consisting in listening, speaking, reading, and writing,
- generate emotions with regard to listening to, speaking, reading, and writing language, and
- (co-)shape language image of the world through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Ideally, this fact (or four or sixteen separate facts, depending on how we view it) might be recognised by schools which might, maybe in the form of something of a *manifesto*, outline its position on, say, how much and for what purposes pupils' speech is welcome, what stance teachers of that school take with regard to their students talking, what interdisciplinary or extracurricular uses of language are aimed at, or which texts are not allowed in the classroom (if any) – to name just a few potential declarations. Such *transparency of education* with regard to language-related issues would no doubt bring out benefits to all the school stake-holders, with such gains cutting across the board and fostering language awareness and use across all school subjects. Plain and obvious as it may sound here, such educational transparency with regard to language should apply to all the four (or sixteen) sections emerging from our division of the ERL scope. At the moment, however, in the educational reality as we know it there seems to be little balance between them, with research on, for instance, how pupils use their native or foreign in speech being widely represented, whilst studies on how they *feel* about what they say still remaining consistently rare.

The juxtaposition of four language skills against the four areas can be presented as follows:

2.2. Graphic outline 2: (areas and) skills

⁹ It takes little effort to find out that a vast majority of library references or Internet links will associate four language skills predominantly with second language teaching and learning and it takes a lot of flicking through or "scrolling down" to detect publications or websites relating the four skills to other school subjects.



Having added one more dimension, we arrive at problems represented by the following:

2.3. Interdisciplinary problems 2: (areas and) skills

Area	Skill	Problems raised	Expertise needed
General education	Listening	How is the ability to listen for facts and opinions practised (and assessed) at schools? (FQ) In what educational settings do pupils listen with highest alertness and due to what factors? (PQ)	types of listening aural reception
	Speaking	For what educational purposes are pupils' speeches used in teaching across curricula? (FQ) To what extent do speaking skills naturally co-occur with general knowledge and what hampers this process? (PQ)	functions of language; verbalisation
	Reading	How semantically and syntactically complex texts are employed in reading across curricula? (FQ) How does reading enhance learning maths? (PQ)	build-up of curricula; CLIL
	Writing	To what extent is the ability to write viewed as a part of competence in different school subjects? (FQ) What general personal abilities does effective writing require and foster? (PQ)	competences; writing personal styles
Language activity	Listening	What sources do teachers implement for practising L1 and L2 listening comprehension? (FQ) How long listening can be expected from nine-year olds from the perspective of cognitive development? (PQ)	authentic materials; stages of development
	Speaking	What teaching techniques are employed to promote pupils' speech? (FQ) What elicitation techniques prove most effective with teenagers and opposed to young children? (PQ)	FL teaching methods; elicitation
	Reading	What do pupils believe they read for? (FQ) Which genres prove most conducive to pupils' motivation to read (and thus to general education)? (PQ)	children's beliefs; genres
	Writing	Which part of speech do EFL pupils make most mistakes with? (FQ) Which elements of pupils' native language prove most fossilised in their written texts? (PQ)	semantics; error analysis; fossilisation
Language experience	Listening	Which English dialect do pupils enjoy listening to the most? (FQ) How does listening to fairy tales as audiobooks affect pupils' motivation to read them as paper books? (PQ)	UK and US dialects; research on motivation
	Speaking	In what subjects and on what issues can school children	subject matter of

		<p>speaking the longest? (FQ)</p> <p>What prompts pupils to speak at lessons on different subjects? (PQ)</p>	<p>curricula; pupil's interests</p>
	Reading	<p>Which books present plots most relevant to pupils' own life experience? (FQ)</p> <p>What values do obligatory books do school children see to propagate? (PQ)</p>	<p>children's situation; axiology</p>
	Writing	<p>What type of texts do pupils write most frequently? (FQ)</p> <p>What type of texts do pupils write most willingly? (PQ)</p>	<p>classroom practices</p>
Linguistic matrixes	Listening	<p>How is listening to stories used as a technique enhancing pupils' imagination? (FQ)</p> <p>How do children construct images on the basis of texts they listen to? (PQ)</p>	<p>FL listening techniques; semiotics</p>
	Speaking	<p>What speaking tasks are posed? (FQ)</p> <p>What restrictions are imposed on pupils as to the lexis used to express their own understanding of reality? (PQ)</p>	<p>speaking practice; classroom rules</p>
	Reading	<p>What image of the world do school textbooks create? (FQ)</p> <p>How (dis)similar does reception of same texts by different pupils prove? (PQ)</p>	<p>linguistic imagery; text reception</p>
	Writing	<p>By what means is creative writing encouraged? (PQ)</p> <p>In what respects does the image of the world presented in narrative of various pupils differ? (PQ)</p>	<p>creativity; discourse analysis</p>

2.4. Implications 2: (areas and) skills

As can be seen in the table, by imposing onto the four areas the four-skill perspective we arrive at research problems of a much more specific character. This being the case, the scope outlined by Figure 2.2 wins a great deal of **tangibility** – in other words, looking at the scope in question through the prism of four skills, we recognise problems which are “closer at hand”, letting themselves more readily to qualitative and/or quantitative research methodology as compared to those exemplified by Table 1.3. And, despite the somewhat superficial character of these and similar problems, the significance of answers and/or findings they lead to is hard to overestimate, which can quickly be realised if we try to **imagine a school in which teachers know answers to all or most of the questions above**. Their familiarisation with data obtained on such skills-based problems as presented in Table 2.3 (e.g. data on which elicitation techniques work best, or on which themes pupils can speak at length) – especially if shared by teachers of all school subjects – is likely to help radically improve pupils' overall school performance. This fact of skills-oriented tangible questions prompting answers that are applicable across school curricula can be viewed here as **the second argument** in favour of aggregation of ERL studies

3. Contextualised language experience

Apart from the fact that schools – again, deliberately or not – exert impact within the four recognised areas (views, actions, feelings and images) and inevitably co-shape pupils' four language skills, they constitute and provide contexts in which language operates on several levels, that is personal, social, cultural and universal. These levels can be covered by studies addressing, for example, how students express themselves, what jargons exist in educational circles, what forms of communication official systems advocate, or how the subject matter is categorised – respectively. Hence, for our analysis to be even more comprehensive, this dimension must also be taken into account.

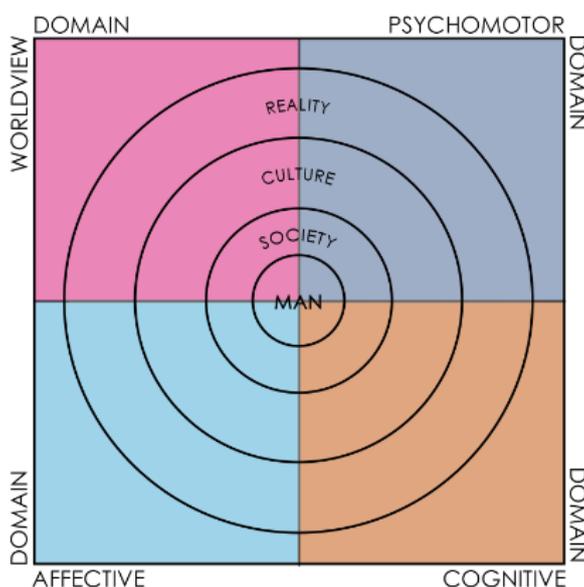
3a. It is worth noting that language issues falling within these four realms can be addressed jointly or in separation from the dimension of skills, with the latter option remaining far more commonplace. As a result, we shall more easily come across such discussions or studies which tend to be oversimplistic in that they seem to assume that skills are not a decisive factor for the results obtained –

although such an assumption can be argued to stand in stark opposition to common sense and the way people handle, sense and employ different languages. (To name a few examples, conditions of language communication, the worldview reflected by slang, communication styles, or sociopragmatic competence – they all are most likely to vary across language skills (meaning that conditions favourable to writing will not necessarily facilitate speaking, oral and written language production will not yield an identical worldview, pupils will communicate differently in writing and by word of mouth, and pupils’ competence in sociopragmatic issues supporting reading will not necessarily aid their listening abilities etc.)). If, for the time being, we put aside the dimension of language skills, we observe that the functioning of schools takes the following format:

3.1a. General outline 3a: (areas and) realms

- Every school will:
- promote some views concerning language on a personal, social, cultural and universal level,
 - entail experience with (physical) language on a personal, social, cultural and universal level,
 - generate emotions with regard to language on a personal, social, cultural and universal level, and
 - (co-)shape language image of the world on a personal, social, cultural and universal level.

3.2a. Graphic outline 3a: (areas and) realms



The likelihood of the oversimplification referred to above does not imply that we should “throw the baby out with the bath water” by resigning from research problems juxtaposing (only) two dimensions of areas and realms altogether. In fact, there occur a number of such two-dimensional questions which either address issues operating across (or regardless of) skills or can be treated as prompting studies preliminary to more detailed analyses focused more narrowly on particular skills. For instance, studies on pupils’ willingness to communicate in a foreign language can prove more comprehensive if covering both speaking and writing, whilst a study on the link between L1 and L2

can serve as a starting point for concentration on how L1 speech affects L2 utterances, or the other way round. Hence, within the scope of ERL studies we shall also welcome problems such as¹⁰:

3.3a. Interdisciplinary problems 3a: (areas and) realms

Area	Realm	Problems raised ¹¹	Expertise needed
General education	Man	Does L2 learning enhance both L2 and L1 cognitive skills? (PQ)	psychological conditioning of skills
	Society	How does L1 sociopragmatic competence affect sociopragmatic competence in L2? (PQ)	intercomprehension; language transfer
	Culture	How does the study of L2 foster intercultural awareness? (PQ)	cultural capital; interculturalism
	Reality	What evidence supports the educational approach to language teaching? (PQ)	cognitive appeal; cognitive motivation
Language activity	Man	What is the role of language in knowledge construction? (PQ)	linguistic upbringing; language functions
	Society	What are the conditions of language communication at school? (FQ)	linguistic habitus; minority languages
	Culture	Is there a conflict between learners' experiences of language and their school experiences? (PQ)	complex system theory
	Reality	What are the classroom characteristics that enhance language learning in kindergarten and primary school? (FQ)	immersion; metacognition; compositional semantics
Language experience	Man	What does the students' willingness to communicate in L2 depend on? (PQ)	language of emotion; neuroeducation
	Society	Are educational systems making the most of the role of language learning in (i) developing social cohesion, (ii) promoting social inclusion? (PQ)	social cohesion; social inclusion
	Culture	How much is willingness to communicate related to educational, social and cultural context? (PQ)	socio-emotional development
	Reality	What personal experience with language is offered by the surrounding reality? (FQ)	personal variables; identity constructs
Linguistic matrixes	Man	What linguistic worldview does adolescent slang reflect? (PQ)	narratology; narrative research
	Society	What are the communication styles of boys and girls in a given school? (FQ)	communicative competence
	Culture	How do the first language cultural principles and	translanguaging;

¹⁰ To cover the four-realm spectrum in a systemic and readable manner and to account for a certain degree of fuzziness across the four levels, research problems pertaining to schools have been classified as falling within the realm of 'society', whilst those concerning entire educational systems or countries – to the realm of 'culture'.

¹¹ Table 3.3a partially draws on research problems raised by academics enrolling for ERL projects in 2016 (the website <http://educationalroleoflanguage.ug.edu.pl/initiated-projects> gives links to projects sheets with their initials given). The collection of project participant forms served showed how widespread interested in such questions are and how keen the academics in question are to embark on respective joint research.

		habits interfere in communication in a foreign language? (PQ)	sociocultural theory
	Reality	How do students view reality through a language (L2) they don't like or manage very well? (PQ)	multimodality; generic competence

3.4a. Implications 4a: (areas and) realms

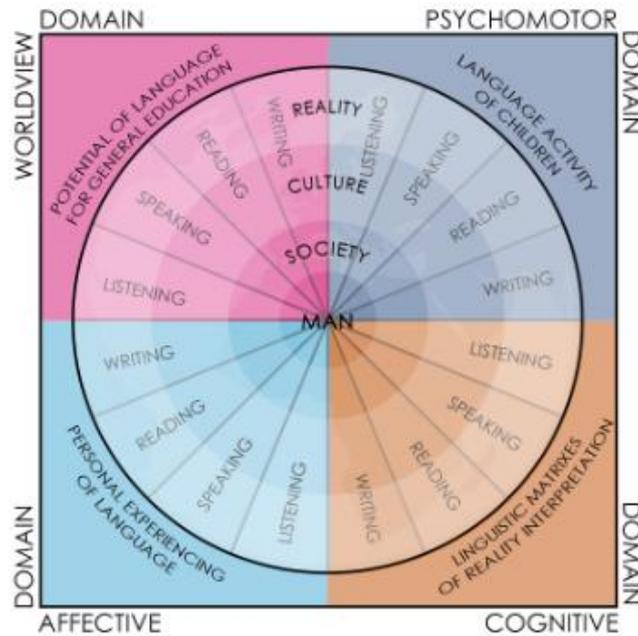
Being far more general than the previous set of questions (2.3), the problems arising from juxtaposing the four areas against (only) the four realms are poised towards qualitative research. With the four concepts (man, society, culture, reality) being less operational and more “voluminous” than the four language skills, the problems in Table 3.3a can be construed and verified in multiple ways and directions, with different factors being taken into consideration. These feature of the problems above we can refer to as changeability or, to be more precise, **gradability**, meaning that depending on what factors we choose to cover with our analyses, particular facts and phenomena are bound to be manifested with different degrees and to lead to stronger or weaker effects. As an example, we may consider various attempts at studies of differences between communication styles of boys and girls; if, for instance, our studies happen to focus on as narrow and specific a construct as vulgar words, we are likely to observe more strongly clear-cut results than in a situation in which we decide to broaden our perspective and reach beyond one or two categories of words or messages. With both narrower and wider differences being equally probable, the gradability is the third argument supporting the call for joint educationally-linguistics endeavours.

3b. Considering the four aforementioned realms jointly with the four language skills and imposing them together on the four recognised areas, we may argue that such treatment is more concordant to the actual character of language phenomena and, as such, helps to prevent over-simplistic approaches to them: it does not take much expertise to realise that researching, for instance, pupils’ views on language as a whole (i.e. imposing only the dimension of realms on the areas) may prove far less practical and beneficial than studying their attitude to one specific language skill. In other words, how pupils approach speaking in a given language or what form of “propaganda” schools realise as to how and/or how much they (are allowed/encouraged to) speak is most likely to differ as compared to, say, writing. Putting the realms and skills together, we observe the following:

3.1b. General outline 3b: (areas and skills and) realms

<p>Every school will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote some views concerning listening to, speaking, reading, and writing language on a personal, social, cultural and universal level, - entail experience with (physical) language consisting in listening, speaking, reading, and writing on a personal, social, cultural and universal level, - generate emotions with regard to listening to, speaking, reading, and writing language on a personal, social, cultural and universal level, and - (co-)shape language image of the world through listening, speaking, reading, and writing on a personal, social, cultural and universal level.

3.2b. Graphic outline 3b: (areas and skills and) realms



With the dimensions of skills and realms being jointly imposed on the four areas, each quarter becomes divided into as many as sixteen subfields, whilst the entire circle encompasses 64 of them. Such multiplicity renders the comprehensive treatment aimed at by the ERL studies far more demanding. In order to restrict the range of research problems which we might possibly envisage as resulting from the three dimensions being considered jointly, we shall apply two measures of systematisation of questions exemplifying the subfields comprising the entire field, that is:

- chronology: the problems shall pertain roughly to three stages of education, that is planning (in the 1st area), learning/teaching (in the 2nd and 3rd areas), and assessment (in the 4th area); the classification of stages into the four areas is purely arbitrary and so could be easily modified or reversed;
- inclusiveness (repetitiveness): following the premise that the four realms principally differ in their extensiveness, with the subsequent realm(s) including the preceding one(s) (e.g. culture encompassing the realms of man and society), problems pertain to same phenomena on four different levels so as to present how the narrower realm(s) help(s) account for phenomena on a wider scale.

3.3b. Interdisciplinary scope 3b: (areas and skills and) realms

Area	Skill	Realm	Problems raised	Expertise needed in e.g. ¹²
	Listening	Man	What <i>objectives</i> are assigned to listening by pupils/teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>: educational objectives; workplace listening; • <i>research methods</i> phenomenology;
		Society	What <i>objectives</i> are assigned to listening by a school/teachers of different subjects?	
		Culture	What <i>objectives</i> are assigned to listening in a given community/educational system?	
		Reality	What <i>objectives</i> are assigned to listening outside school/by non-educators?	
		Man	What <i>approach</i> to speaking on general education is taken by pupils/teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>:

¹² Table 3.3b mentions only a brief selection of issues and methodologies. Apart from showing the conceptual and empirical multiplicity, it serves to assist the ERL circles in realizing most suitable method and tools.

General education	Speaking	Society	What <i>approach</i> to speaking on general education is taken by a school/teachers of different subjects?	languaging; language anxiety oracy; generic competence • <i>research methods</i> interaction protocols; interviews
		Culture	What <i>approach</i> to speaking is taken in a given community/educational system?	
		Reality	What <i>approach</i> to speaking on general education is taken outside school/by non-educators?	
	Reading	Man	Which <i>types</i> of texts are viewed as generally educational by pupils/teachers?	• <i>subject matter</i> : metaphorisation; rhetorics; literacy; information load • <i>research methods</i> textual analyses; crosslanguage research; content analysis
		Society	Which <i>types</i> of texts are viewed as generally educational by a school/teachers of different subjects?	
		Culture	Which <i>types</i> of texts are viewed as generally educational in a given community/educational system?	
		Reality	Which <i>types</i> of texts are viewed as generally educational outside school/by non-educators?	
	Writing	Man	What <i>uses</i> of language justify the learning to write for a man?	• <i>subject matter</i> : critical thinking; pragmatics • <i>research methods</i> contrastive studies; mind maps;
		Society	What <i>uses</i> of language justify the learning to write for a man by a school/teachers of different subjects?	
		Culture	What <i>uses</i> of language justify the learning to write in a given community/educational system?	
		Reality	What <i>uses</i> of language justify the learning to write outside school/by non-educators?	

Area	Skill	Realm	Problems raised	Expertise needed in e.g.
Language activity	Listening	Man	What <i>preferences</i> concerning listening can be recognised among different pupils?	• <i>subject matter</i> : dialogic listening; disambiguation • <i>research methods</i> shadowing; focus group; studies of personal constructs
		Society	What <i>preferences</i> concerning listening can be recognised in different schools?	
		Culture	What <i>preferences</i> concerning listening can be recognised in a given educational system?	
		Reality	What <i>preferences</i> concerning listening can be recognised as important outside school?	
	Speaking	Man	What <i>methods</i> are used by teachers to maximise pupils' language production?	• <i>subject matter</i> : speech acts; implicatures; classroom talk • <i>research methods</i> observation;
		Society	What <i>methods</i> are advocated by schools to maximise pupils' language production?	
		Culture	What <i>methods</i> are recommended in official documents to maximise pupils' language production?	

		Reality	What <i>methods</i> are employed outside schools maximising pupils' language production?	conversation analysis;
Reading	Man		How relevant to their own <i>interests</i> do pupils find books they are required to read?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>: Interdisciplinarity; literary theory • <i>research methods</i>: field surveys; literary analysis
	Society		How relevant to pupils' <i>interests</i> are books which schools require them to read?	
	Culture		What <i>interests</i> are fostered by the books officially regarded as compulsory?	
	Reality		What <i>interests</i> are promoted by means of popular books read outside school?	
Writing	Man		What <i>rules</i> are pupils instructed by their teachers to follow when writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>: orthography; creative writing; • <i>research methods</i>: case studies; reconstruction
	Society		What <i>rules</i> do schools introduce with regard to pupils' skill of writing?	
	Culture		What <i>rules</i> do curricula stipulate as valid with regard to pupils' skills of writing?	
	Reality		What <i>rules</i> can be observed outside school with regard to writing?	

Area	Skill	Realm	Problems raised	Expertise needed in e.g.
Language experience	Listening	Man	At what <i>stage</i> of language studies do pupils find themselves with regard to listening?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>: self-assessment; affective filter • <i>research methods</i>: semantic differential; needs analyses
		Society	What do schools do to support pupils' satisfaction with their listening skills at different <i>stages</i> of language studies?	
		Culture	What do documents do to promote pupils' satisfaction with their listening skills at different <i>stages</i> of language studies?	
		Reality	How important for everyday needs is the listening skill found by pupils at different <i>stages</i> of learning?	
	Speaking	Man	What <i>standards/models</i> do pupils follow in their construction of utterances?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>: dialogic learning; collaborative learning • <i>research methods</i>: ethnography; triangulation
		Society	What <i>standards/models</i> do schools advocate for pupils' construction of utterances?	
		Culture	What <i>standards/models</i> do official documents advocate for pupils' construction of utterances?	
		Reality	What <i>standards/models</i> of speaking are encountered by pupils in their outside-school reality?	
	Reading	Man	How much freedom do pupils sense in their <i>choices</i> of what they read?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>subject matter</i>: expression of thought;
		Society	How much sense of freedom do schools advocate with regard to pupils' <i>choice</i> of	

			books?	• <i>research methods</i>
		Culture	How much sense of freedom do official documents advocate with regard to pupils' <i>choice</i> of books?	
		Reality	How much sense of freedom in the <i>choice</i> of books do citizens of given countries have?	
	Writing	Man	How do pupils feel about their own writing <i>styles</i> ?	• <i>subject matter</i> : neurolanguage; cognitive styles • <i>research methods</i> documentation analysis;
		Society	What do schools do to promote pupils' liking for their own writing <i>styles</i> ?	
		Culture	What do official documents stipulate as for pupils' attitude to their own writing <i>styles</i> ?	
		Reality	What writing <i>styles</i> are employed in books most liked by pupils and read outside school?	

Area	Skill	Realm	Problems raised	Expertise needed in e.g.
Linguistic matrixes	Listening	Man	What cognitive <i>categories</i> do pupils recognise in what they listen to?	• <i>subject matter</i> : electronic language; language standardisation • <i>research methods</i> semantic fields analyses;
		Society	What cognitive <i>categories</i> are viewed at school as worth developing through listening?	
		Culture	What <i>divisions</i> of subject matter are implied in official documents with regard to listening?	
		Reality	To what extent do <i>divisions</i> implied by listening exercises reflect the surroundings?	
	Speaking	Man	How are subskills of speaking understood by pupils?	• <i>subject matter</i> : • <i>research methods</i> educational assessment;
		Society	How are subskills of speaking recognised by specific schools?	
		Culture	How are subskills of speaking presented by official documents of education?	
		Reality	Which components of reality are pupils obliged to reflect on (and create)?	
	Reading	Man	How do texts and the ways in which they are used prompt pupils to construct their own <i>meanings</i> ?	• <i>subject matter</i> : metalinguistic demands; sub-lexical reading • <i>research methods</i> action research; questionnaires
		Society	What measures do schools advocate to ensure that the texts chosen prompt pupils to construct their own <i>meanings</i> ?	
		Culture	What measures do documents advocate to ensure that the texts chosen prompt pupils to construct their own <i>meanings</i> ?	
		Reality	What picture of reality and what range of <i>meanings</i> is implied by texts?	
	Writing	Man	What cognitive <i>structures</i> do children's narratives reveal?	• <i>subject matter</i> : narration; writing styles; inferencing
		Society	What forms of writing is fostered by schools for the sake of pupils' cognitive <i>structures</i> ?	

		Culture	What forms of writing are advocated by documents for the sake of pupils' cognitive structures?	• <i>research methods</i> experimental studies; argumentative analysis
		Realm	How do children's narratives boost their creativity and develop their cognitive structures?	

3.4b. Implications 4b: (areas and skills and) realms

Although some of the problems above may sound odd – which might be seen as a result of a strongly mechanical procedure consisting in “adding up” three components or dimensions – many of them reveal perspectives that will be found novel by those researchers, who have not happened to consider the educational reality through the prism of language skills or areas or realms. Regardless of the slightly odd wording of some of the problems above, they all can be “translated” into more readable or less technical questions. For instance, the question (resulting from the “addition” of the concept of matrixes, the skill of reading and the realm of man) on *how texts and the ways in which they are used prompt pupils to construct their own meanings* is partially a question on *whether particular texts include ready-made definitions or leave the defining of reality to pupils*, which sounds more constructivistic and shows the benefit of the addition having been performed.

Moreover, by imposing the three layers onto one another, we pose questions such as those presented by Table(s) 3.3b, which are as crucial to education as they are rare. For example, imposing the skills of reading on the third area of personal experiencing of language yields a question on how what pupils read is sensed, which is considered on four levels affecting one another. Or, to give another example, imposing the skill of reading on the second area of language activity gives rise to a problem concerning rules followed or to be followed on four different levels. This very fact of such problems arising can be argued to legitimise studies on the educational role of language and joint pursuit of the two disciplines in question. This emergent **legitimacy** of ERL studies and the need for their systematisation is already the fourth argument supporting joint work of academics and scientists combining language with education.

4. Social and cultural determinants of language experience

It follows from all of the above that for the scope of the educational role of language to be comprehensively handled, a wide variety of subissues need to be systematically tackled. It transpires that for studies carried out with a view to systematising the extensive field in question, the intersections recognised above can be helpful in deciding about the following:

* from a static perspective:

SPECIALISTS: The imposition of realms and skills on the four areas (recognised within the four educational domains) leads to recognition of numerous subfields which can be seen as “sums” of three components being added to one another (with the total number of 64 subfields with the entire ERL scope). Let us consider four representative cases (the symbols of addition and equation are used most figuratively here to indicate varied combinations of juxtapositions across the three dimensions and the resulting aggregates of academic pursuits):

general education + listening + man = subfield: educational appeal of listening

language activity + speaking + society = subfield: social treatment of speech

language experience + reading + culture = subfield: attitude to reading in a given culture

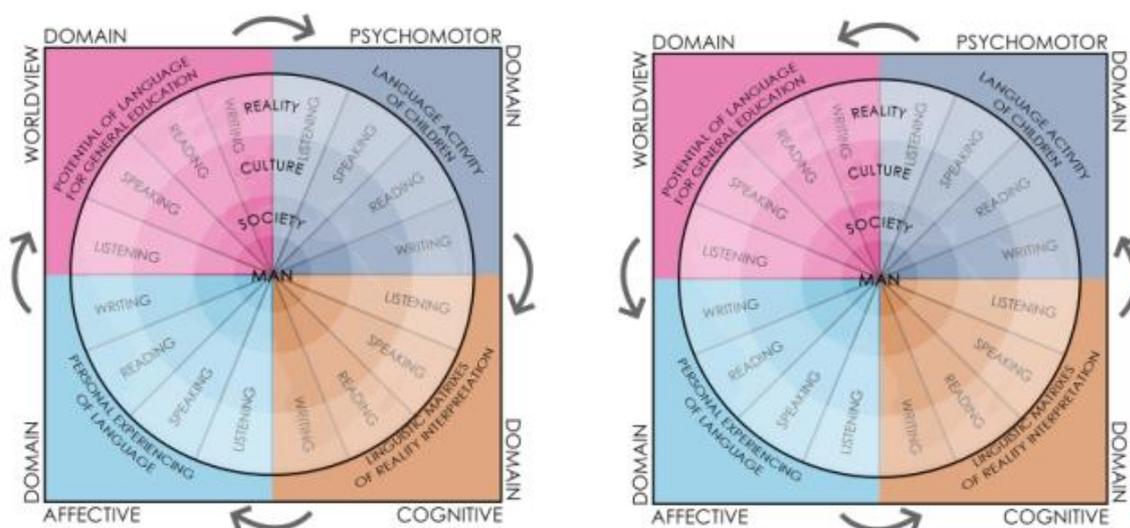
linguistic matrixes + writing + reality = subfield: written representations of reality

It must be emphasised that whilst our aspirations to address the educational role of language comprehensively and harmoniously imply a need for comparable attention being paid to each of the resulting (64) subfields, some of them are clearly under-represented (e.g. those concerning pupils’ personal experiencing of listening, or cultural aspects of writing classroom practices) but others pursued by rich scores of academics (e.g. those addressing language activity on a personal level, or potential of reading for general education).

SYSTEMS: Joint consideration and research of thus recognised subfields may lead us to (re)construction of their whole patterns, that is arrangements showing clusters of appreciated subfields, on the one hand, and clusters of neglected subfields, forming more extensive “empty spaces”, on the other hand. Following the earlier reasoning, we may tentatively assume that, on the international level, there might be more such blank subfields in the left bottom corner of the graph(s) above, with the fewest such cases to be observed in the top right area and the psychomotor domain.

* from a dynamic perspective

STRATEGIES: Furthermore, we can consider the ERL scope on the national level, too. As we may expect differences across cultures one any or all of the three dimensions, it appears appropriate to look at the ERL graph once again, trying to imagine movement of the circle within the square (in the same way as we turn temperature control to adjust it to our needs). Such movement may prove necessary to indicate the position taken by particular schools and/or cultures:



Considering subsequent educational domains, the clockwise movement will imply that a given educational system will be inclined (i) to seek the educational potential of language in the psychomotor domain, (ii) to emphasise in children’s language activity its cognitive edge, (iii) to recognise in pupils’ matrixes of reality interpretation their affective aspect, and (iv) to promote such experiencing of language that will form or strengthen pupils’ personal beliefs. Conversely, that is the anticlockwise movement will denote tendencies to be observed in those educational systems which (i) seek the educational potential of language in (emotional) experiencing of it, (ii) emphasise in children’s language activity its contribution to the formation of beliefs, (iii) recognise in pupils’ matrixes of reality interpretation their psychomotor factor, and (iv) promote such personal experiencing of language that will provide conducive to pupils’ overall cognitive structure. Such envisaging of different positions possibly taken across schools and cultures appears likely to unravel multiple perspectives and solutions with regard to language, which undoubtedly merits further investigation.

STEPS: Ideally, the ERL scope outlined should be studied in four stages or, alternatively, by four large international groups of experts, each dealing with one of the four type of research problems distinguished in the first section. The most recommendable sequence that ERL global studies might follow is that they commence with the *reflective* component so as to construct a well-informed stance on what the educational role of language should be, then they proceed to the *factual* and *phenomenal* components so as to establish the actual state of educationally-linguistic affairs, and finally, close with the *argumentative* component with a view to discussing consequences and possible corrections of the educational systems to be made with regard to language. Ideally, the sequence should be followed by **teams of researchers carrying out parallel studies with different languages**, which would require analogous questions to be posed across nations and an assumption to be made that after translations the problems in fact relate to the same constructs.

A careful reader will have noticed by now that all of the examples included or referred to in this text remain uniform in that they do not show an **eclectic approach**, that is they do not combine issues falling within two or more different areas, skills and/or realms. Although it is fairly simple to envisage such instances of eclecticism (e.g. *How does classroom environment support students' communicative skills?*, or *How does culture determine language practices?* etc.). It appears that eclectic questions and ensuing eclectic studies need to be seen a further step in ERL developments.

The major inference to be drawn from the above is that depending on how we categorise the scope resulting from pairing educational with linguistic issues, we can see their overlap from a different angle. Each juxtaposition performed above results in a different form of benefit, that is juxtaposing

- educational (taxonomical) domains vs. the four areas – unravels **mutuality** of the two disciplines,
- the four areas vs. four language skills – points to **tangibility** of research problems,
- the four areas vs. four realms – emphasises **gradability** of educational and linguistic phenomena,
- the four areas vs for language skills vs four realms – **legitimises** the studies in question, which

renders the educationally linguistic (and/or linguistically educational) studies indispensable and imperative. The blend in question proves highly natural and, at the same time, **reflective of the social complexity of the issues being addressed by the research problems posed**. The inherent complementarity of the two disciplines, pedagogy and linguistics, means that there is no understanding of education without studies involving language and there is no insight into the learning of language without support from educational sciences. It is on this premise that the ERL network was initiated and all its activities are now being continued or undertaken.