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Globalisation and Second Language Identity

Opportunities, Challenges, and the Importance of Morality

Manfred Man-fat Wu

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*This book is dedicated to my wife, Anne Chun Miao, who has always been
supportive and loving throughout the years.*

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PART I

Introduction



Introduction

Abstract This chapter sets the stage for subsequent discussions and provides the background for this book. Globalisation has radically transformed many aspects of contemporary individuals. However, compared to other aspects, relatively meagre attention has been given to how globalisation influences second language (L2) identity. This book aims to draw attention to this relatively neglected area, arguing that L2 identity is a key construct not only in the acquisition of an L2 but many other aspects of individuals' well-being. Individuals' learning experiences contribute to the construction of their L2 identity, and their L2 identity constructed over the years in turn influences their perceptions of L2 learning. This book discusses how globalisation influences L2 identity, as well as the opportunities and challenges globalisation has brought for the construction and maintenance of L2 identity. One major conclusion of this book is that the increasing extent of cultural exchange due to globalisation results in dilemmas of self, especially in terms of morality. This is because language and values are intimately related, and there are conflicting demands in terms of the morality of different cultures. Therefore, morality, a dimension that has almost been completely neglected, is proposed to be included as a key component in fostering L2 identity. As autonomy is an integral part of identity and a contributor to successful L2 learning, how to reconceptualise and foster L2 autonomy in the age of globalisation is selected to be another topic discussed in this book. Finally, globalisation has posed new demands for L2 teachers and teachers need

to transform their identity in order to remain effective in their profession. This book proposes the essential qualities that constitute L2 teacher identity in the context of globalisation.

Keywords Globalisation · L2 identity · Morality · L2 autonomy · L2 teacher identity

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, “the processes by virtue of which the sovereign nation states intermingle and interweave through transnational actors” (Roldán 2018: 110), exerts profound and widespread influences on different aspects of modern life, even though it is often argued that the majority of people still live a local life (Giddens 2006). In fact, globalisation has radically transformed many aspects of contemporary individuals, from consumption patterns, entertainment, travel, career, personal finance, and family, as well as social and political lives. Second language (L2) identity is no exception and deserves special attention, given the role of English as a lingua franca, which implies that the English language and its acquisition influence the identity of a substantial proportion of the global population. Despite its significance, compared to other aspects such as multilingualism (Gao and Zheng 2019), global citizenship (Torres and Bosio 2020), and internationalisation of higher education (Doiz et al. 2013; Kamyab and Raby 2023), how globalisation influences L2 identity has seldom been discussed.

The increasing extent of globalisation has substantially expanded individuals’ frequency of contact with individuals from other parts of the world (Jensen 2021). Some examples are the use of social media for entertainment and consumption, job and business purposes (such as conducting online meetings and virtual business events, as well as travelling both for tourism and business purposes). The use of a lingua franca is inevitable as more frequent contact with sojourners of various parts of the globe means more frequent use of a common language.

This book aims to draw attention to this relatively neglected area and argues that L2 identity is a key construct not only in the acquisition of an L2 but in many other aspects of individuals’ well-being. This is because the unchallenged status as a lingua franca has resulted in English

learning mandatory for many students across the globe. English learning is included in the national curriculum of many countries, for example, Korea (National Curriculum Information Center n.d.) and Japan (MEXT 2011), with the aim of enabling citizens to stay economically competitive and be able to participate in cross-national and international affairs effectively.

Learning experiences contribute to the construction of L2 identity, which is “any aspect of a person’s identity that is related to their knowledge and use of a second language” (Benson et al. 2013: 17), and L2 identity constructed over the years in turn influences learners’ perceptions on English learning. The attitudes of the community towards English also contribute to the stance of policymakers, employers, parents, and other stakeholders involved in L2 education, and they exert direct and indirect influences on the L2 identity of learners. In addition to being influenced by outside forces, L2 identity at the same time influences individuals’ subjectivities and behaviours related to their L2 learning, for example, learning motivation (Dörnyei et al. 2006), the amount of time and effort they invest in learning (Sung 2020), frequency of using English, and their use of English situations in which they have a choice of using English (Block and Cameron 2002). L2 identity also has long-term influences on individuals’ academic achievement and career development (Rutgers et al. 2024).

This book explores issues related to globalisation and L2 identity. It discusses how globalisation influences L2 identity, and the opportunities and challenges globalisation has brought for the construction and maintenance of L2 identity. One major conclusion of this book is that the increasing extent of cultural exchange due to globalisation results in dilemmas of self, especially in terms of morality. This is because language and values are intimately related, that language is a means for expressing moral values, making moral judgements, discussing moral issues, and most importantly, shaping and teaching moral values. In the context of globalisation, there are conflicting moral demands from different cultures. Therefore, morality, a relatively neglected dimension, is proposed to be included as a key component in fostering L2 identity. As autonomy is an integral part of identity and a contributor to successful L2 learning, how to foster autonomy in the age of globalisation is also discussed in this book.

As members of the globalised community, L2 teachers are themselves not only influenced by globalisation per se but also have the obligation

to foster positive L2 identity among their students. According to Sun (2020), successful global citizenship education (GCE) requires learners to possess an identity and attachment to the global community. In applying UNESCO's (2015) framework of global citizenship education, Sun (2020) recommends the notion of global citizenship be treated as an identity, a sense of belonging to the global community. Therefore, a chapter of this book is devoted to the essential qualities L2 teachers need for effective L2 teaching, especially in relation to L2 identity, in the globalised context. The final part of this book concludes the discussions made in the book and makes recommendations on theory, pedagogy, and research.

In the remainder of this chapter, the major themes, namely, morality, globalisation, and L2 identity, which form the conceptual framework for the entire book, will be introduced. The links between these themes will also be pointed out.

MORALITY

In simple terms, morality is concerned with the principles of right and wrong (Oxford University Press 2024). The Encyclopedia Britannica (Britannica 2023) provides a more detailed definition of morality, referring to it as “the moral beliefs and practices of a culture, community, or religion or a code or system of moral rules, principles, or values”. According to Curry et al. (2019), morality functions to promote cooperation through emphasising mutual respect, care for one another, and equality. De Villiers (2023) extends the conceptualisation of Curry et al. (2019) and distinguishes between the biological and the cultural/religious origins of morality. The former shares Curry et al.'s (2019) view, that there is a need for cooperation among human individuals for biological survival. The latter view is related to the capacity of human individuals to use language, that is through language human beings can be motivated to act in ways suggested by the moral rules approved by community.

The following definition of morality offered by De Villiers (2023) is highly accessible across diverse academic and research disciplines:

‘[m]orality is a normative social institution with distinctive and stable core constituents: a core function of enhancing cooperation in communities by providing normative guidance to members on the fair advancement of wellbeing, a set of moral values attuned to the fulfilment of this function, a

set of mechanisms to motivate people to act in accordance with the moral values and approved ways to make moral decisions in concrete situations based on the moral values. At the same time, morality is a flexible social institution that adapts to changes in the social and cultural environment (1).

Given the long history and the broad coverage of the notion of morality, it is necessary to specify the conceptualisation adopted in this book. In this book, Kant's moral theory will be adopted, given Kant's (e.g., 2007) due consideration on globalisation and morality, as represented by his emphasis on human rights in the context of cosmopolitanism (Wu 2020). This book argues that fulfilling duties to others through taking action as proposed by Hegel (1977), a post-Kantian philosopher belonging to the philosophical movement of German Idealism as Kant, is equally if not more important than duties themselves. In this book, morality refers to awareness of one's duties to others and its fulfilment through taking action. Action taking is of particular relevance to globalisation because it has created new opportunities for citizens to engage in local and international affairs, for example, by offering material and intangible support to anti-war movements (Gaventa and Tandon 2010). At the same time, action taking resonates well with UNESCO's (2015) conceptualisation of global citizenship, which has been widely adopted in many countries (see Akkari and Maleq 2020).

The basic tenet of German Idealism is that human cognition determines the appearances of objects as opposed to the view that things in themselves have their own appearance. Regarding morality, Kant (2002) emphasises duty and obligation. Hegel attacked Kant's moral theory as a kind of formalism devoid of practical application in real life and proposed his idea of acting out pure duties (e.g., Hegel 1977).

GLOBALISATION AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AS HUMAN RIGHTS

Kant is the founding father of the modern idea of globalisation and global citizenship as human rights (Wu 2020). Kant's seminal works *Perpetual peace* (1957) and *Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim* (2007) contain his main ideas on cosmopolitanism, which can be traced back to ancient Greece.

In his *Idea of a universal history on a cosmopolitical plan* (Kant 2007), Kant pointed out a need for international relations adjusted to laws between states. The development of a perfect state or civil society, including its internal and external relations, can be regarded as the realisation of a plan of nature (Kant 2007: 47). According to Kleingeld (1998, 2012), Kant's cosmopolitan law focuses on interactions between individuals and those of the states of which they are not citizens. One implication from the above account of Kant is that language serves a role in the protection of human rights in the public sphere.

Kant did not define cosmopolitanism and global citizenship explicitly, but in his seminal work on this topic, *Perpetual peace*, he pointed out the need for a "law of world citizenship". In the section of the "Third Definitive Article for a perpetual peace" of this book, Kant (1957) stated that "no one had more right than another to a particular part of the earth" (21) and "the human race can gradually be brought closer and closer to a constitution establishing world citizenship" (21). Kant paid particular attention to global citizenship, by which he refers to the rights and civil responsibilities that transcend national and geographic boundaries.

In Kant's philosophy, global citizenship is based on the premise that all rational individuals are members of a single community with shared morality. The above conceptualisation reflects that the idea of global citizenship is related to Kant's morality as discussed in his *Critique of pure reason* (Kant 1978), *Critique of practical reason* (Kant 1978), and related works such as *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (Kant 2002). Kant uses his transcendental deduction described in his *Critique of pure reason* to derive his "Categories", which are cognitive schemas common to all individuals. These "Categories" provide the foundation for guidelines on moral actions, which Kant constructed as "Categorical Imperatives". In his *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*, Kant (2002) proposes the concept of individual right that "every action which by itself or by its maxim enables the freedom of each individual's will to co-exist with the freedom of everyone else in accordance with a universal law" (Kant 2002: 133). Kant regards morality as based on reasoning, a core notion of the Enlightenment. Thus, global citizenship and cosmopolitanism, which is moral in nature, form parts of Kant's entire philosophical system.

In *Perpetual peace*, Kant emphasises the equal rights among states in diverse aspects. One implication is that no one language should dominate other languages, the stance this book adopts. In describing how cosmopolitanism should be structured, particularly in the section "The

law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states” (Kant 1957: 18), Kant contends that a supranational body, a league that moves beyond bilateral and multilateral relations between state, is required. *Perpetual peace* begins with six “Preliminary Articles” which laid down the fundamental principles for the maintenance of peace between nations. The three strict principles proposed in this part are that there should be no provision reserved for future war, no interference in government between states, and no acts of hostility to the opposing state during war. The remaining three are broader in scope. They describe the core themes of Kant’s moral philosophy, that there should be no dominance of one state over another by inheritance, exchange, purchase, or donation, no standing armies, and no arrangement of debts with a friction state. In the second part of the book, there are three “Definitive Articles” which describe how cosmopolitanism should be structured. It is in this part that Kant gave a direct account of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship as described.

Two representatives in the recent discussions on Kant’s cosmopolitanism are Appiah (2006) and Kleingeld (1998, 2012). Appiah (2006) extends Kant’s conceptualisation that an individual’s obligation to a foreign other should go beyond his/her obligations towards his fellow members of his immediate community. Kleingeld (2012) made the first attempt at a full-scale philosophical study of Kant’s cosmopolitanism with the aim of clarifying the misunderstandings of Kant’s ideas. The first theme Kleingeld discusses is that cosmopolitanism is compatible with patriotism. The second theme is Kant’s advocacy of the existence of a plurality of individual states. In her discussion, Kleingeld (2012) aims to clarify a common misunderstanding on the accusation of the inability to form one universal state as proposed in Kant’s theory. According to her, the non-coercive league of nation is only a beginning step for the establishment of a cosmopolitan political order. The third theme that Kleingeld discusses is cosmopolitan right, or the right to hospitality. Kant’s egalitarian form of cosmopolitanism allowed his theory to accommodate a wider range of cultural diversity. The last theme was economic justice and free trade. These two representatives highlight the role of obligation and rights in Kant’s theory on global citizenship. Thus, Kant’s idea of globalisation is heavily nuanced with human rights, duties, and morality.

Cavallar (2014) summarises the three camps in the historical development of hospitality right: the imperialist school, the society of states school, and cosmopolitan school. For the imperialist school, hospitality is

an extensive natural right and could be enforced. Natural rights such as travel and trade, according to this school, are only means rather than ends to achieve the end of the spreading of the Gospel. The society of states school gradually gained importance in the eighteenth century after the popularity of the imperialist school. As its name suggests, the perspective adopted by this school is state-centred, which focuses on the right of the state to restrict trades. Hospitality is no longer treated as a natural right for this school. The third school regards hospitality as a natural right, but unlike the imperialist school, natural rights are treated as ends themselves rather than a means for achieving religious purposes. Kant's main difference with these three schools is that his focus on hospitality is trade and freedom to travel (i.e., interactions between individuals as described earlier) rather than the right to abode in a foreign country or to be a guest. However, Kant also argues that the right to present oneself to society is equally important in the concept of hospitality (Kant 1957; see also Cavallar 2014). Cavallar (2014) emphasises the importance of right in the realm of hospitality in Kant's theory.

One important implication of Kant's above philosophy is that globalisation which has accelerated and widened the interconnection and interdependence among individuals resulted in a need for transformation of morality, or in his terms the need to take into consideration cosmopolitan and hospitality rights. Kant has laid the backdrop for the discussions to be undertaken in this book, that globalisation gives rise to repercussions on the morality, which is part of the identity of L2 learners and teachers. In fact, it has been pointed out that globalisation impacts moral values (Jensen, 2021) and L2 teaching should assume moral responsibilities in the globalised era (see Sun and Buripakdi 2021). The moral elements of duties to others advocated by Kant and taking action to fulfil and realise moral duties by Hegel are proposed in this book as the means for overcoming the challenges for the identity of L2 learners and teachers.

THE ROLE OF MORALITY IN L2 IDENTITY

Identity is notoriously known to be a slippery term, as it refers to both commonalities and differences among individuals (Riley 2006). Identity is very often used to describe the characteristics that an individual shares with other members of a community and, at the same time those that distinguish him or her from others. In L2 research, identity is commonly

conceptualised as a set of public and private beliefs related to L2 learning, which may differ in relational contexts. This is because in various relational contexts individuals interact with others of different social capacities and social expectations (e.g., Taylor et al. 2013). It is well established among L2 researchers that learning a new language is at the same time forming a new identity and language and identity are inseparable (e.g., Yuan and Mak 2018). Inherited from traditional disciplines such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and social constructivist which have been in currency in the last few decades, research on L2 identity has been characterised by a myriad of theoretical frameworks and focuses (see Wu 2023). Despite the diversified development in L2 identity theories, relatively puny attention has been given to the philosophical and moral aspects of L2 identity (Wu 2023). Rutgers et al. (2024) comment that research on L2 identity to date has been over-focusing on cognition. In fact, it has been well-documented that emotion such as empathy which constitutes morality is another core component of L2 identity, both for L2 learners and teachers (Mohammadi 2022; Rokita-Jaśkow and Werbińska 2023; Wang 2021).

Research on L2 identity has been dominated by the “essentialist” school.¹ One landmark in recent L2 identity research of this school is the large-scale longitudinal survey conducted by Dörnyei and his colleagues on L2 learning attitudes and motivation of Hungarian teenagers (Dörnyei and Csizér 2002; Dörnyei et al. 2006). Their findings confirm the pioneering notion of possible selves proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986),² and they developed their L2 Motivational Self System, with ideal self as the central concept and “ought-to-self”, which is moral in nature, as the complementary concept. The main tenet of this theory is that the discrepancy between the current self and the future selves influenced by the ideal self and “ought-to-self” is a powerful motivator for individuals to learn an L2.

Mantero (2007) summarises the historical approaches to the study of L2 identity. They are the social-psychological, social-interactional, and

¹ The ‘essentialist’ school treats identity as a stable construct that can be measured and quantified, with the relationships between its components being analysed. See, for example, Dunmore (2021).

² Markus and Nurius (1986) introduce the concept of possible selves, which refers to what individuals might/would like/would not like to become, as a conceptual link between cognition and motivation.