SLA in Uncertain Times: Disciplinary Constraints, Transdisciplinary Hopes

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We live in uncertain times in an uncertain world. While large-scale efforts exist to end poverty, promote peace, share wealth, and protect the planet, we are witnessing serious deterioration of solidarity and respect for human diversity, coupled with alarming tides of authoritarian populism in the West. Many multilinguals—even more so multilinguals in marginalized communities— are vulnerable in the present climate. Researching bi/multilingualism is the business of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers. How well equipped is this field to respond to the present challenges? In this article I unpack four constraints that I believe hamper SLA's capacity to generate useful knowledge about multilingualism. One is a disciplinary identity that is built around the language two of learners and the late timing of learning. The second constraint is the adherence to an essentialist ontology of language that considers it a system separate from the act of communication. A third constraint is a teleological view of linguistic development benchmarked against an ideal monolingual native speaker model. The fourth and final constraint is the disaffection for ethics, values, power, and ideologies, all of which are considered inappropriate disciplinary content. Tempering such a pessimistic view, some hopeful signs suggest SLA's research habitus is changing and may soon be better suited to investigate gradient, equitable multilingualism in all its forms. In this spirit of hope, I suggest nine strategies that would help SLA researchers better investigate the human capacity for language and support equitable multilingualism in today's uncertain world.[1]

We live in uncertain times. On the one hand, the international community seems to be more committed than ever to making the world livable and just. An example is the adoption in 2015 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017). By adopting these goals, its 115 governments and civil society leader members have committed to collaborate and monitor progress towards ending poverty, promoting peace, sharing wealth, and protecting the planet. On the other hand, the world is witnessing serious deterioration of solidarity and respect for human diversity. Just in the West, to bring the point home, we are seeing an alarming tide of authoritarian populism. Anti-immigration prejudice, Islamophobia, perceived threats to national identities, and anti-welfare arguments have come to characterize public discussions and actions in our Western democracies. The signs are clear, from Brexit, to the 2016 United States electoral results, to the increased parliamentary representation of extremist far-right parties in European democracies like Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, and Poland. In the United

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States, a devastating example is the *Rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* policy announced by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2017), which can be seen as an assault against nearly 800,000 youth who have never known any other country. It is difficult to imagine lower levels of human solidarity.

In this uncertain and charged world scene, multilinguals are becoming more vulnerable than ever, particularly those who belong to marginalized communities, racially, economically, or otherwise. Given that the study of multilingualism and the goal to support it are at the heart of second language acquisition (SLA), how well equipped is this field to respond to the present challenges? In this article, I want to address this pressing question. I will discuss four constraints in established disciplinary thinking that I believe hamper SLA's capacity to generate useful, actionable knowledge about multilingualism. I contend, however, that some signs suggest hopeful changes are on the way. In this spirit of change, I will offer nine strategies that may help turn these hopes into realities and firm up a new SLA of the 21st century in support of equitable multilingualism.

Understanding Multilingualism: Inequitable and Gradient

We must understand multilingualism, the object of study of educational linguists and SLA researchers, amidst the uncertain times in which we live. Multilingualism is as old as humanity and, today as always, the world is multilingual. Many people become multilingual from birth, as they grow up with two or more languages in the family. During childhood, as one's social world expands outside the family, the language or languages of formal schooling become central. These are usually the language(s) of the nation-state, which may or may not have been the home languages for different communities and different geopolitical contexts. If English was not one of the languages of the home or schooling, most people will also add at least some English, since this is nowadays the default international language taught as a subject during compulsory education. And many will continue to add other languages during their life time, as a result of biographical events that can be happy or traumatic, elective or forced upon, related to education, work, war, marriage, religious or ethnic persecution, and so forth. Doing the math, that there are 195 nations and about 7,000 languages, shows just how multilingual the world really is.

But if the world is multilingual, it is inequitably so. For one, multilingualism has been contested for as long as we have had historical records of language. Jacquemet (2005) draws from 20th century French literary theorist Roland Barthes to remind us of how the biblical metaphors of Babel and Pentecost offer some illustration of this contestation. In the story of the Tower of Babel in the Old Testament (Genesis 11), humankind is punished with the confusion of many languages. In the Pentecost story in the New Testament (Peter's Sermon in Acts 2:14–36*)*, the plurality of languages is offered as a gift to humankind. Echoing Barthes's words, Jacquemet notes "political power… has always strived to force us to abandon the Pentecostal swarm of plural tongues for a single language, before Babel" (p. 273). Thus, unfortunately for multilinguals, it is the Tower of Babel's negative framing that has been embraced by political powers, particularly since the 17th century project of the nation-state began. Moreover, multilingualism is lived by some as a Pentacostal gift and by others as a Babelian curse, largely depending on structural forces related to unequitable distribution of material and symbolic resources in the world. This

differentiation of bilingual experience has been well-known in other fields but is rarely incorporated into SLA thinking. Ever since Fishman (1977) and later Romaine (1998), the terms folk and elite bilingualism have been used to signal the two very different extremes in how people can experience their linguistic diversity. Looking at the same tensions from a psychological rather than sociological perspective, De Houwer (2015) speaks of conflictive bilingualism, when the presence of more than one language becomes a burden to some children and their families. She opposes it to harmonious bilingualism, when living with more than one language is experienced as stress-free by other children and their families.

The inequities multilinguals experience are inextricably related not just to language diversity but also to other socially constructed hierarchies of race and ethnicity, class and wealth, gender and sexual orientations, religion, and so on. Language-related inequities compound and are compounded by these other forms of oppression. Across continents, the earliest and perhaps most lasting language-related inequity will arise for many children at the point of transition between home and school, if there is a discontinuity in the languages used in these two spheres of life (Lo Bianco, 2017). For many children, the discontinuity is likely to carry long-term negative consequences for their well-being, especially if their families and communities are expected to negotiate it on their own and in the absence of sufficient material and symbolic resources. Language-related inequities may arise for other people, however, at other turning points of life, such as during emigration in young adulthood. This can happen, for example, when immigrants' linguistic diversity is viewed by others with suspicion or prejudice, which can weaken their linguistic confidence and their overall sense of self-worth; or when their fundamental human right to maintain one's own languages and learn new ones is violated, such that, for example, social bonds with intimate others are eroded or access to high-quality health care or fair employment is blocked (Piller, 2016).

Multilingualism is not only inequitable but also gradient. Multilingual competencies are "fuzzy" (Luk & Bialystok, 2013, p. 605) and continuous (Brown & Gullberg, 2012), a matter of degree and probability rather than an all-or-nothing categorical linguistic accomplishment. The point cannot be sufficiently underscored and sharply contrasts with the narrow view of bilingualism espoused by SLA and enshrined in the widely accepted dichotomies of monolingual and bilingual speakers and native and nonnative speakers. I would like to offer three illustrations of gradient multilingualism here, to illustrate the fact that multilingual competencies come in many shapes, shades, and grades that are irreducible to dichotomies.

The first illustration is of a famous multilingual: 20th century painter Marc Chagall. His pentalingual life experiences have been chronicled by Lvovich (2015). Chagall grew up in his native Belarus speaking Yiddish and reading Hebrew. He hated Russian but this later became his dominant language through formal schooling once he got special permission as a Jew to attend a Russian-medium art school in Moscow. He learned French by immersion into the art scene during a four-year stay in Paris and ended up speaking it fluently for the rest of his life, with a Russian–Yiddish accent. He lived in exile in New York during World War II, and despite living in the United States for a good part of the 1940s, he never learned English. He lived his last 30 years back in France, from 1948 until his death in 1985. Chagall's life shows how for many multilinguals languages are always dynamically learned, unlearned, relearned, and even nonlearned over life-

long and life-wide biographical events. But the multilingual lives of immigrant children in, say, contemporary Germany, are no less fascinating or complex. In a study by Melo-Pfeifer and Schmidt (2012), when asked to "draw yourself speaking the languages you know," primary school children with Portuguese immigration backgrounds responded in a multitude of ways (p. 7). One 10-year-old girl drew herself alone inside her German home, surrounded by rain and lightning. This was on the bottom part of the drawing, benchmarked by the German flag symbolizing the German language. On the top of the page, benchmarked by the Portuguese flag symbolizing the Portuguese language, this same girl drew a long row of several dozens of colorful, smiley people (labeled "*a miha familia*," "my family"), a bright yellow sun (labeled "*o sol*," "the sun"), and a sky (labeled "*o ceu*," "the sky;" p. 8). On the other hand, one nine-year-old child drew a cheerful-looking family interconnected by multiple bubbles where a friendly greeting is proffered in at least seven distinguishable languages: "*ciao*," "*salve*," "*salut*," "*hola*," "*ola*," "*kalimera*," "*hello*" (p. 13). The two drawings suggest very different attitudes towards one's own lived multilingualism and an awareness, even at such a young age, that multilingualism can be a curse or a gift, a conflictive or a harmoniously lived experience (De Houwer, 2015). Yet another very different illustration of being multilingual can be seen in what Han (2013) calls grassroots multilingualism, shown in the case study of Laura, a Chinese woman in her mid-thirties and owner of a small business in Africa Town in Guangzhou. Laura had migrated from rural Sichuan to globalized Guangzhou, a moving distance within national borders equivalent to moving from Philadelphia to Chicago. In fact, in Laura's case, this was a radical change that brought Mandarin, Cantonese, and English to her life, previously mostly conducted in her Sichuan dialect. Laura recounts how she sublet space in her shop to "two good-looking young women who could speak English" in the hopes that they would serve as language brokers with her customers. When they refused to help, she taught herself English by surreptitiously writing down whatever sounds she heard from them (*hao a you* for "how are you") and by memorizing the expressions. Eventually, Laura also took it upon herself to teach some oral English to "a few other young women" in Africa Town who, like her, were from the countryside and who "never went to school so they could not read and write" (p. 92).

It is obvious that cosmopolitan Chagall, the Portuguese heritage children in Germany, and Laura in Africa Town in Guangzhou have each developed their multilingual repertoires through means, processes, and with desired and actual outcomes that vary wildly from one another and that are shaped by the given ages at which any of their languages entered their lives, the accompanying life projects they undertook, commensurate with those ages, and their socio-historical and economic contexts.

If researching multilingualism—in order to support it—is the business, responsibility, and mission of SLA researchers, then clearly part of the disciplinary mandate is to produce knowledge about all shapes, shades, and grades of multilingualism. SLA researchers must serve all multilinguals, not just those with privilege. In today's uncertain world, many multilinguals are vulnerable and at risk of experiencing their multilingual lives conflictedly rather than harmoniously, as a curse rather than a gift. The vulnerabilities are particularly acute for multilinguals in minoritized communities, who are the targets of language-compounded

injustice because of their differences in race and ethnicity, class and wealth, gender and sexual orientations, religion, and other socially constructed hierarchies that devalue human diversity. How willing and able is SLA to respond to these present-day challenges? In the following sections, I will unpack four constraints that have hampered SLA's capacity to generate useful knowledge about multilingualism.

Disciplinary Identity Around Language Two and Late Timing

SLA has always defined its purview as investigating how a new language—the language two (L2)—develops when the learning begins later in life, that is, in adulthood or in adolescence, or even as young as four or five years old, but always once the nuts and bolts of a first language or languages have been already laid down. These two cornerstones of the L2 of learners and the late timing of the learning onset have become the building blocks of SLA's disciplinary identity.

From the beginning (e.g., Selinker, 1972), the focus on the L2 enabled the discipline to claim legitimacy, as researchers succeeded to show that the construction of an L2 is not parasitic of the first language and instead is subject to the same developmental processes we see in all natural languages. However, the achievement came at a high cost: the exclusion of individuals' other familiar languages from inquiry. Still today, most SLA researchers typically elicit data from the main participants—the so-called learners—in only one of their languages, the L2, and rarely feel the need to mention whether the analyses were done by bilingual transcribers, coders, raters, and so on. This unwittingly turns the explanation of L2 development into an explanation of learning how to behave monolingually in the new language (Ortega, 2009, p. 5).

The focus on the late timing of learning would not be problematic in and of itself, except that it is routinely framed in negative terms in SLA. Consider this opening statement in the abstract of an article published by seminal researchers in a highly respected refereed journal: "Adults are notoriously poor second-language (L2) learners." Other seminal authors repeat and expand similarly negative construals of adult L2 learning: "Foreign language learning is often a difficult and ultimately unsuccessful task." I spare source citations, because my criticism is not meant to be ad hominem. Such statements are far from rare. In fact, they are so frequent that they have become entrenched in the disciplinary discourse and their strong negative connotations go unnoticed by regular producers and consumers of SLA research unless they are extracted from their context, as I have done here. The commonsensical view that late-timed bilingualism is a failed enterprise is routinely perpetuated in a number of tropes and metaphors noted by Ortega (2013, p. 13). The mature adult brain is imagined neurally inflexible and thus near-atrophied for the task of learning a new language. The linguistic maturity that comes from adults' already knowing at least one language (often many) is construed as knowledge to be overcome because it blocks the learning of the L2. Adults' powerful higher-order cognition is seen as a straightjacket that commits them to futile attempts at cracking the new language via explicit learning mechanisms, since language is thought to naturally call for implicit learning of tacit linguistic knowledge. And the social maturity that comes in adulthood with a well-developed sense of self and others in the world, cultural and moral values, and personal goals for self-determined happiness is suspected of creating a

myriad of motivational and attitudinal obstacles that negatively impact on adults' willingness or ability to learn the new language.

To be sure, all along there have been voices within SLA offering alternatives. Against the practice of focusing on the L2 only, Cook (see, e.g., 1992, 2008) has called for the holistic study of the total system of an individual's languages (first, L2, and any others) within the same studies. This call is motivated by the construct of multicompetence, in which he postulated that the linguistic capacities of late-timed bilinguals are qualitatively different from monolinguals' competencies and thus must be understood in their own right, not comparatively. Against the routine bemoaning of a late timing for language learning as a shortcoming, Lantolf (see, e.g., 1994, 2006) has concentrated on investigating the roles played by higher-order cognition in language learning using the apparatus of Vygotskian sociocultural theory. His theoretical perspective invites researchers to make empirical choices that heed an important Vygotskian insight: L2 learning is something people make happen via agentive self-regulation, not something that happens to people unconsciously or subconsciously.

These voices notwithstanding, the majority of SLA research continues to be fueled by a monolingual focus on the L2 and a negative framing of the late timing of learning. The consequences are deleterious. The harm of focusing on the L2 only looms large as knowledge about the full linguistic competencies of multilinguals remains compartmentalized. A good illustration is the two impressive bodies of research about heritage language learners and 1.5 generation learners. The participants in these two research traditions in fact represent the same populations of multilinguals. Scholars of heritage language learning focus on the development of these bilinguals' home language (e.g., Spanish), whereas 1.5 generation scholars focus on the development of their societal language (e.g., English). Yet, psycholinguists and scholars of crosslinguistic influence have conclusively shown that the languages and literacies of a bi/multilingual person interact and affect each other (Jarvis, 2015; Kroll, Bobb, & Hoshino, 2014), and that the resulting competencies are not the sum of two monolingualisms but are qualitatively different (Cook & Wei, 2016). Why then do these two research communities never cite each other, much less collaborate with each other in order to investigate the multilingual development of the heritage–societal language pair in which these multilinguals function daily?

The consequences of the negative framing of the late timing of learning are no less deleterious. The best illustration is if we critically consider the central question that has driven the field to date: How is L2 acquisition by adults different from, and more difficult and unsuccessful than, monolingual first-language acquisition by children? The question is misguided, not only because of the deficit assumption embedded in it, but also because the comparison is scientifically untenable: development by children in one language only but by adults in two (or more) languages. In other words, bilingual late-timed development is directly compared to monolingual early-timed development, with neither the timing nor the number of languages remaining constant (Ortega, 2013). This stands in the face of the comparative method in systematic inquiry, which requires variation of some parameters while keeping at least one parameter constant. How has this illogical basis for a scientific comparison gone unnoticed by the field for so long?

Essentialist Ontologies of Language

A second disciplinary constraint that in my opinion hampers SLA's capacity to generate useful knowledge about multilingualism is the preference for essentialist language ontologies that has prevailed in the field.

Much SLA research has been carried out under the Chomskyan view that language has an objective reality, is separable from communication, resides in the mind, and (in the most explicit formulations of this view) is genetically endowed at its core. Research that explicitly applies formal linguistic generative theories to the question of how an L2 develops has greatly accumulated in the last 35 years and is synthesized by Slabakova (2016), who proposes the term GenSLA to distinguish this highly technical branch of SLA from the rest. Many other SLA researchers remain uncommitted to the full Chomskyan ontology and can be said to adopt a general-cognitive position towards language. But they espouse an essentialist language ontology as well. Namely, they adhere implicitly to a Saussurean or Bloomfieldian view that takes language to be a system made of subsystems: sounds, which combine into words, which combine into sentences, and so on. This system is then captured in grammar books, dictionaries, and language corpora. Thus in the end, both the GenSLA and the general-cognitive SLA positions, and the continuum of options that each creates, are essentialist: Language is seen as if it were a thing, a system that carries meaning and resides in the mind as knowledge of rules, patterns, or constructions.

Essentialist ontologies of language are not the only choice, however. Particularly in critical sociolinguistics (Blommaert, 2010) and critical educational linguistics (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), but also in certain schools of usage-based linguistics (Hopper, 1998) and cognitive linguistics (Croft, 2001), non-essentialist ontologies are embraced. Non-essentialist views imagine language as a practice or a process (as suggested when the verb *languaging* is used, instead of the noun *language*), rather than a system. Language is thought to construct meaning (rather than to carry it), iteratively out of recurrent social activities, yet often incompletely, unpredictably, and on the fly. This allows for individual grammars that are diverse and heterogeneous. Language is viewed as existing only as a process of communicating; something we do, not something we have. This prioritizes the idea of semiotic repertoires rather than knowledge subsystems within a larger system. And language is located in social activity which is distributed among social actors, rather than in any individual brain. This makes it possible to obviate the metaphor of complete grammars and originary, legitimate owners of a language.

Non-essentialist alternative views have not been completely alien to SLA. A good case in point is the family of usage-based theories which have made good inroads into the field since the mid-1990s (Cadierno & Eskildsen, 2015; Ellis, Römer, & O'Donnell, 2016; Kasper & Wagner, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2017; Tyler, 2012; Verspoor, de Bot, & Lowie, 2011). The usage-based perspective postulates that grammar is not an out-there system and that it is inseparable from the users and the usage events. This view is embraced, at least at theoretical and metaphorical levels, by SLA scholars working within the usage-based traditions of emergentism, constructionism, complexity theory, dynamic systems theory, cognitive linguistics, and conversation analysis (see Atkinson, 2011).

Despite the positive ascendancy of usage-based SLA, however, the field's notion of language remains under the spell of essentialist linguistics, and much of the research continues to be motivated by the commonsensical idea of language as a system. SLA can no longer afford to do so, given the problems that the metaphor of a language system creates. First, when language is a system, the sanitizing of language and its users becomes naturalized and acceptable. This sanitizing involves privileging idealized and homogenized language varieties of the elites, where the target is imagined as a standard, educated, academic, literate variety that all multilinguals (should) aspire to take possession of. This can easily lead to the predicament of research perpetuating standard and purist ideologies of language, with the unintended consequence of instilling linguistic insecurity in L2 learners. The problem of linguistic insecurity is endemic, as aptly described by Grosjean (2008):

> Many bilinguals… have a tendency to evaluate their language competencies as inadequate. Some criticize their mastery of language skills, others strive their hardest to reach monolingual norms, others still hide their knowledge of their 'weaker' language, and most simply do not perceive themselves as being bilingual even though they use two (or more) languages regularly. (p. 224)

The notion of language as a system rather than a social practice or a process in the fly narrows disciplinary views of what it means to know a language and to have communicative competence. Moreover, when researchers remain blind to any understandings of language but those that fit with notions of an idealized target system, unfamiliar forms of multilingual competencies are easily rendered excludable from study. A poignant illustration of how this can happen comes from a pioneering investigation in the field of bilingualism by Peal and Lambert (1962) which is otherwise celebrated as the first vindication of bilingualism as an advantage, not a deficit. These researchers administered an extensive battery of parallel tests in French and English to an initial pool of 364 10-year-old children from six Montreal French schools. They assigned 75 children to the monolingual comparison group and 89 children to the bilingual group, after ascertaining that the first group knew only French, since they scored close to zero on all English tests, and that the second group knew French and English, since they showed very similar scores in each language. Peal and Lambert candidly went on to explain, however, that they decided to withdraw from further investigation another 200 children who took the tests. What motivated this radical 55% participant exclusion rate? They reasoned these 200 10-year-olds were not "equally skilled in French and English" and therefore "could not be unambiguously classified as either monolingual or bilingual" (p. 8). Clearly, the categorical appropriation of a linguistic system is inadequate to capture what many real-world multilinguals do, from Chagall (Lvovich, 2015), to heritage Portuguese–German children (Melo-Pfeifer & Schmidt, 2012), to Guangzhou's Africa Town Laura (Han, 2013), to 55% of the Montreal bilingual youth participants excluded from Peal and Lambert's seminal study.

Essentialist ontologies of language render multilinguals' hybrid, gradient competencies so unfamiliar to researchers that they deem them empirically intractable and exempt them from study. But how can a universal theory of language acquisition, traditionally the disciplinary aspiration of SLA, be built

upon knowledge that may represent 45% coverage of all the relevant evidence? How are SLA researchers to validly investigate the object of study, multilingual development, if they renounce coverage of gradient, unfamiliar competencies that apparently characterize over half of the world's multilinguals?

A Teleological View of Development

The third disciplinary constraint hampering SLA's capacity to generate useful knowledge about multilingualism occurs whenever linguistic development is understood teleologically, as a ladder to the heaven of nativelikeness. Ladders are of many kinds. They can be rigid (e.g., made of aluminum) or malleable (e.g., made of rope). They can be made to be leaned against a vertical surface or to hang from the top, or they can be rollable or folding. We can also extend the developmental metaphor of ladders into staircases. Some of them are spiral, as is the 19th century staircase in the Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and others are winding or whirling, like the helical staircase (emulating the shape of DNA molecules) in the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida. No matter the details, however, ladders and staircases make it possible to reach a desired *telos*, the Greek word for a target, end, goal, aim, or finish line. This is how SLA has conceived of L2 development, a series of broadly universally constrained linguistic sequences by which learners try to approximate the target and appropriate it.

The teleological requirement that L2 development be target-oriented and target-defined has been at the core of the discipline, even when at the same time SLA has traditionally steered away from prescriptive or simplistic views of development. For example, SLA researchers have traditionally deemphasized the significance of accuracy for learning and instead have underscored the developmental value of trying out novel solutions (e.g., in processes of overgeneralization and emergence of a form or a rule), stipulating nonlinearity in the developmental trajectory (e.g., in the well-known notion of u-shaped behavior), and acknowledging great individual variation in the details of development (see Ortega, 2014a for an illustration of this case based on L2 negation development). But no matter how the ladder is built, and how the staircases are laid out and used by each learner, development in the new language is thought to have an ideal if not almost unattainable finish line: targetlike ultimate attainment.

Once again, dissenting voices within SLA can be identified. The clearest objection against the teleological view of L2 development has been offered by Larsen-Freeman, who in an article in 2006 warned, as she put it in her telling title, that in language development "there is no end, and there is no state" because language is ever dynamic and changing. Her complexity/chaos theory of L2 development (Larsen-Freeman, 1997) has evolved into a meta-theory for which she currently proposes an interrelated set of 30 aphorisms (Larsen-Freeman, 2017). Two of them specifically oppose the teleological view of L2 development: Aphorism 19 states that "learning is not climbing a developmental ladder; it is not unidirectional. It is nonlinear," and Aphorism 20 adds "language and its learning have no endpoints. Both are unbounded" (p. 27).

And yet in practice it has been difficult to go beyond the teleological understanding of linguistic development in SLA, and in study after study, nativelikeness continues to be imagined as the finish line. Accordingly, native

speakers serve still as the unquestioned golden benchmark against which to adjudicate gain, progress, learning, and proficiency. The widespread faith in the superior linguistic competence of an ideal native speaker explains the existence of many terms which allegedly denote technical meanings but which also have negative semantic prosodies, for example, incomplete acquisition or processing versus representational deficits. Of course, the idealized notion of a native speaker in possession of a complete, bounded, and perfectly uniform language is rooted in essentialist ontologies of language as system. But subtly and insidiously, it is also predicated on the assumption that the native is a monolingual speaker, with no traces that would give her or him away as living with other languages but the target one (Ortega, 2014b). Thus, the teleological view of development that prevails is one where native-like ultimate attainment really amounts to becoming monolingual-like at the finishing line of L2 development, the heavenly *telos* of passing for an imagined monolingual native speaker.

Values, Power, Ideologies as Non-Scientific

The three disciplinary constraints I have sketched so far have shaped what kinds of knowledge SLA generates. But the fourth and last constraint that I will discuss presents the biggest disciplinary challenge in my opinion. I am referring to the refusal to accept ethical considerations of values, power, and ideologies as within the purview of objective research and, instead, the tendency to push them to the realm of personal subjective choice. I first noted this problem in Ortega (2005).

Underpinning the view that values, power, and ideologies are non-scientific are three positivistic assumptions that most in the field of SLA find natural and unquestionable. First, facts and values form a knowledge dichotomy. Facts belong to the world of theory and knowledge building, and they are the goal of research. Values have to do with practical applications of knowledge, and they are something any conscionable researcher will worry about, but only a posteriori, independent from theory building. We find this mode of thinking about knowledge in the Weberian technicist tradition that neatly divides research into basic and applied (Stokes, 1997). Second, facts and knowledge can and must be neutral and objective. This is, of course, the main premise of positivism and post-positivism (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). The third and key assumption is that values are subjective and irrational. In other words, they are a matter of personal choice and escape rational scrutiny. This is what moral and political philosopher MacIntyre (1984) described as emotivism. To be sure, many SLA researchers are progressive or even radical in their personal political views of social justice, just as many highly educated elites are (Pew Research Center, 2016). And I would venture to add that all SLA researchers, without exception, support and celebrate multilingualism as an ideal state of societies, communities, and individuals. It is just that they are not willing to let these personal values directly inform, much less shape, their research.

Some ethical preoccupations have made it into recent disciplinary publications and should be acknowledged. There is a long tradition that problematizes the relevance of SLA research for teachers (e.g., Ellis, 1997; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017; Ortega, 2012). Some researchers have begun to write about the ethics of Institutional Review Boards (Sterling, Winke, & Gass, 2016; Thomas, 2009). Importantly, others have admonished that much can be gained from including

and serving vulnerable populations in SLA research (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004; Young-Scholten, 2013, 2015). An important book on ethics in applied linguistics has gathered many of these varied concerns (De Costa, 2016).

Nevertheless, there is great disciplinary disaffection towards critically analyzing how values, power, and ideologies may shape both the knowledge which SLA generates and the learning processes which it investigates. These issues are simply deemed outside the scope of the cognitive–linguistic–quantitative research that SLA typically favors. They are treated either as personal opinions, ideological hidden agendas that will contaminate research, or as important dimensions of language learning that SLA can rightly leave to other fields, such as educational linguistics or linguistic anthropology. I have insisted that in evaluating the quality of SLA research, ethical purposes and consequences are as important or more than the rigor of theories and methods (Ortega, 2005), that the roots of the monolingual bias in SLA are ideological (Ortega, 2013, 2014b, 2016), and that the field needs a social justice turn in order to support equitable multilingualism (Ortega, 2017). But my best dialogues about values and power with other SLA colleagues in personal conversations and in public conference venues have ensued whenever I have been able to recast these problems as creating threats for knowledge validity—if I frame them as a hindrance to taking on ethical responsibility, the dialogue does not go very far.

From Disciplinary Constraints to Transdisciplinary Hopes

I have painted thus far a rather bleak picture of the field of SLA, my field. But there are also reasons for hope. First, no ideologies are hermetic or homogeneous, and the capacity for ideological transformation is always open. This is true also of the ideologies that circulate in the field of SLA. As I have noted, all along influential voices within the field have championed against one or more of the constraints. Ideological ambivalence and heterogeneity, with the possibility of transformation, is all the more possible now that SLA has become epistemologically very diverse, with many rather than one cognitive approach and many rather than one social approach. This is an upshot of the social turn of the late 1990s that the collections of theories in VanPatten and Williams (2015) and Atkinson (2011) easily illustrate. From the vantage point of the late 2010s where we stand, much of the field has opened up to exploring and fostering cognitive–social interfaces (e.g., Hulstijn et al., 2014). Even more recently, The Douglas Fir Group (2016) gathered fifteen proponents of socially oriented SLA approaches around the felt desire to assert the potential for synergy, integrativeness, and complementarity among their distinct positions. They sought to unite around the shared aspiration of transdisciplinarity, understood as the willingness "to transcend the boundaries of disciplines and generate knowledge that is more than the sum of a discipline-specific collection of findings" and to "turn critical moments of recognizing difference into opportunities for trusting communication and enrichment across epistemic boundaries" (p. 24). By showing an affinity towards non-essentialist and non-teleological views of language and language learning, the Douglas Fir Group has provided the field with encouragement to lift up two of the disciplinary constraints I have identified. By including identity, agency, ideologies, and emotion, it has opened the door of SLA to subjectivity and values as part and parcel of what must be understood and researched in order to understand language development.

If there is such momentum building up, with so much epistemological diversification from within and with so much attention redirected towards expanding capacities for transdisciplinarity, what can the field do to expedite positive changes? How can SLA step up to the challenges of investigating and serving equitable multilingualism in a world that is becoming more and more uncertain? I propose nine strategies here. Some humbly address changes in ways of thinking about methods and designs that SLA researchers may be willing to try out. Others are more ambitious because they call for a sea change in disciplinary understandings of the object of study and of the proper place in SLA for values, power, and ideologies.

Strategies for Disciplinary Change

1. Collect Evidence from All of Multilinguals' Languages, not Only Their L2

The focus on the L2 has served the field of SLA well for many years, lending it one of its most recognizable staples of disciplinary identity. But when only the L2 is investigated in a given study, the multilingualism of study participants is made invisible, and researchers end up with compartmentalized knowledge that is hence incomplete about the object of inquiry they wanted to understand in the first place. By contrast, when SLA researchers collect same-participant evidence across their languages, the quality of the knowledge generated is considerably richer.

A good illustration is Brown and Gullberg's (2008) study of the discourse and gestures employed by intermediate-level Japanese learners of English when describing motion events in an animated Sylvester and Tweety Bird cartoon. When Brown and Gullberg compared the L2 English descriptions of the late bilingual participants to the target English descriptions of a baseline of English monolingual native speakers, the two sets of data were found to be statistically different in the expected direction. For example, monolingual native language English descriptions contained more manner verbs (*Tweety Bird crawled through the pipe*) than did the L2 English descriptions. But to the researchers' surprise, when they turned to the descriptions elicited from a baseline of Japanese monolinguals in the first language (L1), the L2 English descriptions were also statistically significantly different from these other L1 Japanese comparison counterparts. The monolingual Japanese L1 speakers produced in Japanese more instances of path while omitting manner more often (*ue-ni ikouto surundakedo*, "he tries to go up but") than did the bilingual L1 Japanese speakers in English. And when the researchers finally compared the descriptions produced by the same bilingual participants in their two languages, Japanese L1 and English L2, the surprise was even greater: The expressions of manner, path, and gestures were not statistically significantly different in the two sets, despite the two very different languages these bilinguals were using.

What lessons can we learn from engaging in such within-subject study designs? When we directly compare L2 bilinguals with monolingual native speakers in the target language, we find that nonnative and native speakers are different. Hundreds of SLA studies have drawn this comparison and shown this result. This is really nothing new, and it is also wholly uninformative, as it boils down to saying that bilinguals are not monolinguals. However, when we make the

infrequent comparison of L2 learners using their L2 versus speakers of their same mother tongue using their source L1, the conclusion seems to be that the L2 of late bilinguals—even at intermediate levels of proficiency—is not a mirror image of their mother tongue, that is, their L1 does not deterministically or parasitically dictate what they do in the L2. Thus, we might further conclude that bilinguals do not behave as the monolinguals that they once were. In the even rarer event that we compare how the same bilingual speakers do something in their language pair, the L2 and the L1, we may discover that they are more similar than different in their two languages (even though one, the mother tongue, may be fluent and strong, and the other, the foreign language, may be functional at only intermediate levels of fluency, as was the case in Brown & Gullberg's 2008 study). Bilinguals are whole speakers of two languages, not two monolinguals in one. Thus, whenever possible and relevant for the research questions at hand, the analysis of bilinguals' both languages within the same study will help unearth better knowledge about the object of study.

2. Refuse to Engage in Subordinating Comparisons and Nativespeakerism

Another strategy that will almost certainly improve SLA researchers' capacity to investigate and support equitable multilingualism is to find alternatives to the still dominant practice of using the idealized native speaker as a gold standard of L2 development. I have argued this practice is a case of subordinating comparison, based on ethically compromising ideologies and leading to distortions of knowledge (Ortega, 2016, p. 67).

Illustrations of the perils of subordinating comparisons are surprisingly easy to find, once one becomes sensitized to the problem. For example, in a corpus linguistics study, Chen (2013) investigated phrasal verb use in L2 academic writing by comparing L2 Chinese students writing (*N*=130) to novice L1 English student writing from both the United States and United Kingdom. The two comparison baselines were chosen apparently simply because several high-quality corpora for both native varieties of English were available. To the author's chagrin, however, the U.S. L1 writers (*N*=318) turned out to use many more phrasal verbs than U.K. L1 writers (*N*=590). Surely, nobody would conclude that the U.S. writers are overusers of phrasal verbs and that U.K. writers display the right levels of phrasal verb use. There is no defensible reason to consider U.S. or U.K. English superior to the other. The inferences we make are reasonable, because they presume equal value in the two varieties compared. Chen admitted candidly, "in the present study, the Chinese students would be considered to use far fewer phrasal verbs if they were compared to the American novice writers…, but they would not display a fundamental difference from British writers" (p. 435). Had this (or any other) researcher happened to compare only the corpora of Chinese vs. U.S. student writing, the finding of a difference between L2 and L1 groups would have been interpreted as a sign that the L2 English writers underuse phrasal verbs. Why is it reasonable to assume that monolingual grammars are superior to L2 or bilingual grammars?

Whenever SLA researchers feel that benchmarks and comparisons are needed, other non-subordinating options can be explored. For example, we might choose to compare adult sequential bilinguals to early simultaneous bilinguals who have reached very high linguistic levels in their two languages (Sorace, 2011) or to

bilinguals who begin learning a new language later in life and reach exceptionally good competencies in the L2 (Slabakova, 2013). A third, interesting option was adopted by Saito and Hanzawa (2016) in a study of accentedness. They compared 56 Japanese freshmen without immersive experiences to 10 late Japanese–English bilinguals who they deemed (a) to be comparable to the participants in the late onset of bilingualism and also (b) to be "at the point of ultimate attainment": They had arrived in Vancouver after the age of 18, had been residing there for over 20 years, and reported frequent use of English at work and/or home (pp. 818–819).

These and other novel ways of comparatively making sense of what SLA researchers see in L2 development data are worth exploring in the quest to generate new insights about the human capacity for language across diverse timings of bilingualism onset. Ultimately, however, the challenge is to compare, if we must, but without imposing teleology or theoretical ceilings to language development, cognizant that in language learning, "there is no state, and there is no end" (Larsen-Freeman, 2006).

3. Learn to Reframe Late Timing Positively

The empirical evidence accumulated over almost 50 years of SLA research lends itself to a positive reframing of late-timed bilingualism. Moreover, findings related to a late start in other fields provide convergent evidence to support a positive reframing of late-timed language acquisition in general. Specifically, robust and varied empirical evidence shows an accelerating boost, a rate advantage, for later-timed language development across a truly diverse range of contexts for multilingualism.

In SLA, the initial rate advantage of a late start has been well known ever since Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979). If learners are in immersive contexts of learning, where they can use the language for many hours and diverse purposes daily, this rate advantage is only initial, and after one to three years of enjoying high levels of L2 use, the early starters will catch up and surpass the later starters. Newer SLA research since the 2000s (e.g., Housen et al., 2011; Muñoz, 2006; Nishikawa, 2014; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2016) has shown incontrovertibly that the accelerating boost of a later start is durable if learners are in drip-feed, foreign-language educational settings, where their opportunities to use the new language are limited to two or three weekly hours and to the truncated set of purposes, interlocutors, and contents typical of language classrooms. Moreover, in nonimmersive contexts no eventual advantage is seen for an earlier start even by the end of the compulsory education system, the transition into college, or later development into the college years. Importantly, a similar accelerating boost has been found in the language development of young children (e.g., Blom & Bosma, 2016), showing that a later start with a majority language is beneficial for its development—possibly because the consolidation of development in the minority home language serves as a bootstrap to the development in the majority language later. The accelerating boost of a late start holds across quite different contexts for child language acquisition and for a wide range of starting ages: for immigrant children learning a majority language, between zero (Blom & Bosma, 2016) and seven years (Paradis, 2008); for international adoptees learning the language of the host country, as late as five and a half years (Snedeker, Geren, & Shafto, 2012);

and for language signers learning their first language, even at a very old onset of learning of 14 years of age (Ferjan Ramírez, Lieberman, & Mayberry, 2013).

What do all the convergent findings across these different fields, including SLA, of an accelerating boost for later-timed language learning have in common? In almost all cases, linguistic, cognitive and social maturity are boons. More mature linguistic competencies in at least one language afford better development in the newer language. More mature cognitive and social competencies also make the learning faster and more efficient. Older children and adults are better than infants at deploying consciousness and orienting towards goals. They can mediate their needs through literacy and other tools, and they use intentionality and agency to self-regulate. In other words, prior knowledge of other familiar languages and the ability to recruit higher-order cognition do not only or always result in challenges and constraints, but also in benefits. Consequently, the converging and clear evidence of an accelerating boost—in late as in early bilingual development—for an older start suggests SLA researchers can think not only of maturational constraints but also of maturational opportunities.

4. Consider Probabilistic, Variable Language Outcomes as a Staple of All Bilingual Development

It is a customary trope to tout adult L2 learning as deeply variable in success. This was one of the main arguments that led Bley-Vroman (1990) to propose famously that second language acquisition by adults is fundamentally different from first language acquisition by children: "Among adults, there is substantial variation in degree of success, even when age, exposure, instruction, and so forth are held constant," in striking contrast to "child language development, where there is no such variation" (p. 7). But an important fact that is consistently overlooked in this argument is that Bley-Vroman, and like him the entire field, was comparing bilingual success to monolingual success. What happens if we instead think of comparing bilinguals to bilinguals across different timings of learning, that is, if we compare the success of adults who are learning to be bilingual later in life to the success of bilingual children who are exposed to two languages simultaneously from birth or sequentially from the very early years that precede schooling? Even monolingual grammars have been found to be more variable and less uniform than traditionally assumed (with data from children, Kidd & Arciuli, 2016; and with adult data, Street, 2017). But when it comes to child bilingualism, specifically, variability has proven to be a central characteristic of developmental outcomes.

Bilingual success from birth is indeed possible: Mastering two languages at the same time is perfectly attainable for children who are exposed to two languages from birth. We know that "the human mind is as prepared to acquire two first languages as it is to acquire one" (Werker & Byers-Heinlein, 2008, p. 144). There is no period of confusion for bilingual children. Instead, development proceeds in milestones that are largely similar and similarly paced to those of monolingual children (De Houwer, 2009). Research has documented this, for example, in the areas of phonology (May, Byers-Heinlein, Gervain, & Werker, 2011), word learning (Byers-Heinlein, Fennell, & Werker, 2013; De Houwer, Bornstein, & Coster, 2006; Poulin-Dubois, Bialystok, Blaye, Polonia, & Yott, 2013), and morphosyntax

(De Houwer, 2005). Nevertheless, research also shows that because bilingual children usually grow up using the two languages differentially across domains of life and social networks, so-called unbalanced bilingualism is expected and normal (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; Grosjean, 1989, 2008, 2010). Moreover, in minority bilingualism a shift to L2-dominance is also expected and normal (Birdsong, 2014; Sheng, Lu, & Gollan, 2014; Silva-Corvalán, 2014; Silva-Corvalán & Treffers-Daller, 2015). And in a survey study with a 5,320 sample of six- to nine-year-old children in Belgium, De Houwer (2003, 2007) estimated that three out of four bilingual children will develop into productive bilinguals (whether balanced or unbalanced) but one of four will eventually be productive in only one of the languages they grew up with.

Considering the accumulated evidence that strongly supports variable outcomes in from-birth or very early child bilingualism, I would like to propose the following tentative generalizations to guide future empirical efforts among researchers who might find it acceptable or even necessary to define linguistic success and linguistic failure using the idealized native speaker as a benchmark. Bilingual acquisition is always associated with probabilistic outcomes, and the timing or onset of that bilingualism affects the probabilistic outcomes in a reverse mirror image. Namely, when bilingual experience of language begins from birth or is very early timed (i.e., prior to the onset of schooling around age five in many education systems), the probabilistic outcomes will be likely linguistic success and much less likely but still possible linguistic failure. Conversely, when the experience of using two or more languages begins later in life (often in adulthood, but at a minimum after becoming literate in one language and being schooled for some years in that same language), the probabilistic outcomes pattern into unlikely but still possible linguistic success and much more likely linguistic failure. As a simplified estimation, drawing from De Houwer's (2003, 2007) results, for child bilingualism odds of success would be seen at the level of 75%, (and this would include degrees of balanced and unbalanced competencies) and odds of failure would be seen perhaps at the level of 25%. In the reverse mirror image, with adult bilingualism we may expect perhaps odds of success at the level of 25% and odds of failure at the level of 75%. The former would include exceptional learners such as Julie and Laura, described by Ioup, Boustagui, El Tigi, and Moselle (1994), while the latter may encompass a variety of outcomes, ranging from many adult L2 users who develop advanced grammars but simply do not pass for native speakers to those more extreme who develop high communicative competence without commensurable grammatical development, like Wes described by Schmidt (1983).

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that much in this proposal stands up for empirical validation and that, most importantly, the notions of linguistic success or failure on which the proposal is built are extremely problematic. For the outcomes of child bilingualism, are we willing to call receptive bilingualism a failure and productive bilingualism a success? For adult late-timed bilingualism, are we willing to go along with researchers' proclamation of linguistic success and failure as becoming indistinguishable from native speakers, that is, monolingual-like in the new language? And are we willing to deem a failure adult L2 users who develop highly sophisticated language skills in a rich variety of life contexts but do not survive the scrutiny of nativelikeness in the laboratory, or adult L2

users like Wes, who beyond grammatical development are highly functional in the additional language? Given these serious caveats, I view the proposal as only a strategic move that can help mainstream SLA researchers envision bilingualism as a matter of degree, not a categorical phenomenon, and view early and later bilingualism as fundamentally similar despite timing differences: a probabilistic, gradient, and variable phenomenon.

5. View Multilingual Acquisition as the Default for the Human Capacity for Language

Researchers could also imagine bilingualism as the natural state of the human capacity for language. The logic goes as follows. Monolingual developmental data do not offer the richest type of evidence for understanding human language acquisition. Because contexts of exposure to language are uniform, and the quantity of exposure is maximal when there is only one language to learn, any variability of outcomes is flattened out. This may be why, incidentally, first language acquisition by monolingual children looks deceptively homogenous. In bilingual or multilingual acquisition, by contrast, the quantity and quality of exposure can vary maximally, since there are many ways in which the given languages can be distributed among different interlocutors, contents, life spheres, and social networks, as well as many ways in which the two languages can be intertwined or kept separate in the turn-by-turn and intra-turn enactment of communication. Consequently, bilingual data are maximally relevant evidence about the human capacity for language.

It is important to appreciate the far-reaching scope of making multilingualism the default and starting point of all language acquisition. Building explanations on monolingual data has always been viewed as a natural choice; monolingual acquisition is imagined to be the default case, which bilingualism expands and complicates in both worrisome and fascinating ways. But this would be similar to building a theory of the earth's climate by collecting data from just Hawaii, with measurements that reflect its truncated range of temperatures, sunshine all year around, little annual rainfall averages, pleasant Pacific sea surface temperatures, dominant northeasterly trade winds, and 4,000 kilometers of distance from the nearest continental land mass. Clearly, mounting a good theory of climatology requires consideration of the fullest possible range of data representing measurements inclusive of extreme and varying weather conditions across diverse geographies.

By the same token, researchers should learn to view multilingualism as the default for the human capacity for language. Once this recalibration of perspective has taken place, it becomes easier to avoid thinking of bilingual development as the development of double monolingualism or making categorical something which is probabilistic and "fuzzy" (Luk & Bialystok, 2013, p. 605). If the human capacity for language is multilingual, the goal becomes to study all different kinds of multilinguals for who they are, without excluding any, and to hone research instruments so as to understand relevant participant variables that can illuminate how gradient, probabilistic outcomes relate to diverse biographies and experiences of language.

6. Focus on Experience of Language as a Key Explanatory Variable

A variety of research generated outside of SLA is turning up the finding that experience may trump age of acquisition, when the two variables are not conflated—that is, when researchers have taken pains to vary the timing of learning onset while maintaining proficiency and exposure comparably high in the language pair. This research seems to be unknown to many in the field of SLA, and yet it has appeared in refereed journals that all SLA communities deeply respect, such as *Cortex* (Consonni et al., 2013), *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* (De Carli et al., 2014), *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Gibson, Peña, & Bedore, 2014), or *Child Development* (Sheng, Lu, & Gollan, 2014). In the field of simultaneous and early bilingual development, more specifically, a wealth of studies have by now established an irrefutable link between young children's better quantity and quality of language experience and better bilingual development. The findings hold across all dimensions of language: vocabulary (e.g., Barnes & Garcia, 2013), semantics and discourse (De Carli et al., 2014), phonology (Nicoladis & Paradis, 2011), morphosyntax (Chondrogianni & Marinis, 2011; Unsworth et al., 2014), and overall proficiency (Marchman, Martínez, Hurtado, Grüter, & Fernald, 2017).

By comparison, in SLA few have endeavored to document the black box of experience of language and link it empirically to how much or how little of the new language adults learn. Instead, in many studies adults are tested on their ability to use a given aspect of language, say past tense *-ed* marking in English. It is assumed that these adults have encountered many instances of *-ed* in their experience (probably because they are frequent in natural language use, as any corpus linguistic study of English can show). And when some or many L2 users are deemed not to have learned past tense to the levels we expect from monolinguals, this nonlearning of what seems to be around them is attributed to inherent limitations of nonnative grammars. But as Flege (2009) and Muñoz (2014) have argued in SLA, we must consider whether actual experience of language can explain linguistic outcomes, before we turn to other explanations, particularly the explanation of biological age as a limit to ultimate attainment. Much language acquisition research shows that the actual contents of experience of language shape linguistic success in young children whose onset of bilingual experience of language exhibits very early timings, including from birth. It stands to reason that the linguistic environment and actual affordances for learning must be inspected carefully for adults too, before they are found wanting.

7. Investigate Linguistic Duress in Late Bilingualism

The strategy to link actual experience of language to observed linguistic outcomes needs to be extended even further. Namely, there is good reason to think that in fact for people who learn a new language later in life, actual access to high-quality, relevant language is far from unproblematic or ensured. The little that we do know about the black box of the L2 experience of adult language learners suggests very limited access, even in immersive environments. I propose the term *linguistic duress* to name this possibility.

The findings of the few SLA studies that have investigated L2 experience directly are sobering. Using interviews and questionnaires, Kormos, Csizér,

and Iwaniec (2014) uncovered very low levels of English use among 80 college pre-enrolled international students in the United Kingdom. The researchers concluded that these "students had not succeeded in enhancing their spoken contact experiences, even four months after their arrival in the country" (p. 162) and that the situation had not improved after nine months from their arrival, when the study ended. Using a sophisticated computerized log, Ranta and Meckelborg (2013) closely documented the first six months of language use by 17 international students from China who were studying for a graduate degree in Canada. The students reported being able to use English for chats with friends daily in the best cases for 45 minutes and in the worst for 2 minutes, with a group average of just 11 minutes per day. Collins, Trofimovich, White, Cardoso, and Horst (2009) and Collins, White, Trofimovich, Cardoso, and Horst (2012) have investigated actual experience with specific language features. They analyzed four waves of recordings every 100 hours of instruction in three sixth grade intensive English classes of 10- to 11-year-old students. The findings are even more discouraging than in the previous two studies just reviewed. For example, after searching for past tense -*ed* in the 110,000 words of teacher talk, they found 15,130 finite verbs, but only 354 tokens were cases of regular verbs in the simple past and thus offering students relevant exposure to -*ed*. This is an abysmal distance from the kinds of critical mass exposure that are thought to be needed for language learning to ensue (Marchman & Bates, 1994).

The findings, although admittedly limited for adult bilingual development, suggest that access to the L2 may be fairly restricted even in immersive contexts. If so, a strategic theoretical–empirical move would be to posit that linguistic duress, that is, reduced language exposure conditions, is probably definitional of late bilingual development in immersive as well as drip-feed contexts. The goal would then be to empirically and systematically document actual experience of language by adults and to evaluate the consequences of this potential linguistic duress for late-timed bilingual development.

8. Incorporate Social Duress When Investigating Linguistic Duress

Language is neither cold nor just a matter of symbolic transmission of meanings; language learning is attentionally gated (Ellis, 2015; MacWhinney, 2012), socially gated (Ibbotson, Lieven, & Tomasello, 2013; Ramírez-Esparza, García-Sierra, & Kuhl, 2014; Roseberry, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2014; Shneidman & Goldin-Meadow, 2012), and emotionally gated (Lee, Mikesell, Joaquin, Mates, & Schumann, 2009; Okon-Singer, Hendler, Pessoa, & Shackman, 2015; Pessoa, 2015). It follows that in order to account for L2 learning we must consider not only language but also social context, identity, emotions, agency, and self-regulation. But since learning a new language demands a reconsideration of one's place in the world and one's desired and attainable futures, this list is incomplete unless we also consider power, ideologies, and social transformation. Identity, agency, ideology, and power are not extraneous add-ons; they matter because they have consequences for language learning.

Consider the following error correction event between an EFL teacher and her student, recounted for me by the teacher in a class journal (cited with permission):

> Once I had a student who kept saying "*I came from Korea.*" I tried to correct her grammar by saying "*if you are originally from Korea, you should use present tense when you refer to it.*" She said "*Since I don't want to go back to Korea and identify myself with American, I'd rather say I came from Korea and wish to be an American one day!*"

What at first blush seemed to be a case of not knowing the meaning of English past tenses turned out to be a willful choice reflecting an identity-changing life project. We may also consider the ideologies uncovered by Subtirelu (2014) in a study of international students and their willingness to communicate in English. Some of these students seemed to hold what Subtirelu termed a deficit ideology which made them explain the many difficulties in communication that they faced as a result of their not-so-good English; they seemed to blame their painful experiences fully on their nonnativeness. They were also observed to avoid English altogether. Other students with similar backgrounds and comparable difficulties in communication held what Subtirelu called a more positive lingua franca ideology. In the face of the same painful communication experiences, they would remark that an interlocutor had not been so helpful or interested in talking to them, or they would reflect on the fact that a lecturer had proven to be poor at explaining complex concepts, and so on; these L2 speakers seemed to assign equal blame to themselves and their interlocutors, understanding that the responsibility for communicative failure or success is shared by all parties. They were also more resilient and their willingness to seek communication in English was undeterred. For long-term L2 development, of course, the latter ideology is likely to pave the way to more L2 use and thus better linguistic outcomes.

Research in educational linguistics and critical applied linguistics shows time and again that many adults learn their new languages not neutrally but from positions of marginalization, yet many can also develop empowering strategies of resilience and agency and manage to transform their worlds and negotiate the liabilities of being multilinguals in our monolingually biased societies. This being so, it would behoove SLA researchers to investigate not only linguistic duress in accessing language for learning, but also social duress and ask: How do sociocultural and ideological forces in L2 users' social worlds (i.e., social duress) interact with and modulate access to language (i.e., linguistic duress)? And because social duress is not fixed or deterministic, transformation and opportunity out of social duress must be also studied by asking: How do human imagination and agentivity transform odds at success, by engendering resistance, leveraging power, encouraging liminal and contingent identity performances, changing investments, and subverting constraints? These questions can continue to be investigated in depth by educational linguistics and critical applied linguistics, but they must also enter into SLA studies side by side the focus on language development, simply because social duress can interact with linguistic duress in tangible ways that shape observed linguistic outcomes.

9. Identify New Social Justice Goals for Inclusion in Future SLA Research Programs

Finally, might SLA respond to our uncertain times by discussing and developing explicit social justice goals for the study of later-timed multilingual learning? This would be a great transdisciplinary hope, since nothing would

support equitable multilingualism better than if SLA communities, galvanized by our uncertain and charged world, respond by mobilizing their research expertise. The most urgent social justice concern for SLA could be to ask: How do ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, and socio-economic diversity, among key forms of human difference with potential to engender oppression and othering, relate to the linguistic diversity recruited in multilingual learning? I would like to finish by brainstorming some preliminary ideas.

Marginalized multilinguals include cognitively and physically diverse speakers, learners of languages in Indigenous communities, migrants and refugees, heritage speakers and 1.5 generation speakers, primary and secondary L2 students who are labeled for their limited proficiency in the language of schooling (e.g., English Language Learners in the United States), adults or adolescents with limited or interrupted experiences of print literacy and formal education, members of Deaf signing communities and L2 learners of signed languages, and so on and so forth. Given how much oppression they will experience as they learn, unlearn, relearn, and even not learn their languages over their life time, we might want to study how resilience arises in response to conflictive bilingualism experiences and negative ideologies, and whether and how resilience can foster linguistic development and harmonious bilingualism outcomes. There are also vexing questions that policy makers, governments, parents, and the public repeatedly ask themselves and that SLA researchers could choose to broach in their studies more squarely. A perpetual pending question, for example, is how long it may be reasonable to expect for a newcomer to a country to take to learn the majority language, for given purposes, in different contexts, and at different ages.

Elite multilinguals can also be included in social justice goals as SLA responds to the demands of our uncertain times, on several counts. Elite multilinguals experience moments of marginalization, even if fleeting, when they experience being the other, the foreigner, the incompetent as part of the quest to learn a new language. Thus, SLA studies may be well positioned to illuminate the relationship between study of a new language and the development of human empathy and tolerance of dissimilar others (e.g., van Compernolle, 2016). But elite multilinguals can reproduce social injustice even as they embrace bi/multilingualism as a world value. For some, for example, internalized ideologies of linguistic purism may interact with conservative political views to produce xenophobia and rejection of linguistic diversity (Hansen, Wypych, Bańko, & Bilewicz, 2017). Multilingual urban elites are often expected to thrive in cosmopolitanism and curiosity for others. Yet it turns out that wealth and high proficiency in a global language such as English may fail to generate these expected benefits (Verboord, 2017). Indeed, in Europe, for all its boasted multilingualism, anti-immigrant hostility has been shown to increase in countries with stronger national global economies and for individuals with higher-status occupations and incomes (Mewes & Mau, 2013; Swank & Betz, 2003). How might the privilege of elite multilinguals be turned into an asset for equitable multilingualism for all, and which critical language learning experiences can help turn elite multilinguals' experiences into solidarity-affirming life choices?

Even so-called monolinguals—and marginalized monolinguals, who are often blamed for the rise of authoritarian populism in the West—may be open to study by SLA researchers wishing to let responses to our uncertain times shape their future research programs. In the United States, for example, according to the National

K–12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey (American Councils for International Education, 2017), 80% of children from English-speaking families do not enroll in language study during their K–12 education, and Devlin (2015) estimates that 75% of English-native speaking Americans will have never studied another language at any point in their lives. Under such realities, research could usefully investigate whether some awareness-raising training about multilingualism may have a positive impact on monolinguals who serve multilinguals, such as therapists (Bager-Charleson, Dewaele, Costa, & Kasap, 2017). SLA researchers have always assumed, but rarely directly investigated, that exposure to other languages leads to more human empathy, democratic values, and critical global citizenship (e.g., Gross & Dewaele, 2017). A full empirical pursuit of this assumption seems poignant and timely. Under what circumstances can exposure to other languages lead to changes in ideologies and attitudes that may support equitable multilingualism? Can multilingualism reduce ethnocentrism (e.g., Mepham & Martinovic, 2017), and is there a demonstrable link between foreign language skills and lessened linguicism and racism? How may different understandings of patriotism and ideologies of nationhood, together with the associated attitudes towards minorities and immigrants that they predict (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016), change by experiencing another language through study or contact? How would these different nationalist understandings change, and with them the attitudes towards minorities and immigrants (many of them marginalized multilinguals), if experience of another language through study or contact were available to individuals?

Admittedly, letting explicit social justice goals into SLA research will be impossible to imagine, unless researchers are willing to shun their disciplinary disaffection for values, power, and ideologies and begin to recognize them as under the purview of objective research. Once researchers can see that identity, values, power, and ideologies shape both the knowledge which SLA generates and the learning processes which it investigates, it may be possible to explore how the setting of explicit goals for social justice can give way to new SLA research programs in the pursuit of equitable multilingualism.

Conclusion

For over 50 years now, the field of SLA has been driven by the pursuit of an overarching disciplinary question: How is L2 acquisition different from, and more difficult than, monolingual child language acquisition? The study of multilingualism and the goal to support it have always been at the heart of SLA, but the epistemic orientation of the discipline has inadvertently but certainly led the field down a monolingual and deficit slope. Recent developments in the world have brought great uncertainty for all, but particularly for multilinguals, many of whom must negotiate their language learning from positions of marginalization. In response to these uncertain times, it is important that SLA be able to engage in transdicipinary renewal and epistemic reorientation. Can SLA promote equitable multilingualism as both a societal value and a window into understanding human language development? I have discussed the disciplinary constraints that stand in the way and offered some strategies that may help break them down and let new generations of SLA researchers turn transdisciplinary hopes into reality.

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