

Internet-Based Lifelong Learning: Implications for Language Teaching and Semiotic Structure Principles in Media Sociology and Religion Sociology

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ABSTRACT

In the course of science theory, when we deal with the subject of language teaching in the context of semiotic structure principle developments as well as in the course of the media culture and religious sciences, it shows that in numerous contributions concerning this subject area there is a complaint that the aporetic treatment and integration of language and religious history [Sprachgeschichte/Religionsgeschichte] in the sense of an internal and external language and religious history should be taken into account [1]. The associated diachrony of historical linguistics is said to be not only relevant but also sufficiently socially systemic and imminently codependent for its constitution [2]. There is talk of a "step child," of "marginal permanence," and even of a malicious deletion from facultative curricula since the international history of language and language teaching is said to be hardly fruitful, especially in view of a problem-oriented approach, obviously not having any relevance for the present constantly transforming, media- and religion-sociology-oriented reality of life and work (paper presented at the Ecumenical and Pedagogy of Religion Colloquium, "Dimensions of Education," at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, on October 11, 2007, in Torun). The author of this paper does not wish to join in this lament about the "Geschichtslosigkeit und Religionslosigkeit" [historical unawareness] regarding time and language, with its sustainable effect on international language and religion teaching, since in recent years, there have been some astonishing changes in perspective, signaling a big opportunity in terms of a substantial paradigm shift for international language teaching – the subject of lifelong learning.

Keywords: Anamnestic acquisition formation, memory-guided acquisition formation, memory research, lifelong learning, media didactics.

INTRODUCTION

The term "language teaching" [Sprachdidaktik] covers an exciting determinative triangle that illuminates the entire problem area but also the opportunities in the sense of the above-mentioned paradigm shift. It consists of three sentential components, which must be placed in meaningful relation to each other: language – cultural history – didactics.

However, propaedeutically, it should be remembered that a focus on emphatic syntax in the sense of the functionality of oral syntagma would be too deficient: "It appears that the sentential analysis works more or less at the level of traditional philology qua text interpretation. The critical editor cannot be satisfied with the syntax but must decipher the context, such as the antitheses" [3].

First of all, the term "language," on which the facultative area is based, should be clarified. This is not the place to discuss the extremely disparate definitions found in the theoretical approaches. Yet throughout the different phases of philological teaching, distinct differences can be identified. In recent publications, H. U. Gumbrecht [4] and S. Lerer [5] are pleading in unison for a broad, i.e., polysemic, definition of language. However, in the author's opinion, this leads to scientific, theoretical, and discursive ambiguities. Lerer's positions are largely reflecting observations by K. Lachmann and F. Schleiermacher, and he therefore places his conceptions on a dynamically perceived definition of language. The consequence of classical philology was that, while it wasn't the only philology, it continued to claim that it was in effect a *primus inter pares*.

Contrary to the so far predominating, but polysymbolically determined, language teaching, which was characterized by an instrumentalized and historically critical view of philology, we now want to make room for an understanding that goes even beyond philology's Eurocentric hegemonic claims and – due to the media-sociological and religion- sociological transformation processes – includes all Worldwide Web nations [6].

The second term to be defined is (cultural) history. It is the typological and conceptual nature of language history and cultural history, or the history of language teaching, that means its issues must be assigned to linguistics as well as to historiography, which of necessity must include more of the results of current media-sociological and religion- sociological research. Its position between linguistic, historical, and cultural studies permanently forces it into a reflected determination of location. By using all the scientific methods of these disciplines, it is able to generate compatible research results without having to forego its own linguistic framework for referring to the meaning of history and culture. In recent decades, but especially since the early 1970s, there have been fundamental upheavals in historical and cultural studies, adequately demonstrated by terms such as social history, history of religion [Religionsgeschichte], history of structures [Strukturgeschichte], history of mentality [Mentalitätsgeschichte], cultural turnaround [kulturalistische Wende] and gender history [7].

For those reasons, in terms of language history and cultural history, the author favors an integrational or synthetic research approach that abductively and appropriately combines the meaning of semiotic motifs and profiles with the results of sociological research and thus always also encompasses the implications of religion, sociology, and ethics. Gender-oriented historiography but also other innovative research perspectives contribute to the expansion, completion, and revision of the existing research consensus in the various historical eras.

The last term, "didactics," is concerned with issues pertaining to the goal of developments in philology, taking into consideration sociological core dimensions, which must also include the sociology of religion. This is based on new findings in brain research describing the constitution

of language as well as the associated teleological core dimension mainly as the conative maxim of meaning and motivation, which in the so-called autopilot has a multisensory as well as a religion-historical essence to be determined as a memory-guided dimension [8]. What in the framework of linguistics is to be achieved for learners today, in terms of conceptual acquisition formation, by studying and exploring the past through the history of language and religion? What is the significance of language history and, thus, also religion history within our present society, and how can it be justified?

A review of the didactics applied to philology so far has demonstrated the following flaws [9]:

- a) The history of language and culture always includes the history of religion and primarily serves the purpose of forming a social identity, thus constituting a self-conceptual philologia sacra. It was always apologetically oriented and legitimized – through a rather religion-sociological interpretation of historical development – the status quo of the prevailing linguistics, preventing a philologia moderna [10].
- b) The history of language and culture met the legislative requirements concerning social self-awareness and was therefore primarily the "history of the victors" [11].
- c) The history of language and culture as the history of religion, especially during the upheavals of the 1970s, in analogy to historically critical hermeneutics, was accused of being oriented too much toward historical research which added to the clarification of historical and sociological contexts, but presented a distant, apparently objectifiable view of historical connections, without regard for the present reality of life and the sentential questions of our present reality of work, thus always socializing in the past. Finally, for a long time, the history of language, religion, and culture regarded itself as a conveyor of knowledge about philological content or apparently verified "facts," and thus primarily as retrospective and less concerned with acquisition formation. Another factor is the teleological dimension and importance: Language as a religion-sociological instrument has always used the media-conveying instruments of its era as Bedeutungsträger [carriers of meaning], with whose help ethics, as the maxim of meaning, was to be socialized. This function as the Bedeutungssentenz [maxim of meaning] in all societies and cultures was always a conative intention of an existence-determining Existenzbewältigung [coping strategy] of those eras. Therefore, the issue of the linguistic experience horizon of learners as users of ethics and thus also of religious didactics and media didactics was not a priority for a long time.
- d) The history of language and culture was unilaterally conducted personalistically, whether in the form of hagiography, in archetypal constitution, or in the sense of retelling legends or exempla humanitatis – exemplary persons as identification models. In both forms, the history of language, religion, and culture was primarily understood as a stringing together or collection of exemplary life stories of influential individual personalities who made history, which promoted legendization and moralization.

However, in the more recent didactics of language and religion, a distinctly new accent evolved, which the author now wishes to review under the heading of anamnestic semiotic acquisition formation, or better as memory-guided religion-semiotic acquisition formation.

ANAMNETIC, OR MEMORY-GUIDED ACQUISITION FORMATION, AS A NEW APPROACH IN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING

The new lifelong learning perspective within language teaching and media pedagogy feeds on very diverse sources and scientific disciplines. The natural sciences have been knowledge conductors for memory research, but media-philosophical and especially media-sociological findings – via collective or collaborative and media-cultural memory – have also had that effect. First of all, we have to point out the growing interest in memory as a basic constant factor of human existence, which is normative for the development of social and definitely also of religious-semiotic structural principles.

Collective and Media-Cultural Memory

Memory research, which in recent years has established itself as an interdisciplinary interface between neuromedicine, neuroeconomy, and the natural and media sciences, is trying to make new discoveries about the complete process of memorizing [12].

Interestingly, these findings are widely discussed and received not only in scientific circles but also in the general public. Memory is no longer regarded as a closed neurological system but as an open structure under changing conditions characterized in particular by transformation processes inside societies, namely globalized intermedial realities of work and life. Thus, remembering is a dynamic, in particular a conative and affective process in which we cognitively connect our present with our former situation, selecting and discarding commemorative elements and always transforming them contextually and semiotically, changing them, and evaluating them. This evaluation relevance is always a conative essential meaning with a religion-ethics function. This process – especially through the factors of social media or Web 3.0, as well as in the context of ludological and heuristic aspects – has led to media-psychological modifications of the socially semiotic setting, which must be determined as a system-inherent social constitution.

Thus, remembering not only equals recapitulating, but is also closely and interdependently related to our present reality of life. The renewed relating and re-experiencing of the past changes memory and at the same time intensifies it by making it publicly accessible semiotically and through international media, based on value and overlapping religion and ethics, and constantly increasing [13].

The results of interdisciplinary memory research are presently also received and exploited in the humanities and media sciences [14]. The systematic theologian Dalferth is cited here as an example for several similar contributions from the humanities and media sciences: "There is no human life without remembering – without remembering something that other living beings also know and without the remembering that is particular to mankind." Dalferth describes the process of remembering as an active process of acquisition and transformation. It is presently still uncertain what impact the new findings of brain research from neurobiologists will have on historical and religious studies. Some researchers already speak of a necessary "revision of historical methodology," saying that it now must be subjected not only to source criticism but also to a thorough criticism of memory and should be renamed "neocultural historical studies" [15]. A core sentence of this direction in research says: "Memory is always presence, not past. It is creation, construct" [16].

Breakthroughs in the neurosciences correlate with approaches in media culture and religious studies concerning collective or cultural memory. They go back to the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, and they were brought into the discussion in the late 1990s by the cultural and religious scientist Jan Assmann [17].

In this context, research goes beyond individual remembering to place every individual into a comprehensive connection of social, religion-social, and media-social remembering processes, which in turn reciprocally influence the individual's memory. Going beyond this, even the individual memory is social, especially with Generation X or the "Millennials," and it is influenced by the social media, namely by the language – an international language competence, by socialization, and their media culture environment, manifesting the semiotic, as well as religion-sociological structural principles with international orientation and thus of a communicative nature, especially through Web 2.0. According to M. Halbwachs, every social idea is a linguistically and religion-ethically constituted memory of society, and such societal thinking is a memory made up of collective memories, which today manifest themselves mainly media-semiotically and internationally [18]. What we experience, we remember collaboratively only in the presence of others, regardless of whether they are present in reality or fictionally on Web 3.0, such as on Facebook and YouTube. This cultural and collaborative memory, according to Jan Assmann, includes the delivery of texts, conative carriers of meaning such as pictures, art, and architecture, as well as songs, rites, and customs, which, in the memory and identification space, i.e., also in the international Web 3.0 space, – constitute culture [19]. Individual remembering is thus always connected with an intergenerational and intermedial forwarding of memories and is therefore irretrievably part of the self-confirmation of a society, namely our worldwide web society. No individual, no group, and no society can live long in the memory. We know the fatal effect of amnesia (the loss of memory), which on an individual and also on a collective level lead not only to a loss of orientation but also a loss of individuality and thus the social loss of language. International linguistic competence manifests itself increasingly in media sociology, but also in religion sociology, collaboratively and imminently, transforming the media spaces and societal ethics spaces in terms of existence-determining [Existenzbewältigung], thus making lifelong learning a semiotic and socially ethical organic media process.

Remembering (Religion-)Semiotic Structure Principles Through Media-Cultural Basic Structures

Now we come to the reception of recent memory research by media science. The meaning of remembering is first of all characterized by a semiotic, conative religion-historical, and optoacoustic didactics of memory [20]. In the last analysis, the semiotic and media-based structure principles on the Internet are nothing but a permanent media-didactic memory, originating from the constant updating, repeating, and citing of reported events in recent contexts by means of source code generated and audio-visual settings. This modified and transformed updating is a form of memory work. Also starting out from media-didactic observations should be the societal acquisition process of language through media-active remembering, at the same time provoking compassion and identification and bringing people together into an international society in terms of a semiotic communication construction (www = worldwide web). Media-based remembering can lead to changes and to a religion-ethical concretion above and beyond the national radius. No longer is there an historical-antiquarian

interest in a media-based tradition in the foreground, but a remembering and internalizing in search of present issues, problem situations, and interests that are presented to the international worldwide web generation. Greve cites and at length pleads in her study for the formation of an anamnestic media culture in the context of international language teaching that would always have religion-didactic *Bedeutungssentenzen*. These findings of media hermeneutics can also be applied to the history of language and religion. The goal is to discover the power of media history that can reveal presence and develop the future while on the one hand delivering an immense treasure of experience and on the other hand offering approaches to learning that are holistic and relevant to our time.

If we take the new routes of interdisciplinary memory research seriously and connect them with the media-scientifically prescribed way of remembering, international language teaching can play a new role in the religion-social and ethical-didactic regions, for it offers people – as learners – an access to the international memory in the context of their own world. At the same time, it invites people to remember, i.e., to look for traces of experiential knowledge, for failures and defeats but also for hopes and the ethical responsibility of past generations, to find new perspectives for their own presence. The history of media culture is always based on philology based on media studies and religion studies, which inter-culturally and globally lead to a feeling of memory community – the constituted community – to feel at home in it and to reveal newly semiotically substituted possibilities of action. Thus, the history of media culture can be regarded as an extended memory, but not in the antiquarian sense of perceiving external facts, nor is it oriented toward the cognitive acquisition of knowledge, but rather to generate a process of acquisition and identity finding that is semiotically and internationally constituted. In a didactic sense, people belong in this relationship as learners. There is no media culture history as philology *per se*, but always only in the context of understanding, living, and learning as an internally social, internationally collaborative, and socioethical process. This actually describes quite a sophisticated program, but it is also a necessity. Findings of interdisciplinary memory research stringently indicate that neglecting the dimensions of philology – the collective memory – leads to a self-perceived loss of identity.

CONSIDERATIONS OF DIDACTICS AND SCIENTIFIC THEORY

In this connection, we should think about how this anamnestic acquisition formation can be achieved internationally in terms of religion, semiotics, and media. As far as methodology is concerned, we find that in terms of an interdependent meta-science, a deductive, scientifically theoretical process should be preferred to achieve premise formation and plausibility.

The objective of lifelong linguistic acquisition is not primarily to provide encyclopedically oriented knowledge and language skills but a factually detached introduction to the periodically differentiated linguistically based media process. In the future, language should and will be increasingly experienced conatively and affectively. The international and collective memories generated by meta tags and containing personal stories should perhaps invite semiotic acquisition, but in any case, a conative confrontation with the changes to our own views, which – media-based and collaboratively – do in fact have an increasing international effect in Web 3.0. Numerous media pedagogues graphically call this a media- and religion-based "immersion" or "entanglement" by the learners in international philology, which is thereby being

transformed. i.e., an involvement is semiotically and conatively socialized through Internet-based environments [21].

It is not the objective observation of what has been, but a close connection and intermedial interdependence with their own life story that also leaves room for feelings, dismay, emotion, and anxiety all the way to identification, which shows in verbal signs on the Internet, which is the goal of this future media-based (religion) semiotic acquisition formation. The important thing is the selection of subjects. Consistently, there are pleas in the more recent literature on didactics, language history, and religion history to pick up on subjects, key points, and turning points in history that can demonstrate the general aspects. When picking subjects, it is important to consider the previously mentioned criteria, such as gender justice, plurality in Europe's way of life and social systems, and especially the adaptability to the learners' present-day questions. Seen from this perspective, language history is not a history of historical heroes or heroines but increasingly an international and collaborative reality of our society's way of working and living with socio-ethical core dimensions.

What should be especially observed in terms of methodical implementation are independence, learning through research, and the ability to act. In this context, it is recommended to look for information in the social media close at hand, such as Web 3.0, etc. Humanity as a whole should profit from the more recent media pedagogy that places value on interactive and conative discovery processes that leave room for the expression of experiences and their collaborative creative implementation. With numerous subjects, experiences from oral history, such as meetings with contemporary witnesses, can become important. There, the narrative access to philology absolutely proves its religious, sociological, and socio-ethical value. Often the importance of non-educational places is pointed out, as they were dealt with in the pedagogy of language regions (key term: learning management systems). In spite of all the criticism about the personalization of language history, the importance of life histories or biographic examples is again moving into the foreground, although these should not be presented individualistically, but in the context of their time, and they should also be assigned conative importance. With all this, the exceptionally productive change of perspective in historiography – from personal histories to everyday history and the history of mentality – must be taken into account, i.e., toward a history that is no longer primarily interested in exceptional personalities, but in typical everyday people. This will facilitate identification [22].

CONCLUSION: A CRITICAL OUTLOOK

Surely the above-named aspects have made the reader aware of the fact that a new perspective within the framework of international language didactics with a conative function in terms of socio-ethical and religion-ethical essential importance is only at the beginning. Critical issues regarding possible approaches of this kind still remain to be dealt with, including a renewed instrumentalization of history for teaching language, religion, and social ethics that can only take place under different signs.

Furthermore, not only the criteria for the selection of media-based subject material, but also the implications of the term "semiotics" must be more precisely defined. In some of the literature, this term is treated under the heading "anything goes." Yet special attention should

be paid to the criteriological reasons for the media-based material selection, taking into account the acquisition and formation of the content.

In terms of method, social ethics, and media pedagogy, the discovery of anamnestic learning should especially boost creativity and not again generate any fixation on life histories or on the much-praised pedagogy of language regions. Stephan Leimgruber summarizes the goal of anamnestic acquisition formation as follows: "What it means is the creative processing of biographical, public cultural, and religious experience in view of changes in attitude and behavior" [23]. He already sees this intention formulated in an old, historically significant Jewish Bible saying: "Remember the days of long ago; consider the years of many generations!" (Deuteronomy 32:7).

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