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Distress and Turmoil - Learning a Language, Ego States and *being-in-the-world*

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Abstract

This paper suggests that learning a language is accomplished through the formation of new language identities and explains this process through the use of existential phenomenology. In order for learning (and specifically, the learning of a language) to happen, a permanent change in the identity of the learner must occur. The paper suggests the introduction of the concept of linguistic ego states as a model for such a change in learner identity which, in turn, brings about the embodied (not just cognitive) retention of the acquired knowledge. In order for such retention to occur the situation must bring about anxiety, an existential crisis, or the distress and turmoil mentioned in the article's title. This leads to a leap of faith, or an irreversible, qualitative personal change, a move to a different existential mode of being.

Introduction

Philosophy, both past and present, sets the search for truth as its main objective. Researchers in other disciplines adopt views and theories that best suit their needs: for example, explanation of phenomena in physics; advancement of professional practice in education; or applicability to therapeutic practice in psychology. In contrast, philosophers utilise theories which, in their opinion, provide them with the most truthful philosophical account of the problem at hand. It is in this vein that I adopt in this paper the concept of ego-states, which is helpful as background for a philosophical model rather than a psychological explanation. The paper applies the phenomenological research method in the presentation of particular experiences. However, the method itself is only part of my broader, philosophical claim that existential phenomenology, as opposed to Cartesian rationalism, empiricism, or materialism, is a more suitable philosophical basis for the understanding of language learning. The method, which can be described as a splinter taken from the philosophical concept of phenomenology, deals only with the description of experiences, while existential phenomenology as a whole makes claims about man's being-in-the-world.

The paper[1] argues that learning of a language is accomplished through the formation of new language identities and that this process can be explained

[1] The motivation to write this paper comes from three sources. Firstly, it is part of a larger PhD project combining existential phenomenology with language studies (language learning in particular) and the concept of ego states. In that sense, it follows directly from my paper titled "Ego states, language, and phenomenology. An unavoidable union?", which was presented at the ESPP conference in Belfast in 2006. Secondly, it stems from a need to respond to a paper written by my colleague, Dean Chapman, presented at the University of Zululand's Faculty of Arts Conference in 2006. In that paper, entitled "Fact or friction", Dean Chapman gave an explanation of rule following according to Wittgenstein. Finally, this paper is deeply related to the practical issues encountered by the team at the Department of Philosophy while teaching the first year course entitled "Philosophy and Writing for the Social Sciences".

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through existential phenomenology. I claim that, in order for learning (and specifically, the learning of a language) to happen, a permanent change in the identity of the learner has to occur. The assumption of an identity change is based on the now widely accepted concept of learner identity (Medina, 2003). I suggest the introduction of the concept of linguistic ego states as a model for such a change in learner identity. This change, in turn, brings about not only mechanical application but also the embodied retention of the acquired knowledge. In order for such retention to occur, the situation must bring about anxiety, an existential crisis, or the distress and turmoil mentioned in the title of this article. This leads to what Copleston (1994, p. 36) described as a "leap of faith". This could also be described as an irreversible, qualitative personal change, a move to a different existential mode of being (Kierkegaard 1843/1994). It is through this kind of experience, the constant inter-subjective contact with the world, that a change is achieved which, through the creation of a particular linguistic ego state, finally enables the formation of a new learner identity.

John Dewey (1922) introduced a distinction between 'knowing-how' and 'knowing-that' in order to call attention to what could be called the 'thoughtless' mastery of everyday activities:

> We may ... be said to *know how by means of our habits* ... We walk and read aloud, we get off and on street cars, we dress and undress, and do a thousand useful acts without thinking of them. We know something, namely, how to do [it] ... [I]f choose to call [this] knowledge ... then all the things also called knowledge, knowledge of and about this, knowledge that things are thus and so, knowledge that involves reflection and conscious appreciation, remains of a different sort (...). (Dewey, 1922, pp. 4-5, emphasis in original)

This distinction suggests that although Dewey had an intuitive grasp of the practical, life-oriented aspect of utilising knowledge, he did not provide an explanation for what underlies the human capability of exhibiting such 'knowing-how'. Within this article, I provide such an explanation from an existential phenomenological viewpoint.

As discussed elsewhere[2], many philosophical concepts have been employed in an attempt to account for language learning[3]. In the sections to follow, examples of situations are presented. These situations are used to introduce existential phenomenology as a philosophical basis for the explanation of language learning and, thus, also a basis for the explanation of language acquisition.

The first example deals with the acquisition of tense grammar, as presented by Merleau-Ponty (1964) after Rostand. The subject is a child acquiring his first language. The second example is that of an adult foreign language learner, achieving mastery of the English tense commonly known as the present perfect tense. This example is based on my personal experience. Finally, an example is presented of first year University of Zululand students. These students are second language speakers of English. For these students, the change occurs in a more general, yet easily observable, identity change from what I term 'a child at home' to 'a grammatically writing young academic'.

While the subjects in the examples differ in age, culture, country of origin and advancement in the learning of their respective languages, it is exactly these differences that justify the choice of examples. The individuals in the three examples have in common the fact that they all, at a certain stage of the development of their language ability, undergo a change that can only be fully explained through the use of existential phenomenology as a philosophical basis. Furthermore, the change is achieved as they find themselves in situations of 'existential crisis' at particular points in their lives. The three examples present a stage in the process of what would traditionally have been labelled/called language acquisition/learning and what I suggest should actually be called the formation of a 'linguistic ego state'. In the section below I show how the three examples corroborate my concept of the development of a linguistic ego state which is applicable, *mutatis mutandis,* to both children and adults.

In the sections to follow, the concept of linguistic ego states is introduced. My interpretation of the Kierkegaardian 'leap of faith' as the driving force behind the change in the learner's identity, or, in other words, the acquisition of a new linguistic ego state, is also applied.

[2] These matters are discussed in my forthcoming PhD thesis.

[3] I will, for the purposes of this paper, treat first language (FL) acquisition as well as foreign and second language (SL) learning as the same. Although there are differences in traditional views concerning language acquisition as well as FL and SL acquisition, for the purposes of this paper it will be argued that the mechanisms underlying the learning/acquisition of a language are, in fact, the same regardless of whether it is a FL or a SL. Thus, throughout this paper I refer simply to 'language learning'.

Example One

In "The child's relations with others", a chapter in the book *Primacy of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1964) established a relationship between language acquisition by a child and the changes in the child's emotional world or, as Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 108) put it, its "affective environment". He stated that if changes happen to a child in this environment, language development follows. His claim is that this development is due to what he termed "the phenomenon of identification" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 109). Merleau-Ponty (1964) quoted such an event, following the work of Francois Rostand, giving an example of tense grammar acquisition in a child. He claimed that "the acquisition of language is itself a phenomenon of identification. To learn to speak is to learn to play a series of roles, to assume a series of conducts or linguistic gestures" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 109).

The example is as follows: A male child who is the younger of the existing two siblings is confronted with an arrival of a new member of the family, a baby brother. At the same time, a cousin who is older than both the siblings comes to stay with the family. Initially, the 'no longer youngest' sibling shows jealousy towards his new brother. He also regresses both in general behaviour and in language to an earlier stage, carrying himself as if he were a baby. Eventually, he overcomes his jealousy and starts behaving towards the baby in a manner similar to that exhibited by his older brother towards him. He also makes a linguistic 'leap' in that he spontaneously starts using the past tense, the perfect tense and the future tense (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). In the later sections the discussion will show how the change in his status in the family contributed to the linguistic change.

Example Two

I am a foreign, albeit proficient, language speaker of English. Although I initially learned the rule of 'use the present perfect tense so that it carries the intended meaning', my application of the structure (which has no direct structural correspondence in my native Polish, semantic correspondence being achieved by descriptive rather than structural means) was always full of uncertainty. I relied on recalling the 'rule' and intellectually considering all the possible options in order to ascertain whether the situation called for the use of this particular tense. Considering the complexity of the rule and the multiple meanings that the tense is used to render, the intellectual process involved was rather daunting and intimidating. This intellectualisation, I believe, is responsible for the experience of many Poles who find mastering the use of the tense (as opposed to the mastery of the mechanics of the structure itself: subject and have and past participle of the verb) difficult, if not impossible.

In the sections that follow I will show how a situation of existential crisis encountered during my first visit to Great Britain brought about a change, resulting in a non-intellectualised use of the tense.

Example Three

The students at the University of Zululand (KwaZulu/ Natal, South Africa) are second language English speakers, often arriving at the university with both language and academic skills that are not fully adequate for the tertiary environment's needs. In the process of teaching the Level 1 course entitled "Philosophy and Writing for Social Sciences" (APHI111/112), the lecturers have established that they are able to stimulate a development of a certain academic literacy by placing the students in situations of what this article refers to as 'distress and turmoil'. In the course of learning, the students have to write one formative test a week. The markers then identify errors of reasoning and language and require a rewrite, to be submitted a week later.[4] Eventually, a change is noted that cannot be described as a quantitative change of the 'I know the rules of grammar' type. The change is of a qualitative nature, suggesting, as claimed in this article, a development of a new 'academic' or linguistic ego state and, therefore, a whole new student identity.

Ego, ego states, and linguistic ego states

According to Mensch (2006), our awareness of the world is "always an awareness from a particular point of view" (p. 73). Thus, in the cases of multilingual speakers, awareness is always from a particular language identity's point of view or, in other words, from the speaker's situatedness in the particular language. Numerous reports exist (Hoffman, 1990; Kaplan, 1994; Lvovich, 1997; Rodriguez, 2005; Zongren, 1993) that describe the experience of either a different world being opened, an enrichment happening, or a change in an individual's personality taking place while learning and using another language.

In 1972 Alexander Guiora introduced the concept of a language ego. While this was undoubtedly a move in the direction of acknowledging the effect of language on the person and his/her personality, the concept itself, based on the Freudian idea of a single ego constituting the person's 'self', seems to be insufficient to explain the phenomena mentioned above. Since Guiora's (1972) model assumes the existence of a single language ego within which multiple languages are contained, it cannot account

[4] The exact methods applied by the staff of the Department of Philosophy are described in another paper (Maphanga & Latecka, 2010).

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for the often encountered phenomenon of 'shifting' or 'gliding; from one language identity/language personality to another (Latecka, 2009). Likewise, it cannot account for the existential paradigm shift, frequently described as a new world being opened, which occurs in learners of foreign languages.

In order to account for these phenomena, I propose (Latecka, 2009) a more flexible model of multiple language ego states. I believe that this model is more suitable for the explanation of such experiences. Most of the research on this topic came from psychologists, practitioners who wanted models on which they could base their therapeutic solutions. That was the aim of researchers and therapists, such as Federn, Hilgard (cited in Hogan, n.d.; Watkins & Watkins, 1997), Berne (1964) and Watkins and Watkins (1997). These authors all introduced models of multiple 'ego states' contained in an otherwise consistent personality.

Berne's (1964) model has been adopted in Transactional Analysis while Watkins and Watkins' model (1997) is applied in Ego State Therapy. Both Berne's (1964) and Watkins and Watkins's (1997) models go far beyond their historical indebtedness to the original Freudian concept of the Ego, and form self-standing, distinct systems. Watkins and Watkins (1997) developed the concept of ego states, defined as multiple, predictable but flexible modes of being within one personality. This model assumes the existence of unlimited ego states. The multiple ego states are independent but form part of the same person and are mutually permeable. Such a structure allows for the basic personality to remain stable but also allows for shifts between ego states. An ego state in this model is defined as "an organized system of behavior and experience whose elements are bound together by some common principle, and which is separated from other such states by a boundary that is more or less permeable" (Watkins & Watkins, 1997, p. 25). Within normal people, different ego states are experienced as normal mood changes. They "occur when a state becomes developed enough to have a *sense of identity* associated with it (e.g., that's my teenage part)" (The Ottawa Anxiety & Trauma Clinic**,** n.d., pagagraph 1; emphasis added).

John Watkins recalls the following experience of his wife, Helen, who is German by birth but was brought up in the USA from the age of 10. While in Germany,

> she spoke German to the store clerks, who took her for a native. However, this required a switch of ego states. When I (JGW) asked her to remember and tell me what month it was when she and her mother came over on the ship, she responded with 'Juli' (pronounced 'Yuli' in German). Her thinking had moved to a German-language ego state. (...)When asked during our workshop at a scientific convention in Konstanz, Germany, if she would present one of her lectures in German, she said simply, "I can't. All my scientific vocabulary and graduate training have been in English." Her German was spoken at the 10 year age level. This is a good example of normal ego state functioning, since she is not a multiple personality. (Watkins & Watkins, 1997, p. 79)

The explanation is that while in the USA, "she simply created a new ego state, an English-language ego state" (Watkins & Watkins, 1997, p. 79). This ego state then became part of her personality alongside the German ego state. The model proposed in this article proposes that linguistic ego states, like general ego states, are created at certain stages of an individual's life and are also called upon in situations requiring their use. (In the example above, Mrs Watkins's inability to go beyond her ten-year-old German indicates a specific linguistic ego state). As stated in one of my previous articles (2009, p. 82): "The broader, more flexible model of Watkins and Watkins (1997) renders itself a better tool to develop a concept of linguistic ego states, capable of encompassing, within an existential phenomeno-logical framework, both mono- and multilingual experience".

Being-in-the-world, the leap of faith and the formation of linguistic ego states

In order to create an ego state and, as its effect, a new identity enriched by this ego state, a phenomenon of "personal transformation" must take place (Campbell, n.d., paragraph 2), or, in Merleau-Ponty's words (1964), a "phenomenon of identification" (p. 109). This "personal transformation" happens through a "profound sense of turmoil and subsequent change" (Campbell, n.d., paragraph 2).

The distress and turmoil mentioned in the title of this paper is not simply coincidentally related to the Kierkegaardian idea of anxiety or dread (Kierkegaard, 1843/1994). The author has special reasons to use Kierkegaardian and existentialist discourse. As Rollo May has put it: "Existentialism is basically concerned with *ontology,* that is, the science of being" (May, 2004, p. 12, emphasis in original). It "arose specifically just over a hundred years ago in Kierkegaard's violent protest against the reigning *rationalism*[5] of his day" (May, 2004, p. 11, emphasis

[5] I discuss the problem of the dominance of rationalism in the sciences, including language studies, in my forthcoming PhD thesis. In that argument, I reject both dualism and materialism as philosophical approaches inadequate for the

added). Both Kierkegaard, generally accepted as the pioneer of existentialism, and those who followed in his footsteps

> protested firmly against the rationalists and idealists who would see man only as a subject – that is, as having reality only as a thinking being. But just as strongly they fought against the tendency to treat man as an object to be calculated and controlled, exemplified in the almost overwhelming tendencies in the Western world to make human beings into anonymous units to fit like robots into the vast industrial and political collectivism of our day. (May, 2004, p. 12)

These thinkers were stressing the importance of the individual, not torn between his position as a subject and as an object, but at one with himself within the world and, from this position, making his choices. They were concerned with "rediscovering the living person amid the compartmentalization and dehumanization of modern culture" (May, 2004, p. 14).

Heidegger, in particular, viewed his *Dasein as* "being-in-the-world".

> [I]t follows that Being-in is not a 'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and without which it could just be just as well as it could be with it. It is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world' - a world with which he provides himself occasionally. (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 84)

Similarly, Sartre (1956) and Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) make claims about the embodied situatedness of man in the world, as well as his individuality and his existential choices. According to Kierkegaard (1843/1994), the choices made by an individual are preceded by and result from anxiety and dread.

Kierkegaard (1843/1994) claims that through anxiety and dread an individual becomes ready to commit him or herself to something which, when looked at objectively, is highly uncertain. The individual is thus ready to take the leap of faith, a motion to know the unknown and unknowable by virtue not of reason but of faith alone. In other words, having breached the gulf, the individual becomes a different person, a believer.

The leap of faith and student identity

While Kierkegaard (1843/1994) talks of a leap of faith to God, to Christianity, I claim that, *toutes proportions gardées*, a similar Kierkegaardian anxiety and dread[6] and an 'existential crisis' which lies at its base, need to exist as a necessary condition to the leap of faith, a qualitative change in a learner's identity. This paper is based on the assumption that such an existential crisis is indispensable in order to achieve effectiveness, retention, and permanency of learning. Within this paper I also take the concept further, providing a philosophical background and a psychological model catering for both the existence of learner identities as well as their formation.

Why distress and turmoil?

It is rather frightening to think that one would consciously subject a student to distress and turmoil, an unpleasant situation in order to achieve learning. Questions arise concerning why this is done and whether this is a necessary condition for the achievement of retention and permanency of learning. The answer to these questions is that, in order for learning to be retained, a permanent change in the identity of the learner must be made. The learning must become part and parcel of this newly formed person's character. This cannot be a superficial change; it cannot be a quantitative, cognitive change of the 'I know more' type. Instead, this is a change from which, once achieved, there is no return to the previous situation. Although there might be a way forward, progress, a further identity formation, there is no turning back. Regressing to the previous stage is impossible[7]. The question remains as to why a student would respond to such treatment. It seems that the only way out of the distress and turmoil, the existential crisis or, in Kierkegaardian terms, anxiety and dread, is to actually take that decisive step forward, to cross the 'gulf' in one brave leap forward; to take a leap of faith. This is not an intellectual process. Although words such as 'taking' the step or 'making' the leap are used, the step or leap, in a sense, actually 'takes' or 'makes' itself. A new ego

explanation of language and learning. I chose not to discuss these issues in detail in this paper as this would have taken the paper in a completely different direction. A separate paper will follow.

[6] The Kierkegaardian anxiety and dread describes a philosophical concept of a state of being, probably related to, but not identical with, what psychologists describe as anxiety.

[7] I discuss the issue of the impossibility of regression to the previous identity in another paper which is in preparation. In that paper I compare the kind of permanent change brought about by the existential crisis with the waning change brought about by behaviourist conditioning.

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state is formed and the completion of the process means achieving a totally new quality, a new whole.

The change which the student undergoes through the existential crisis accounts for the change of the whole. In other words, the resultant person, personality, or identity, is a new person who, while retaining previously existing ego states, is enriched by the newly formed one.

The existential crisis?

How is this existential crisis achieved? The experience through which it is achieved has to be authentic. In other words, whatever behaviour the learners need to obtain has to be a behaviour which is goal-oriented, but not goal-oriented in the behaviorist, stimulus-response manner[8]. To use Merleau-Ponty's (1942/1998) words, the reorganisation of the students' behaviour "is accomplished only through *the pressure of external conditions*" (p. 39, emphasis added).

In the first example, prior to the described events, the child does not perceive himself within temporal relationships. With regards to the children of his family, he is the 'absolute youngest' while his older brother is the 'absolute eldest'. The arrival of both the new baby brother and the older cousin changes the temporal relations amongst the children in the family resulting in an existential identity crisis for the child. His first reaction seems to be that of denial, jealousy, and an attempt at maintaining the position of the 'absolute youngest' by means of his regression to baby-like behaviour. However, eventually the existential crisis is resolved. The child emerges from it with a new identity, an identity of one who 'was the youngest but is the youngest no more' and who has a brother who 'was the eldest but is the eldest no more'. In other words, he emerges from this experience as a time-situated being, capable of perceiving and expressing relative temporal relationships. At that instant, his language also changes. As a result of his time-situatedness, he now starts using language which relates to time, including the use of the past, present and future grammatical tenses.

In Merleau-Ponty's (1964) words:

> The acquisition of language might be a phenomenon of the same kind as the relation to the mother. Just as the maternal relation is ... a relation of *identification*, in which the subject projects on his mother what he himself experiences and assimilates the attitudes of his mother, so one could say that the acquisition of language is itself a phenomenon of identification. To learn to speak is to learn to play a series of *roles*, to assume a series of conducts of linguistic gestures. ... It is in the phase of the "surpassing" of jealousy that one notices the appearance of a link between the affective phenomenon and the linguistic phenomenon: jealousy is overcome thanks to the constitution of a scheme of past-present-future. ... One sees that there is a solidarity between the acquisition of this temporal structure, which gives a meaning to the corresponding linguistic instruments, and the situation of a jealousy that is overcome. (pp. 109-110, emphasis in original)

In relation to the second example, it was only when, during my first visit to the UK, I found myself in a situation calling for the use of the structure in question that I responded without 'intellectualising' the process. By a situation calling for the use of the structure I mean a situation in which only the use of the present perfect tense would allow me to achieve a goal which I was intending to achieve. Thus, the use of the structure was indispensable in order to convey not only the intended superficial meaning of a particular phrase but to attain a more complex linguistic goal of convincing somebody or of truthfully relating a story. Such usage led to a qualitative change in me as a speaker of a foreign language and resulted in the creation of a new linguistic ego state. From that moment on, my present perfect tense problem ceased to exist. The use of the structure became natural and non-intellectualised, without reference to rules of usage. It was the experience of the meaningful situation that rendered the use of the structure meaningful and facilitated its use. The meaningfulness had to be personal, life-related, and real. In other words, I really had to experience the need to use the structure. I had to live through a situation of crisis, the resolution of which would be to use the structure in order to achieve a real, life-related goal.

In the case of the students mentioned in example three, learning has not really taken place until, in the process of resolving the existential crisis, the relationship between the knowledge attained and the student changes from being that of 'a student who possesses a knowledge of the rules of grammar', to that of 'a student who possesses more knowledge of the rules of grammar' and finally into 'a grammatically writing young academic'. In other words, the change is not constituted by the fact that student just knows more about grammar or writing. What happens is that a new person emerges, with a

[8] Merleau-Ponty (1998, p. 39) gives a description of such non-behaviouristic, "in-the-world" goal-orientedness in the *Structure of Behavior,* while explaining the reorganisation of functioning of a dung beetle after the amputation of one of its limbs.

new identity which, in our circumstances, we choose to call 'a young academic'. In this sense, a change to an 'academic identity' is achieved. This identity will, from now on, come into play whenever an academic task is presented. This identity is retained because the existential force which made the student choose to perform the leap of faith has exhausted itself and is no longer in action once the leap has been taken. The driving force towards that change was the Kierkegaardian anxiety and dread. Now that the anxiety and dread has been appeased there is no need to change, nor is there a need to go back. The new identity is comfortable and permanent, until, of course, another crisis is encountered.

Thus, the student is asked to perform a task which is meaningful, meaningful in an existential manner, which requires a complete, fully personal involvement. Through creating that requirement, the pressure is exerted, the anxiety but also the desire is created to become the 'young academic', to express the self as a 'young academic' does. Thus, if the student needs to express a past possibility (for example, the sentence: if she had expressed her disgust, she would have been regarded as low class), he or she will use the required grammatical structure without even thinking about it, as the young academic ego state is called to action simple because the need for the structure is there.

The change takes the student from 'being mindful and writing' to, when employing the new academic identity, 'mindfully writing'. It is important to emphasise that, as predicted by Heidegger, the phenomenal space is different from the "real" and "physical" space that surrounds us: phenomenal spatiality is directly present in experience whereas the "physical" space is an abstraction, not experienced directly (Riva, 2006, p. 54). Like the phenomenal space, the phenomenal being-in-the-world is not to be equated with the real, physical, and thus separable being. It is a unity in its own right.

No matter how intensively or how many times the structure is taught, it cannot be permanently retained unless it is the intention of the student him/herself to use the structure, not simply the intention of the teacher to make the student use the structure. The structure can also not be retained unless, through the distress and turmoil, the application of the structure becomes an unavoidable step on the path to breaching the gulf, performing the leap of faith and, finally, attaining a new identity.

Discussion and conclusion

The creation of the ego state results from exposure to certain goals that need to be fulfilled, from the 'call' to perform a particular task. In order for the "personal transformation" (Campbell, n.d., paragraph 2) to occur, the goal has to be extremely important to the individual performing the task. It has to put the person in a situation of existential crisis, the resolution of which can only be achieved through an inner, personal change. A similar call later triggers a particular ego state when this individual is confronted with a similar task. In this paper I have argued that the same process has to take place in order for a linguistic ego state to be formed.

Cartesian dualism accepts the thinking substance (*res cogitans*) as distinct from the extended substance (*res extensa*). From this separation, it follows that language, understood as sound, is just the physical manifestation of thought. However, I denounce the Cartesian dualism and, instead, accept the assumption championed by existential phenomenologists, particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty, that language completes the thought and that, in fact, the two are inseparable. It therefore follows that my being-in-the-world is inseparable from my being-in-the-language.

> In this Cartesian tradition, there is no plane on which consciousness and language meet. If one recognizes that consciousness is a unique type of being, then one will reject language as something outside consciousness and find that it is analogous to things. The interior link between consciousness and language no longer exists. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 3)

> Language is neither thing nor mind ... language is invincible against all efforts to convert it into an object. But evidently it also shows that we should not confuse it with the mind. Language defies the sign-signified distinction. (Merleau-Ponty, 2001/2010, p. 5)

I argue that, because of this intimate relationship between thought and language, my relationship with the world, and my being-in-the-world, stands in a relationship to the language used. My claim is that, while using a particular language, a person shifts to a particular mode of being, reflecting in the language that person's identity, entailing far more than the accent or vocabulary. The already formed identity or, as I prefer to call it, the linguistic ego state, is called upon by the situation in which I find myself.

In the first example, the child's experience reflects exactly the type of "personal transformation" that occurs as a result of a "profound sense of turmoil and subsequent change", as described by Campbell (n.d., paragraph 2) in her article. In other words, the child's tense grammar has changed because of the dramatic change in the world around him and his relation to this world. Thus, the lived world has an effect on the

person. There is constant interaction between the person and his lived world. To put it differently, the person's being-in-the-world shapes his identity and through the engagement from within helps the creation of the linguistic ego state. However, it is also exactly that situatedness in the world that is responsible for calling the relevant linguistic ego state into action.

From a phenomenological perspective, structure is inseparable from content (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962). This also means that, in the case of the students (Example three), the grammar and logical structure of a piece of writing is 'pregnant in the discourse'. It is only from an intellectualist (Cartesian) point of view that these two are separated.

The creation of a new linguistic ego state and, in consequence, a whole new identity, is a transformation of a person, not a purely cognitive change. It entails engagement, being 'at grips' with a situation. This change results in the feeling of being thrilled by the new-found power and therefore a raise in learner confidence. From a careless and sloppy child emerges a mindful and mature academic; from a hesitant, self-conscious second language user a confident, eloquent speaker emerges. Such changes can only be achieved through the creation of situations that are engaging, down-to-earth, and that touch the lives of the students.

Engaging in learning, being 'at grips', contributes to the formation of a new identity. The ego state, and the linguistic ego state in particular, is an ontological entity (neither a psychological entity nor a physical state) that allows for the emergence of the new identity. While the identity is 'you', the change in the identity is achieved through a change in 'a part of you', the particular ego state, not the whole. The creation of an ego state or the modification of an existing one thus leads to a change in overall identity which comprises all ego states.

To conclude, I would like to state that it is impossible, in the short space of this paper, to outline fully both the proof for the claim of being-in-the-world as the basis for the formation of linguistic ego states and, in consequence, new learner identities, as well as the claim's educational importance and validity. These questions, as well as the presentation of the situation in which the already created new linguistic ego state is 'called into action' are issues with which I intend to deal in a separate paper.

Referencing Format

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About the Author

Ewa Maria Latecka was born in 1958 in Lodz, Poland, where she spent her childhood and schooling years as well as the early part of her professional life. Originally qualifying with an MA in English Language, Language Teaching, and Linguistics from the University of Lodz, Poland (her thesis was in linguistics, on *Redundancy in natural languages*), Ewa later pursued being an English teacher for UCLA examinations as well as a medical translator and interpreter.

In 1995 she arrived in South Africa where she developed an interest in philosophy and existential phenomenology in particular, and was consequently employed in the Department of Philosophy, University of Zululand where she registered for a PhD, combining her qualifications in language teaching and linguistics with her interest in existential phenomenology. Ewa's thesis argues for change in the philosophical underpinnings of both theory and practice of language learning and teaching from the now prevalent Cartesian, Empiricist or Materialist approaches to that of Existential Phenomenology.

Ewa has presented at both local South African philosophy conferences as well as internationally. Apart from conference proceedings, her most recent publication (a book chapter) is: Latecka, E. (2009). Which self? Or what is it like to speak or listen – an existential phenomenological approach. In Tymieniecka, A-T. (Ed.), *Memory in the Ontopoiesis of Life, Book Two. Memory in the Orbit of the Human Creative Existence*, Series: Analecta Husserliana, Vol. 102. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer

When not working on her thesis or related topics, Ewa enjoys listening to classical music and opera in particular and has recently taken up painting and photography as hobbies.

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