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Article

Exploring language as the "in-between"

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Abstract
My starting point is a dialogical notion of language that puts forth language activity as a dynamic process performed by subjects conceived as dialogical selves. Obviously, the language performance taking place at a specific moment is not pure momentaneity, not only unique but also well-known, it can be identified and recognized. What, then, grants the performance order and makes it non-arbitrary? To preserve the priority of the performance of language activity one has to conceive of a structuring moment other than some supra-individual system that is upstream to performance. This leads to the "in-between": the principal assumption is that relata are constituted by an in-between, understood as a medium-generating relatedness, and thus the relata as such. Seeing language as that medium, I look at the way it functions, how it supplies forms as possibilities of generating a communicable and understandable subjectivity. Time is a key notion to this questioning.

The intricate relation between language and the self is the issue considered in this contribution. The question is explored from a psycholinguistic point of view, where "psycholinguistics" is understood according to a cultural-historical framework, rather than in its mainstream, cognitive version, as part of the cognitive neurosciences (Cutler, Klein, & Levinson, 2005). From its psychological side, cultural-historical psycholinguistics as developed in Bertau (2011a, 2011b), combines the sociocultural (or cultural-historical) tradition in psychology rooted in the work of Vygotsky and his circle (Yasnitsky, 2011) with a modern notion of the self as dialogical (e.g., Hermans & Gieser, 2012). From its linguistic side, this version of psycholinguistics links itself back to dialogical linguistics as developed by Vygotsky's contemporaries (Jakubinskij, Bakhtin,

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Vološinov), and in more recent research, as for instance in Markovà and Foppa (1990), and Linell (1998, 2009).

Hence, the core notions of cultural-historical psycholinguistics are processes concerning thinking, consciousness, and the self and their relationship to the language *activity*. Indeed, following Humboldt (1999)—who can be said to be one of the main sources for the Russian-Soviet dialogical notion of language (Bertau, 2013)—logical and factual priority is given to the becoming of language (*das Werden der Sprache*), or to its "doingness," its activity, as given by the Greek word *energeia* Humboldt uses in contrast to *ergon* ("the work," "the done").[1] With its pronounced view on language as a situated process, our notion of language is close to Shotter's approach putting forth a rhetorical notion of language for a "rhetorical-responsive version of social constructionism" (1993, p. 17; see also 2007).

Speaking of the "intricate relation between language and self," means for me to address both aspects with regard to their entanglement. Hence, there is not a dialogical language, *plus* communicating individuals, or selves, who can optionally be in dialogical relationships, neither is there the dialogical self *using* language, entering into dialogues and stepping out from dialogues. Rather, there is precisely that intricate relation between language and the self, both being dialogical, each in its own way with respect to functions and structures, and in a coordinated, interdependent way, that is, coordinated in development and performance (Bertau, 2012; Bertau, Gonçalves, & Raggatt, 2012a).

I would like to offer now some ideas in order to further elucidate the intricacy of language and self, taking up two main ideas I view as basic for conceiving the dialogicality of self and of language: time and the "Third." The notion of the Third is particularly supposed to offer a contribution to the discussion on intersubjectivity (e.g., Valsiner, 2003): it is grounded in time and underscores the need to think of dialogicality beyond the dyad of self and other (no matter how many selves and others). Going through a series of questions, we start with the status of the subject, proceeding then to the central notion of the medium as Third. In a next step I ask for that Third, for its manifestation and phenomenality. The results of this exploration are some considerations on the subjectification of the self in language activity.

Status of the subject

The approach as put forth by Dialogical Self Theory corresponds to a shift away from the notion of the autonomous, self-contained "I" belonging to the conventions of modern Western thinking and culminating in the individualist view of human functioning. The shift leads toward a relational self (Hermans & Gieser, 2012; see also Gergen, 2009) that is thought to be dialogically related, be that in the world with real others, or in an imagined, remembered, projected world where a self performs activities without actual others (Bertau, Gonçalves, & Raggatt, 2012b). Looking more closely at the leading concept of the related self leads me to inquire into the *kind* of relation at work here. To qualify it as "dialogical" is not enough for a closer look. In order to trace the intricacy previously mentioned it is precisely the kind and phenomenality of the dialogical-relational *movement* that is at issue: the phenomenological substance of that movement, the way it shows through concrete forms. This questioning is due to the perspective here adopted which

decisively privileges processes. Thus, I would like to go beyond relatedness as a given attribute, as an inherent part of the self, beyond a reification of relatedness by opening it to its very dynamics.

Movement between

I propose a kind of logical starting point for conceiving relatedness. Two possibilities are given in conceptualizing relatedness, amounting to a different location of the starting point of the relation. According to the first possibility, what is related, the *relata*, is thought to be the starting point of the relation; for instance, two entities, e.g., individuals, build up a relation which is then secondary to these individuals: they existed as such *before* any relation. Relatedness is thus a quality that arises from the individual's activities. The second possibility of conceptualizing relatedness is to give the relation primacy. In this case, the relata are *not* what generates the relation, rather, it is the movement between them which generates and forms the relata *as related*—as related *in that specific way* and as related *as these specific entities*.

   The shift from the self-contained "I" to the related self (to be precise: the "self–other-related self") is only consistent if completed by the conception of the primacy of the relation. So, to the shift from self-containment to relatedness, (a), comes a shift from being the starting point of relations to being the receiver of a relational movement (b). The first shift results in the necessity to acknowledge otherness (a facing person, *ein Gegenüber*), while the second shift displaces the focus of agency from the entities (the individuals) to a movement creating a quite specific, autonomous[2] "spacetime": a sensory experience *affecting* the entities. "Autonomous" is understood in the sense of being irreducible to an addition of elements, although not independent from these elements, and hence to have an own quality that is experienceable by the entities. "Affecting" means: touching, transforming the entities, so that the entities cannot sustain the movement without being "engaged"; moreover, the fact of being affected is necessary to become a related being. Hence, the model I advocate for—and which I think is an indispensable consequence of the rejection of the self-contained "I"—conceives relatedness from the viewpoint of an in-between. It is within and by virtue of this in-between that individuals are always and already related, that they are co-beings to each other.

   The idea of the subject put forth gives priority to the relational movements experienced by the subjects—as voicings, gestures, gazes, handlings, and touches; these experiences can be simultaneously perceptive and proprioceptive. It is in this sense that subjects are selves: they are necessarily related through a *medium* to another self. So, it is within a medium and by virtue of it that specific relational movements take place and are experienced through a certain phenomenological substance: the relational movement shows a "vivid materiality" (Vološinov, 1929/1986) that affects the subjects bodily, affectively, cognitively.

Medium

Shifting the defining weight from the related entities to their relation, it is necessary to look at that intermediary dimension generating the relata, being their medium. This shall

give an access to understand the specific medial quality of language that I advance here. I will first remain on a general level, proceeding then to language.

In order to grasp that intermediary dimension generating the relata, a distinction is worth making (Schürmann, 2010): the notion of that intermediary dimension *as means or tool* that mediates a relationship between two single entities (as is the case of artifacts) has to be distinguished from the notion of the intermediary dimension as *medium, as element*. In the first case, artifacts are made use of in order to reach a specific aim and put aside afterwards: the aim is attained. One can for instance use a ladder to reach the top of a cupboard in order to retrieve something. This kind of means is thus optional, not necessary, and principally under control of the individual—this is indicated by his/her taking them at hand and putting them aside. The idea of controllable means, or tools, as mediators to the world belongs to the notion of an individual in control of his/her means, who autonomously undertakes a relation by using a means or tool.

In contrast to this, the second case views the medium as a necessary element of living and activity, defining individuals *as individuals to each other*, that is, as related selves. It is by virtue of this medium that individuals are always and already related, that they are co-beings to each other. The in-between is the medium of their expressive possibilities insofar as it permits these specific expressive possibilities and insofar as it always puts itself between the individual and his/her world (self, other): human beings are in a principally mediated position to the world, to the other, and to themselves. The medium thus gives access to the world and at the same time it constrains this access to a certain form: it is not transparent, not just something to "go through," but something to "live with and by." Thus, relations can build up at all *as* social relations *by virtue* of this medium: individuals can come "themselves" as individualized and as positioned selves.

To be more precise, and in so doing coming back to the fundamental and founding dynamics of human life: the relational medium as movement between selves has *a form*, and I assume this form to be *actual* language activity—a sensorial formation occurring in space and time: the relational power of the necessary medium is crystallized in language activity. Language activity constitutes the necessary medium for human beings to be individuals in the sense of being positioned to each other and to themselves within a movement from self to other, from other to self. Clearly then, language is not a tool, not a means under control of an individual; rather, toolness of language is the result of particular societal language practices, by which the individuals can construct an outside position to their language and use it *as* a means.[3] As the element of human beings, language (the language activity) cannot be suspended, it cannot be subtracted without the individuals dissociating into a-social atoms: neither socially organized, nor being self–other positioned and related. This also means that one cannot choose to step out of and back into language, language cannot freely be taken and put aside—as human beings we are *in* language, not *facing* it.[4] So, the mediating element is not just an "intermediary tool" we could opt to take aside. Rather, we cannot do without that medium—we cannot "have" a self for our own, nor a language for our own. Without a medium, we could not be self–other related selves. In the sense I wish to put forth here, "medium" does thus not refer to a transmitter of information using different material supports, but to a middle that renders a process between entities possible at all (Schürmann, 2010, 2011). It is an "enabling element" that allows the entities to take specific formations and relationships to each other.

Importantly, this enabling element is not a substance because it is dependent on its "being done/lived," on its doing-ness. Taking the example of water as an enabling, living element for fish, constraining them to a "fishy" life: in that case, the necessary element enabling fish to live as fish, is indeed a substance. In contrast, language as enabling element, as medium in my understanding, is dependent on its doingness: as if fish by their swimming "do" water, nevertheless not being able to survive without their element.

Hence, the medium language mediates the living individuals to each other, and by doing this it offers forms to the relation, forming its specific dynamics, enabling and constraining specific spacetimes as the between of the subjects. This line of argument can be seen as a contribution to the de-entification of language: language is not an independent entity human beings face, it is *energeia*, a doing-ness generating relata, generating the related individuals. So, the medium in my understanding can also be called "medium-as-doingness." As said, language activity crystallizes the relational power of the medium, shows it as movement with forms. I will turn now to the dialogical-relational movement itself, constitutive of the individuals as related ones.

Active–passive

In order to further clarify the constitutive movement, I would like to come back to the second shift mentioned previously: the subjects are no more the generators of their relation but the receivers of a relational movement. As said, this second shift displaces the focus of agency from the subjects to a movement. So, it is to ask what kind of experience the subjects (or selves) undergo when the relational movement happens—if they are not agentive—or are they still? If then, how? In a word: what about the agentivity of the selves? The talking and listening is not just emerging, they, the *doers, do* it, after all.

In developing an alternative view to the self-contained "I," it is of utmost importance to go beyond the dichotomy of active and passive and to critically question the view of the individual as "active actor," so to speak. First, this introduces the other as primary with regard to the self, where this primary is seen as motivated ontogenetically as well as existentially (Bertau, 2013), and, second, it introduces passivity into activity (Schürmann, 2008). This step can be accomplished by turning to activity theory as developed by Leont'ev (see, e.g., 1978). Following Schürmann (2008), human activity is characterized by its medium status between activity and passivity. This is a clear rejection of the "doer," the fully active, controlling and controlled "I" and an acknowledgement of the "richness of the realized activity."

Following this, a pure and self-controlled activity is not possible. Thinking of the relational movement, other and self are to be conceived as interdependent because of the reciprocity of their positions. Hence, each is the giving one for the other, her/his starting point, and at the same time a recipient of the given. There is even more: each giving act is conditioned by an act of acceptance and acknowledgment: received by the one who gives, given by the one who receives. So, both parties are givers *and* receivers to each other. This simultaneity precisely reflects the specificity of human activity to be in the middle of active and passive. So, the subjects are still agents, but their agentivity includes passivity, receptiveness.

Two examples may illustrate this specificity. First, the linguistic case of medium, existing for instance, in Greek can be of some help here. Greek *didásko* as active form

means "I teach," whereas the medium form *didáskomai* means "I am taught," which is precisely not expressed by a passive form—being taught is not conceivable without the pupil being actively open to the teacher and his/her activities, and active in this openness, although receptive, as well as the teacher has to be open to the pupil's activity. Second, an instance of active–passive may be found in a specific joint movement: *leaning* on somebody amounts to being passive without letting all activity go. Leaning is not falling into the arms of someone, there is a tonus, and a directedness towards the other, but it is not holding complete control.[5]

From this point of view, to be affected—as previously said of the subjects—means for a self to undertake a joint passive–active performative process with another; both subjects are in the mode of mediumness.

Results

The first step leading into an exploration of the status of the subject can be summed up by three core terms. First: *Now and Materiality*. The idea of the movement highlights the Now of that constitutive movement, and simultaneously its "living materiality" as experienced concreteness, sensorial experience in space and time. Now and materiality belong to the language activity, to the forms its *energeia* takes in actual encounters between related selves. Second: *Subjects*. The subjects are formed and determined *as* subjects by the movement relating them to each other, hence generating the individuals as reciprocally related selves. This happens according to the mode of mediumness, and is conditioned by a necessary medium: the language activity. Third: *The Third*. The notion of medium acknowledges the dialogicality of the subject as an other–related self by consequently going beyond the pure dyadic structure of Me–You as intimate dyad of two subjects outside of any third factor. Relatedness of the selves is thus not optionally undertaken, on the contrary, the individuals are in need of a medium to be related at all, to become these certain, related beings. Hence, it is the medium *as Third* that transcends the self–other-structure, rendering that structure possible at all: it transforms the Me–You dyad into a Self–Other-relatedness-within-the-Third. The next step is to ask for the phenomenality of the Third, for the forms its doingness shows.

The Third as it lives in the language activity (in *energeia*)

As stated, language as language activity is the medium of human beings understood as related selves, this medium *exists as* a movement between these selves, as forms in specific performances: the sensorial, experienced, perceived forms of the verbal performances in time and space.

Locus of language

With that performance-based conception, language seemed to be dissolved into actual practice, into something emerging and disappearing after completion. And indeed, by insisting on the *energeia* aspect of language, on its doingness and becoming, the dichotomy of language versus speaking, of an abstract system versus its concrete usage is

questioned. An important question is then, how to conceive the structuring moment of the language activity without abstracting, detaching it from this very activity, by assuming a determining construct. The Soviet-Russian linguists Lev Jakubinskij and Roman Jakobson addressed precisely that question, questioning Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* (Friedrich, 2005, p. 42). By their functional and social approach to the language activity, these scholars insisted on the contact of language with social life, highlighting its dynamics of patterning and evaluations leading to the development of specific form means which are functional to the aims to be attained—Jakubinskij (1923/1979) devoted his seminal essay *On Dialogic Speech* to these "functional forms of speech," similar to the genres later conceived by Bakhtin (1953–54/1986). For Jakubinskij, these functional forms do not generalize into *one* abstracted system, on the contrary, the diversity of the forms is kept and must be investigated as such.

The functional and, in Jakubinskij's case, radically pragmatic approach to language as a practice of functional forms question the locus of language as conceived by Saussure's *Cours*. For Saussure, *langue* is a treasure deposited in our brain (Engler, 1968; Saussure, 2002), this depot develops from all the forms heard and practiced by the individual. Hence, language is fundamentally social, *but located in the individual brain*. This attribution has had a deep influence on the conception of language and of its functioning, converging with the picture of the self-contained "I." Particularly, the powerful emerging and spreading of the cognitive paradigm in psychology and linguistics in the second half of the 20th century reinforced the locationalism of language within the individual brain. One important result of that development is the almost complete de-temporalization of the language notion (Auer & Couper-Kuhlen, 1994). This goes together with the deepening of a visual image of language, in opposition to a notion including (or even privileging) language as an auditive event: heard, listened to, and bound to the temporal devolution of spoken words. Such a notion is mostly subterranean in Western thinking, it can foremost be found in the Sophists' notion of the logos (Buchheim, 1986), and in the language philosophy of romanticism with Herder as major contributor (Bertau, in press; Gipper, 1992; see also Lipari, 2014).

So, insisting on the *energeia* aspect of language, the challenge is how to not lose language into its praxis or activity, and how to explain that activity—after all, it functions, and there is something *there*. And this must be in some way related to time. If the structuring moment is precisely not understood from an essentialistic standpoint, it has to enter temporality. The general aim is to explain the order of the dynamics of language activity by the performance of the activity itself. Following Linell (2009), I will first address the use of language with regard to different temporalities, leading to the term of re-contextualization; this will be followed by a brief analysis of the kind of experience likened to these different temporalities; the final step points to a specific form of re-contextualization showing a specific temporality: the Third.

"Double dialogicality"

Staying with language activity and following the notion of the Third means also to stay with the fundamentally social and temporal factuality of language (*not* overlooked by Saussure). In this sense, it is useful to start with the image of different

states of language corresponding to different timescales and bound to different social practices, as done by the dialogist-linguist Linell (2009). Worth noting, actual usage-based approaches in cognitive linguistics follow the becoming of language through practices in time, claiming that "all linguistic units are abstracted from *usage events*" (Langacker, 2001, p. 144; see also Tomasello, 2000), hence they seem to be quite near to the Saussurian *langue* idea, and the questioning of language seems to remain basically cognitive and individualistic. I propose to look at that usage moment in a different way, with the conceptual instruments introduced: dialogicality of language and subjects as related selves, entailing a consequent dynamization and temporalization of what is often taken as entity.

Explaining the term "double dialogicality," Linell (2009) distinguishes two basic aspects of communication, bound to different timescales. The first aspect refers to the situated interaction, tied to its specific place and time. The second aspect refers to the situation-transcending practices, "sustained by social life, and … maintained over longer time periods" (Linell, 2009, p. 52). Thus, the two basic aspects of communication are "situations" and "traditions." The link between situations (1) and traditions (2) is given by the fact that participants in (1) contribute over time to the sustaining/changing of the long-term practices of (2). A simple chaining in time? Not for Linell, whose dialogical stance allows him to go right beyond a pure sequential-temporal chaining of (1)-(2)-(1)-(2) that would amount to a simple accumulation in time. Rather, for Linell, there is *dialogue* between (1) and (2). This is grasped by the very term of double dialogicality: the fact that participants "engage in both situated interaction and sociocultural praxis" (2009, p. 52). So, by their actual language activity, subjects both engage and perform a situated, unique verbal interaction and enact the sociocultural praxis the verbal forms they perform belong to (e.g., they perform the conversation belonging to a first date in a restaurant, to a family dinner, to an academic reception).

But what is really interesting is that this dialogical link makes (2), the tradition, *perceivable*: "Double dialogicality makes us see an … utterance both in its singularity and in its wider sociocultural and historical belongingness" (Linell, 2009, p. 53). There are interdependencies between (1) and (2), interactions (= 1) have situation-transcending aspects (= 2). The examples Linell gives are the case of a speaker who refers to his own words in other occasions, the case of a speaker who breaks out of the current genre (giving a lecture) and shifts into another one (narrating a personal anecdote): dialogues with own, past utterances, and dialogues with framings of genres. That kind of referencing and indexing leads to Linell's term of "recontextualization," addressing the traveling of utterances through texts and contexts. Linell (2009, pp. 248–249) distinguishes three types of recontextualizations, operating on different time scales, where the first two types correspond to the token level, the third type to the type level: (a) within the same conversation (participants make use of the same expressions several times), (b) to other texts or discourses (re-using or alluding to elements of other specific discourses/texts), and (c) borrowing/importing of other genres or discourse orders or routines.

So, we can see these types of recontextualizations as possibilities of indexing (2), the tradition, in (1), the interaction.

Calling-in

The following brief analysis is now possible. According to our temporal being-ness, we experience the situation, the actual interaction (= 1) *now*. And we also experience the tradition of practices (= 2) *now*: exactly through these strategies of referencing and indexing, of borrowing and importing, quoting ourselves, others, genres, discourses, by performing reprises and variations, re-invoicements and re-listenings according to formats we reiterate countless times in a great (although not unending) diversity of speech-and-listening practices. All these language activities call in, and thereby construct, our tradition. We "have" our tradition only in this mode of calling-in, so we experience our tradition again and again by way of performance of language practices, in our forms, or better: our formations according to conventionalized, public patterns—we hear the tradition for instance in certain intonatory and syntactic patterns, in ways of asking a question. Cases like migration coupled with the forced use of an alien language, or the isolation from one's speaker community (in prison), but also common bilingualism shows how painful it can be to not "*have* a language": on the contrary, it is obvious that language can disappear, that it can get thinner and lose contact to reality, which is nothing but others' reality we could share. So, the socio-historically transmitted tradition is a *present practice*. So far, this first step is deducible from Linell (2009). A second step leads to the Third.

There is a "type of recontextualization" which is situated before Linell's first one, upstream to any traveling of utterances and expressions. Before the self can reiterate the same word in an interaction, there is the fact that any word is already uttered, that is: all words are public and thus outside of the self's personal will and control. Children's play with language (e.g., Andresen, 2002) can be read as a sign to nonetheless try to control the public dimension of language. Hence, children illustrate (not the least by their laughter and fascination) that Wittgenstein's private language argument is correct, their exploration of impossible privateness is a playful verification of Wittgenstein's thought.[6] All words are public, and all words are already uttered: the second, complementary, thought is formulated by Bakhtin (1953–54/1986), saying that no speaker is the very first one, breaking the silence of the universe. Following further the Bakhtinian idea, it is to assert that all uttered words are polyphonic—precisely *because* they are words: as communal, public symbols, they circulate within the community through different spheres of activity (Vološinov, 1929/1986), as such they accumulate and carry specific and different (even contradictory) "value accents" with them that belong to specific usages; hence, words are not only public and polyphonic, they are—for Bakthin and Vološinov—not neutral, but always positioned and positioning, uttered with a certain voice as stance to the topic at issue, to oneself and to the other.

Stating that all words are polyphonic means to see the dialogical movement not only at work *between* related selves, but also *within* the elements of language activity itself: within utterances and even single words. This is the step fulfilled by Bakhtin (1929/1984) and Vološinov (1929/1986), surpassing "dialogical use" between interlocutors, and going beyond speaking persons as concrete and expressive bodies and into dialogizing utterances (Bertau, 2013). The spoken word itself is dialogical, thus speaking means to join

each and every time one's word with its particular voice, position, and value accents to the web of polyphonic words of one's community, entailing positions and evaluations, coexisting and reciprocating each other with their different voices. This web can be labeled the "phonic texture of the public word." In speaking, we display that public-ness, present in any and each instance of speaking-and-listening event, in any language activity: this is the Third, a witnessing audience that attends the Now of every interaction (= 1). By this attending and witnessing the Third transcends that Now.[7]

The Third *is occurring now*, because it is evoked and assumed in the present moment by the interacting partners, although in a different quality: now as "As we did and do always"—linking our self to each other's usages, linking our present moment to all the other moments we experience and we assume others experience similarly. In this time-suspending Now, the Third is normative: "as we did (speak/listen) and do always" is "rightly done," i.e., "rightly spoken/listened to," precisely guaranteed by the witnessing eyes and ears—and the Third's normativity is the glue that holds the particular Nows together. But it must be displayed *now*.

One can follow this practice of linking oneself and each other through time, for instance, in ontogeny, when a small interactive routine between mother and infant is taken up an hour later, or a day later, positioning the partners as those who did this together an hour ago, a day ago, in these positions in that way. A micro-history and tradition is building up, constituting the selves as these specific ones. Ways of doing emerge from the coordinated performances of these specific selves, dialogical practices where certain patterns are established and jointly abbreviated (Lyra & Bertau, 2008), and frames are established (Fogel, Garvey, Hsu, & West-Stroming, 2006). It is precisely in these forms-in-time that the language activity, first practiced to its full maturity by only one of the partners, is passed over and built up into complex symbolic language (Gratier & Bertau, 2012).

So, the interaction is experienced by the participants as *now*, and the tradition is experienced as *called into that now*, leading to the notion of an "always" in the participants—an important construction orienting their language activity. Any language activity affirms and confirms the rightness of the activity itself, and of the public correctness of the self–other related selves: of their sociality. Selves become social and language practices become general. The point is to become a general/social self, speaking–listening according to general/social forms of doing this. Precisely in doing this, we become selves. Again, children's language play is a precious resource for tracing these processes of negotiation and formation of a socialized self.

So, the Third is *there*, not in an ideal realm. It is within our shared life time, within our speaking-and-listening time. The locus of the Third is *here*, in our common performances in time and space. The momentaneity of language is at the same time its transcendence, its not-now, *but only performable now.*

The locus of the *langue* is not the inner treasure (*trésor intérieur*), and is more than a social fact (*fait social*), it is the moment we witness each other speaking-and-listening, a specific social activity as social performance (see descriptions as in Hymes, 1975). Hence, nothing is hidden (in the mysterious head neurocognitivism brings some light in), all is visible, one has to "learn to look"—according to the anti-essentialistic position of the late Wittgenstein. I think that the forms language activity concretely takes are the

major aspect to look at, for it is the form that is transcendable: the selves can pass it over historically, through nows with different partners in different situations. Form, in this context, has to be understood as "vivid materiality" (Vološinov, 1929/1986), a consequence of the dialogicality and polyphony that are perceptible in each word uttered. Transcendability of forms is the reason why we cannot theorize the self without assuming a dynamic form notion. Form guarantees momentaneity and historicity, it is the means of presentation and displacement, the means of transmission and the aiming point of the witnessing audience.[8]

Subjectification in the language activity (in *energeia*)

As the primacy is given to the relational movement that generates relata, that is, self–other positioned selves, and as the language activity is viewed as the concrete formation of that movement, language is assumed to be necessary to subjectification, it is necessary to become that self to that other and to oneself. The considerations on the Third further made clear, that this self is a deeply public self, precisely because of the language activity. Conceptualizing language within a tension of objectivity and subjectivity is here at stake: language cannot be pure objectivity, it must involve subjectivity in order to function for the subjects' communication and understanding—language is in that sense flexible with regard to the subjects' unique and particular expression. But it can neither be pure subjectivity, sheer expression of the subject, otherwise it would shift into a private, not-public and not-social "language"—objectivity as communal, public dimension is equally involved in language. Hence, both qualities are needed, coming together in the form of a tension, a kind of pulsation between subjectivity and objectivity. Again, Humboldt's language philosophy, and particularly his notion of the "specific objectivity of language" (Di Cesare, 1996), helps to further clarify the relation between language and the self.

Objectivity

The reason why language is necessary to subjectification, necessary to become that self to that other and to oneself lies in a specific characteristic of language that Humboldt (1999) develops: language is characterized by an objectivity *which does not cease to be subjective*. This idea can be explained following two pathways into Humboldt's philosophy of language, the first refers to semiotics, the second to the speaking–listening practice, to the work of language in thinking. In both lines of ideas one can observe Humboldt's deeply synthetic thinking, his faculty to think aspects together which are, particularly in the Kantian tradition, separated. In the case of the sign, it is the conjunction of sensuousness and intellect that paves the way for a conception of the word as *not* purely an intellectual, arbitrary sign: precisely then is language able "to talk about things in the world *and* to the partner, *about* that partner," language combines self-activity (*Selbsttätigkeit*) and receptiveness (*Empfänglichkeit*; Liebrucks, 1965, p. 124f., see also Liebrucks, 1972; Trabant, 1990). This characterization goes well with the concept of human activity as active–passive previously proposed. It is the second pathway I will follow here, and therefore briefly explain its context.

Humboldt situates language within the coordinated acts of address and reply—this is for him the genuine way of the *being* of language.[9] In the founding situation (Humboldt, 1827/1994), a person formulates an idea and utters it to a listener, who then replies: only the whole movement, completed by the reply of the other, makes the idea of self clear for both partners—it objectifies the idea, and that is: it gives it an understandable common form, but without losing the relationship to the *particular* subjects and to their *actual* movement.

According to Humboldt (1827/1994), a concept is generated by tearing it off from the "moving mass of ideas." By this movement, the concept thus torn off comes as object into a vis-à-vis position for the thinking subject. Thus, a first separation occurs, resulting in a first object the thinking subject can inwardly look at, or reflect on. But this only leads to a "feigned [apparent] object" (*Scheinobject*), an object that is incomplete, not enough separated, not enough objectified—i.e., its objectification needs completion, and this will be found in the other. Hence, in the following step the concept formed by the first separation is exteriorized, uttered to another subject, a listening and replying one. By this second, exteriorizing movement, the thinking subject now perceives (hears) her concept-object outwardly, and comes to an outward position to her own concept. This corresponds to the second separation. Here, we can locate the socializing effect of speaking on thinking: to formulate one's thinking is to make it understandable, shareable, it is to make it social—for others as well as for ourselves, because we could not understand the ever-moving mass of our ideas until it was subjected to the clarifying process with its two separations.

In this movement that simultaneously relates and separates, language displays a specific kind of objectivity that remains flexible to the subjects and allows them at the same time to become "alien" to themselves. It allows them to "see" (reflect on) their own activities as products, separated from themselves, materialized into transmittable objects traveling through time and space (e.g., spoken words)—but, importantly, within a dialogical movement that includes an Other, who is a unique subject as well, and who is at the same time a "representative" of the Third. For speakers–listeners are simultaneously these biographically unique selves, and as socialized individuals, representatives of their common Third.

Becoming a subject

As a result, to become a subject is precisely not possible in opposition to the social, or, even worse, in opposition to another. On the contrary, an individual generating his or her communicable and understandable subjectivity by the means of language activity through the other is profoundly *social and self*. Subjectification happens within and through the dialogical movement relating selves to each other by address and reply. Worth noting is that both positions are always also listening ones: listening to own words/objects, listening to the replied words/objects. In addition to the exteriorized words, we must add the interior words coming into contact with the heard ones in the process of understanding: understanding is active and dialogic (Bakhtin, 1953–54/1986; Vološinov, 1929/1986). Hence, a "thick dialogical volume" belongs to each spoken and listened word. Clearly, then, each and every act of speaking–listening

amounts to a socializing act leading us through this vibrant dialogical volume and the "specific objectivity of language"—characteristics of the verbal symbol.

Becoming a self as communicable and understandable, that is, a social and public self, does not lead into uniformization of self. The reason lies, again, in the specificity of language, of its flexibility towards the subject and the objectivity as Third. There is an incessant movement at work here, which keeps individuality and difference, described by Humboldt as a tension between the "power of language" and the "dominion of man":

> Nobody means by a word precisely and exactly what his neighbor does, and the difference, be it ever so small, vibrates, like a ripple in water, throughout the entire language. Thus all understanding is always at the same time a not-understanding, all concurrence in thought and feeling at the same time a divergence. The manner in which language is modified in every individual discloses, in contrast to its previously expounded *power*, a dominion of man over it. (Humboldt, 1999, §9).[10]

Hence, it is in not-understanding that we are these unique selves, nonetheless public and social to the extent that we practice the language activity with our fellow others.

Conclusion

Opting for a process-oriented understanding of language and of the self, I stated that both are dialogical, each in its own way. On these grounds, some ideas and arguments were proposed as a point of entry to clarify the entanglement of language and the self. In a first step, the status of the subject is given by the relational movement subjects experience and are affected by, it is by this very movement that a subject becomes a self, understood as self–other-related individual: related to another self *and thus* also to oneself, namely by the necessary movement generating a specific in-between. That in-between is a temporal devolution perceptible and experienceable, it takes sensorial forms in the language activity. Hence, giving up the image of subjects who enter optionally into relationship by a means under their control brings the quality of the relational means as necessary medium to the foreground, experienced in the formations of the in-between. Shifting the defining point from entities to processes, from entities to their relatedness, enables us to see what renders the relational structure of self–other possible at all: the Third. With that, yet incompletely theorized, notion I try to conceptualize the necessary step leading from the simple Me–You dyad to a socialized, comprehensible self (to self and other), to a self living in language as its medium, thus a fully public self.

Exactly then it is a major necessity to understand the functioning of language for the self, of language as medium that gives access (by enabling and constraining forms) to the common social reality lived with consociates. Within the dialogical movement of actual, socio-historical selves, language displays a specific kind of objectivity, remaining flexible to these subjects, and at the same time allowing them to become "alien" to themselves, to get a public perspective on something of their own—to even form that something as their own before the eyes and ears of the Third. It is precisely in the selves' performing of their doingness, that language fulfills its subjective-objectivity, that the Third becomes present, is present.

   The dialogical movement takes place within language and within the self: the self creates and finds its subjective, unique self in the movements within the specific objectivity of language. Here, in the movement reaching from subjectivity to shared objectivity *through* another self, is the core of the self's subjectivity.

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Notes

1. The term "doing-ness" is used with reference to Seifrid (2005). As Seifrid (p. 32) points out, the Russian translation by Potebnia (an Ukranian linguist who founded the Russian Humboldtian tradition) of *energeia* even intensified Humboldt's sense of process: the Russian term *deiatel'nost* Potebnia uses means "the doing-ness of language," which is more active with respect to the workings of language.
2. The profound analysis concerning social cognition and coordination by De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) evidences the autonomy of the in-between.
3. Specific language activities are related to the tool-use: writing, reading, metalinguistic analysis. This may lead to the Written Language Bias (Linell, 1998). For further details see Bertau (2011b) and the commentary to axiom 2 saying that "*[T]he language activity is the medium of the individuals' sociality and self–other-relatedness, hence there is no outside standpoint to language, and the possibility of an actual instrumental relationship to it is not possible. Rather, an instrumental usage of language activity is the result of specific socio-cultural practices*" (p. 33).
4. For a similar approach in linguistics see the model formulated by Weigand (2009, p. 79). The toolness view of language is criticized from a philosophical stance by Gadamer (1966/1986).
5. That the dichotomy active–passive is far too simple for any living being where contact and coordination plays a major role is clear from a systemic and autopoetic approach (as e.g., in biology and cognitive sciences). The notion of coupled systems introduced by De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) can be seen as the condition for gaining access to another notion of activity.
6. Following Andresen (2002), children play with language at each level: pragmatic, syntactic, and semantic, and also on the sound level. They play for instance with speech acts and conversational rules by breaking them, marking that they *know* the rule by metacommunicative comments and/or by laughter: they, for example, violate the convention to ask certain questions only for unknown information, they affirm false facts (being a girl while being a boy). Playing with grammatical structures, children for instance derivate adjectives from substantives, constructing non-existent adjectives: Garvey's example is a girl (5;7) saying: "'Cause it's fishy too. 'Cause it has fishes," the boy (85;2) replies/continues: "And it's snakey too 'cause it has snakes and it's beary too because it has bears," the girl again: "And it's … and it's hatty 'cause it has hats" (1977, p. 38).
7. I call the Third also the Polis, see, for example, Bertau (2010). This term allows us to conceive in a more specific way of the Third, and it permits us to go beyond the—misleading—numbering. For the sake of clarity, I here stay with "the Third" in the meaning of "different."

8. I am not arguing for a sheer formalism. Rather, I wish to put forth a notion of form that is precisely not bare of any content, that has its own value, through which the *relation* of the uttered word to its communicative context is established—hence, the communicative context is *not expressed* by the form (Friedrich, 1993, p. 160; see Vološinov 1929/1986, pp. 95–96). This corresponds to Vološinov's notion of language form, explicitly conceived as revision of the abstract form notion in linguistics.
9. The contrast is between "niemals zureichende Erscheinungsform" (never sufficient form of appearance) and "wesentliche Seinsweise" (essential way of being; Di Cesare, 1996, p. 285).
10. This quote is retrieved from the online version of Humboldt (1999), thus without page. German original: Humboldt, 1903–1936, Volume 7, I, pp. 64–65.

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