The Tyranny of ‘Teaching and Learning’

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Abstract

The phrase ‘teaching and learning’ has essentially replaced the word ‘teaching’ in educational discourse. The linguistic shift occurred as part of a wider movement in the 1980s and 1990s to give greater attention to learning in the educational process, and the phrase served a sloganistic function. With the learning paradigm now largely uncontroversial, the phrase—like other ex-slogans—may now be carrying implications more tied to its literal meaning. This paper suggests that the constant reference to learning in the context of teaching carries the implication that teaching is always accompanied by learning. After applying Gilbert Ryle’s distinction between task and achievement verbs, the paper argues that under certain interpretations, the idea that teaching implies learning is deeply problematic. The paper proposes that we instead use ‘teaching and studying’: to communicate the deep connections between the activities carried out by teachers and students, without supporting the unhelpful idea that the activity of teaching must always lead to the achievement of learning.

Keywords Learning · Teaching · Study · Policy

Introduction

Some phrases are designed to change how we think. They are slogans, partisan formulations intended to promote alternative views of the world. Their message is not limited to the narrow meaning, but they are supported by a set of background ideas to communicate a wider message. ‘Black Lives Matter’, ‘For the Many Not the Few’, ‘Make America Great Again’: they function figuratively to express a grander sentiment than the literal meaning of the phrase. And they are intended to persuade, by capturing an idea so concisely and poetically that through repetition they can shift people’s views. The literal meaning is still there, however, and if the slogan hangs around for long enough, and it succeeds in changing people’s minds, it loses its radical force and the more prosaic meaning becomes more influential. In an imagined future without racial injustice, the phrase ‘Black Lives Matter’ might seem prosaic in the extreme.

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With the passage of time... slogans are often increasingly interpreted more literally... They are taken more and more as literal doctrines... rather than as rallying symbols. (Scheffler 1960, p. 37)

As slogans lose the radical context and partisan message, and begin to be interpreted in ways more closely tied to their literal meaning, they can sometimes be problematic. The new meanings may not be helpful: they may not be consistent with the original motivating ideas, or they may not be plausible.

‘Student voice’ is an example of a phrase from education that used to be radical, has become commonplace, and is now interpreted in more literal ways; ways that are not necessarily helpful. The origin of the phrase has been traced to a desire in the early 1990s to counter the “exclusion of student voices from conversations about learning, teaching and schooling” (Cook-Sather 2006, p. 361), though the phrase may have been used far earlier in the context of the student activism of the 1960s, and students’ desires for greater involvement in the governance of universities (Wilson and Gaff 1969). It was originally radical, but over recent decades the value of listening to the ‘student voice’ has become widely accepted. For example, in UK higher education, it features prominently in both the Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA 2012) and the Government’s most recent higher education green paper (DBIS 2015). The original implications of the phrase being no longer radical, new implications have arisen more linked to the literal meaning: there are concerns that the singular noun form implies that students’ views about their experiences are homogenous (Cook-Sather 2006). There are similar worries that the phrase ‘student experience’, originally used to shift attention on to students’ lived experiences of higher education, now carries the problematic implication—linked to the literal meaning—that students’ experiences are monolithic (Sabri 2011). This paper is about another phrase that was originally partisan but is now a routine part of the educational linguistic landscape, ‘teaching and learning’.

The phrase ‘teaching and learning’ has become so prominent in the English language, that it often feels as if it has become one word – ‘teachingandlearning’. (Biesta 2015, p. 230)

Anyone working in education in an Anglophone country will recognise the phenomenon that Gert Biesta is describing. For many purposes, the word ‘teaching’ has been replaced by the phrase ‘teaching and learning’ (or ‘learning and teaching’). Policies, job titles, units, events, resources all now often carry the ubiquitous phrase. To use the word ‘teaching’ on its own has the faint air of an anachronism, a signal that you have missed the past few decades of educational progress. The phrase ‘teaching and learning’ is ubiquitous, but its’ origin is unclear. Google’s Ngram facility, which tracks the historical occurrence of words and phrases in digitised books—not a complete dataset but a helpful partial picture—indicates that the phrase was rare before around 1982 but proliferated dramatically in the late 1980s and 1990s.¹ There is no record of any explicit call to replace talk of ‘teaching’ with talk of ‘teaching and learning’, so we don’t have direct evidence for any intention behind that linguistic shift. Nevertheless, given what was happening at the time the motivation seems fairly clear. In the US, the UK and Australia in particular, a number of ideas were rising to prominence that were linked by a focus on learning: constructivism (Vygotsky 1978; Lave and Wenger 1991), post-modern critiques of educational authority (Usher and Edwards

¹ Ngrams can be generated at <https://books.google.com/ngrams>.

1994), a neoliberal focus on individual benefit (Biesta 2005) and critical pedagogy (Freire 1970). In higher education, there were also new ideas about students' approaches to learning (Marton and Saljo 1976), student-centred approaches played a role (Lea et al. 2003) and there was an interest in 'student engagement' (Kuh 2001). Robert Barr and John Tagg encapsulated the new climate in higher education by talking about a paradigm shift:

In its briefest form, the paradigm that has governed our colleges is this: A college is an institution that exists to *provide instruction*. Subtly but profoundly we are shifting to a new paradigm: A college is an institution that exists to *produce learning*. (Barr and Tagg 1995, p. 13, emphasis original)

The practice of replacing the word 'teaching' with the phrase 'teaching and learning' coincided with an increased focus on learning: for teachers, for leaders in schools and universities, and for efforts to monitor and improve educational quality.

In the absence of direct evidence of intent it seems likely that the timing is not a coincidence, and that the adoption of the phrase was part of wider efforts to promote the value of learning, and in particular to promote learning as the source of the value of teaching. By appending 'and learning' every time we talk about teaching, the terminological shift seems intended to remind us to keep the end goal of learning in mind. At a time when the 'instruction paradigm' was still dominant, the phrase served a clearly sloganistic function. It was deployed as part of a broader movement, a set of ideas; and as a rallying cry and badge of progress: we teach so they learn, we aren't the stuffy sages of a conservative past, we step down from the pedestal and acknowledge our role as facilitators of student learning.

It isn't a slogan anymore, because the learning paradigm is no longer controversial. The primacy of learning is a platitude. Adult education has been rebranded as lifelong learning, LearnDirect and FutureLearn are prominent education providers, teachers are encouraged to be fellow-learners, schools and universities make use of virtual learning environments. In higher education, the improvement of learning has become the focus of both professional development for academic staff (Gibbs 2013) and quality enhancement (Gunn and Cheng 2015). Learning outcomes have become central to curriculum development (Allan 1996). Over the past couple of decades there has been persistent interest in evaluating educational quality by measuring students' 'learning gains' (Evans et al 2018). Gert Biesta has called the dominance of learning 'learnification': "the redefinition of all things educational in terms of learning" (2019, p. 549). For Biesta, the dominance of learning has had a pernicious effect. He sees the focus on learning as promoting an individualistic and consumerist outlook, and undermining the proper role of teachers: it causes "a certain embarrassment amongst teachers about the very idea of teaching and their identity as a teacher" (Biesta 2013, p. 451). The practice of education may not everywhere embody the ideas of Vygotsky and Freire, but Biesta is surely right that the 'learning paradigm' in Barr and Tagg's phrase is no longer radical. The apparent message of the shift from talking of 'teaching' to talking of 'teaching and learning'—that we should give learning its rightful place as the ultimate source of educational value—is now the dominant ideology.

As a retired slogan, still hanging around in educational discourse but without its radical energy, it is worth considering what effect it might be having on how we think about education. It was introduced to change how we think. Having been successful (or at least having been on the winning side) it can continue to influence conceptions of education, but in unforeseen and unintended ways. Just as the phrase 'student voice' has come to send a problematic message now that the radical message has evaporated and the literal meaning is more exposed, 'teaching and learning' may be having a deleterious effect. Given the

ubiquity of the phrase in contemporary education, it is an alarming prospect and an important question to explore.

There are many ways that the constant linking of ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ might be affecting how we think, but the most obvious—and the one I will focus on in this paper—is that the concepts of teaching and learning are closely linked. More specifically, the most natural interpretation of the widespread use of the phrase is that teaching is always accompanied by learning. That is, the replacement of the word ‘teaching’ by the phrase ‘teaching and learning’ can best be made sense of if teaching is always accompanied by learning. If teaching is happening, learning is happening; teaching implies learning. And it is important to note that the discourse does not imply the relationship is symmetrical; the word ‘learning’ does not seem to have been systematically replaced by the conjunction.

Tasks and Achievements

Before assessing whether or not the idea that teaching implies learning is helpful, we need to take into account an important ambiguity in the meaning of both ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’: both of them can be understood either as activities, or as the successful outcome of activities. In *The Concept of Mind* in 1949, the philosopher Gilbert Ryle drew a distinction between ‘task verbs’ and ‘achievement verbs’. A task verb refers to an activity without any implication of the success of that activity: to *run* the race, to *treat* the patient, to *search* for the thimble. An achievement verb is used to refer to an activity which has led to a particular outcome: to *win* the race, to *cure* the patient, to *find* the thimble.

One big difference between the logical force of a task verb and that of a corresponding achievement verb is that in applying an achievement verb we are asserting that some state of affairs obtains over and above that which consists in the performance, if any, of the substantive task activity. (Ryle 1949, pp. 143–144)

The task/achievement distinction can be problematic because, as Ryle says, ‘we very often borrow achievement verbs to signify the performance of the corresponding task activities, where the hopes of success are good’ (p. 143). We may say that someone is *finding* some food for lunch before actually knowing if they’ve been successful, but if we didn’t have good reason to think they would ultimately be successful (if they had gone to a clothes shop rather than a food shop, for example) it would be more natural to say that they were merely *looking*. That is an example of the achievement sense being ‘borrowed’ to refer to a task, but there are verbs that seem to respectably carry both task and achievement meanings:

We use the verb ‘to observe’ in two ways. In one use, to say that someone is observing something is to say that he is trying, with or without success, to find out something... In another use, a person is said to have observed something, when his exploration has been successful. (Ryle 1949, p. 211)

Philosophers of education have used these ideas to explore the connections between teaching and learning, starting with B. O. Smith in 1960, who argued that ‘to teach’ is a task verb in Ryle’s sense, while ‘to learn’ is an achievement verb, on the grounds that while “[i]t makes sense to say that we teach unsuccessfully... it is self-contradictory to say that we learned French unsuccessfully” (Smith 1960, p. 16). Nevertheless, most writers who take a view (e.g. Scheffler 1960; Hare 1969; Kapunan 1975; Biesta 2015) believe that both

'to teach' and 'to learn' can be understood according to Ryle's analysis of 'to observe'; i.e. they can be used—without error—in both task and achievement senses. While Smith highlights the sense of 'to teach' that does not imply success, such as 'I've been teaching them Spanish for a week but they haven't learnt anything', others highlight the apparent implication of a phrase such as 'she taught him the capitals of South America' that the attempt at teaching has been successful. Smith's claim that 'to learn' functions as an achievement verb is based on a use such as 'Jane has learnt how to calculate the area of a circle'. Others—and Smith himself in later work—highlight phrases such as 'Jane is learning how to ride a bike' to argue that 'to learn' also has a task sense without the implication of success. As Salvador Kapunan pointed out in 1975, the ambiguous nature of 'to learn' is neatly encapsulated in the following passage from John Dewey (who, as discussed later, played an important role in the debate about the relationship between teaching and learning):

The only way to increase the learning of pupils is to augment the quantity and quality of real teaching. Since learning is something that the pupil has to do himself and for himself, the initiative lies with the learner. (Dewey 1910, p. 36)

Dewey seems to first use 'learning' in an achievement sense, and then to use it in the following sentence with a task sense. It is worth noting that the kind of ambiguity found in 'to teach' and 'to learn' is not particularly unusual. Take for example the verb 'to build': 'Jane is building the shed' appears to denote an attempt while 'Jane built the bridge' denotes a success.

If it's right that both 'to learn' and 'to teach' can function as task/activity verbs and achievement verbs, there are then four different ways to understand the idea that teaching implies learning:

- (P1) the *achievement* of teaching is always accompanied by the *achievement* of learning
- (P2) the *achievement* of teaching is always accompanied by the *activity* of learning
- (P3) the *activity* of teaching is always accompanied by the *achievement* of learning
- (P4) the *activity* of teaching is always accompanied by the *activity* of learning

With these different propositions in front of us, the questions are firstly, which of these are likely to be communicated by the way we use the phrase 'teaching and learning', and secondly, which of these might create problems for how we talk and think about education.

A couple can be dealt with quickly. Given that the achievement sense of 'to teach' is just that the relevant students have achieved the relevant learning, (P1) is a tautology and can't be an idea inspired by the use of the phrase. (P2) is also tautologous, given one additional and reasonable assumption: that the achievement of learning requires the activity of learning. Is that a fair assumption? Could someone successfully learn something without having engaged in the activity of learning? It seems unlikely. Learning always requires some kind of effort, and on a conceptual level the achievement of learning requires a process of reaching that achievement, which at a minimum is all that the activity of learning consists in.

Is the Activity of Teaching Always Accompanied by the Achievement of Learning?

The relationship between teaching and learning has been the focus of debate in the philosophy of education since the 1960s. In 1968 it was called “a lively, though modestly sized controversy” (Komisar 1968, p.169). The key inspiration for the debate was John Dewey’s claim earlier in the century that there was a necessary connection between teaching and learning:

Teaching may be compared to selling commodities. No one can sell unless someone buys. We should ridicule a merchant who said that he had sold a great many goods although no one had bought any. But perhaps there are teachers who think that they have done a good day’s teaching irrespective of what pupils have learned. There is the same exact equation between teaching and learning that there is between selling and buying. (Dewey 1910, pp. 35–6)

In the subsequent literature the ambiguity in the verb ‘to teach’ was recognised immediately, with B.O. Smith in 1960 drawing on Ryle’s distinction between task and achievement verbs. It took longer to acknowledge the parallel ambiguity of ‘to learn’, and until Kapunan (1975) it seems to have been exclusively understood in its achievement sense. The debate about whether teaching implies learning was thus largely a debate about the validity of (P3)—that the activity of teaching implies the achievement of learning—and powerful arguments were put forward in opposition.

Firstly, there is the implausibility of the epistemological claim implied by (P3). If the achievement of learning is a necessary condition of the activity of teaching, then it would seem that in order to know that I was teaching I would need to have evidence that my students were learning something. While some have been prepared to accept that consequence—“it is because changes [in the student] may have taken place but be concealed from us that we cannot be incorrigible about whether or not we are teaching” (Freeman 1973, p. 17)—it is deeply counterintuitive (Mitchell 1966).

There are other ways in which (P3) is in tension with how we usually talk about education. We would normally, as a matter of course, accept that sometimes teaching is *unsuccessful*, in that teaching sometimes fails to make the impact that we hope, and the students don’t learn, or don’t learn what we hope, or in the way we hope. It seems a truism that to teach is in fact to *hope* that our efforts lead to learning. We would usually, as a matter of course, accept the literal truth of a sentence such as ‘I’ve been teaching him how to juggle but he just can’t get the hang of it’. Although there is a broad consensus in the literature for the literal truth of such sentences (e.g. Komisar 1968) there are dissenting voices, arguing that what we might think of as unsuccessful teaching is actually a *failed attempt* at teaching: you aren’t teaching, you are instead merely trying to teach (Freeman 1973; Kleinig 1982). Of course the activity of teaching and the achievement of learning are clearly very closely connected in some ways. For instance, if you don’t even have an intention that your actions will generate learning then you probably can’t be said to be teaching (Hare 1969; Kansanen 1999). Similarly, if in general your actions fail to generate learning—if your students never successfully learn—then we may well stop calling those actions teaching (Komisar 1968; Dietl 1973). However, despite the undoubted close connection between teaching and learning, (A3) itself—that the activity of teaching has only taken place if learning has been achieved—is implausible. As

Gary Fenstermacher says: "It makes no more sense to require learning in order to be teaching than it does to require winning in order to be racing" (1986, p. 38).

More than one person has commented on the slogan-like character of (P3). Those such as Dewey who claim a necessary connection between the activity of teaching and the achievement of learning are plausibly just trying to emphasise the importance of learning in the context of teaching: 'So talk about the bond of teaching and learning is gestural, it is the symbolic crux of an altogether worthy crusade to tell teachers to feel pushed to look at the results of their teaching in the student' (Komisar 1968, p. 170, see also Broudy 1954, Scheffler 1960). As a slogan (P3) may have merit. Taken literally, it is a radical departure from our common sense ideas about teaching and learning.

Is the Activity of Teaching Always Accompanied by the Activity of Learning?

This idea is far less problematic. Few would disagree with the claim that for someone to be engaged in the act of teaching, someone must be engaged in a corresponding act of learning. Unlike for (P3), the idea of an *attempt* at the activity of teaching does seem relevant here. The acceptability of a sentence such as 'I tried to teach them but they wouldn't pay any attention' points in that direction. For example, if you are teaching an online class but unknown to you the internet connection has failed, it would seem natural to describe that as a case at attempted—but failed—teaching; the reciprocal activity of learning is not present, and what you are doing is probably not correctly described as teaching. Unlike (P3), (P4) does not clash with common sense.

'Teaching and Studying'?

There are few things more pointless than complaining about everyday language, however the phrase 'teaching and learning' belongs more to the language of policy than normal speech. While it may be used in conversation it is more likely to be encountered in policies, job titles and professional development materials. The growth in its use seems to have been part of a conscious attempt to change the way that people thought about education, and as such there is scope to think again, if the phrase is now found to promote unhelpful ideas.

In the debate about the relationship between teaching and learning, Gary Fenstermacher proposed the term 'studenting' or 'pupilling' as a way of capturing the task sense of 'learning' alone, without the achievement sense. He was trying to clarify the relationship between teaching and learning: "The task of teaching is to enable studenting" (p. 39, though he acknowledged that it "certainly seems odd to use the word 'student' as an intransitive verb"). Pertti Kansanen (1999) developed a similar idea: "If we describe the activities of the teacher as teaching, I would prefer to call the activities of the student studying" (p. 85).

One motivation for using the idea of studenting/studying to express the task sense of 'learning' is to clarify the responsibilities of teachers. The idea that the activity of teaching necessarily entails the achievement of learning—i.e. (P3)—suggests that it is the job of teachers to ensure that their students successfully learn, and they have failed if they don't. Gert Biesta has pointed out that by presenting studenting/studying as the proper goal of the task of teaching, Fenstermacher and Kansanen help us see more clearly that the

responsibility of the teacher is limited to the students' engagement in the task of learning and not its achievement: "On this new scheme, the teacher is held accountable for the activities proper to being a student (the task sense of 'learning'), not the demonstrated acquisition of content by the learner (the achievement sense of 'learning')" (Fenstermacher 1986, p. 40). On this view, the wrong lesson was drawn from the learning paradigm. Teachers are not directly accountable for the achievement of learning; the thing that teachers are directly accountable for is students' engagement in the activity of learning.

[W]hat teachers should try to bring about is not the learning itself, but the activity of studenting. In this set up, learning is, at most, the 'effect' of the activity of studenting, but not of the activity of teaching. (Biesta 2015, p. 233)

Nevertheless, the message of the learning paradigm, that the achievement of learning is paramount, must be accepted. Pertti Kansanen talks about the 'teaching-studying-learning process' to capture the idea that while the achievement of learning is the ultimate goal, the direct effect of teaching is not the achievement of learning, but studying.

For the teacher, to bring about learning is the central task, but to control the learning taking place is theoretically impossible. What the teacher is able to control or rather to guide is studying. (Kansanen 2003, p. 230)

On this view, staff are not let off the hook for the achievement of learning, but it is acknowledged that the responsibility runs via an impact on students' engagement in the activity of learning.

If the word 'studying' can capture the activity sense of 'learning' without its achievement sense, could it help us to avoid the problematic implications of the phrase 'teaching and learning'? (P3)—the unhelpful implication that the activity of teaching necessitates the achievement of learning—turns on the achievement sense of 'learning', and if 'teaching and studying' were used in place of 'teaching and learning' (P3) would no longer be implied. 'Teaching and studying' would, on the other hand, preserve (P4), the important idea that the activity of teaching is always accompanied by some learning activity.

In the last few years, in a distinct but related conversation, there has been a focus—including a recent special edition of *Studies in Philosophy and Education*—on the idea of study as an alternative to neoliberal forms of learning, drawing on the ideas of Robert McClintock and Giorgio Agamben, among others. In this discussion, study is conceptualised as a way of participating in education without acquiescing to dominant logics of acquisition and completion. In particular, study is presented as not only distinct from goal-oriented activities, but as a rebellion against the idea of ends-over-means. Study is "interminable" (Agamben 1985, p. 64), the studier is "refusing actualization" (Zhao 2020, p. 322), study is "means without an end" (Ford 2014, p. 105). Giorgio Agamben uses the character of 'Bartleby the Scrivener' from Herman Melville's short story of the same name, who 'prefers not to' when asked by his employer to do his contractually obliged work, to illustrate the nature of study as a refusal of completion. As Tyson Lewis frames it, Bartleby is a powerful example because it shows how the studier can paradoxically stand within a scheme of achievement and productivity, while remaining outside it (Lewis 2014a). Study is a liberation insofar as it enthusiastically embraces radically counter-productivity concepts such as stupidity (Agamben 1985), unprofessionalism (Arsenjuk and Koerner 2009) and uselessness (Lewis 2014a, b); this is study as "self-nourishment of the soul" (Agamben 1985, p. 65) rather than instrumentalist education.

A key way that this idea of study has been explored—"[a] continual concern" (Zhao et al 2020, p. 241)—is via its relation to the concept of learning. While in one sense, the

rejection of goals means that study is set simply and directly against “an outcome-based learning and goal-oriented learner” (Zhao 2020, p. 322), some authors have complicated that picture. In their introduction to the special issue of *Studies in Philosophy of Education*, Zhao et al (2020) provide a helpful perspective on the relationship between study and learning. They characterise the relationship as an open question, with the two ideas “in flux and constant dialogue” (p. 242). They ultimately suggest that we can understand the relationship as a “glissade”, which I take to mean a form of duet where each has its distinct role, in part defined by opposition to the other, locked in a reciprocal relationship of some kind. This idea is strongly linked to Weili Zhao’s understanding of the relationship as *ying-yang*, with study and learning as “a movement rather than a binary pair” (Zhao et al 2020, p. 241). Lewis (2014b) offers study as a “profanation of the learning apparatus”; a rejection and opposition, but intertwined with learning, not an independent or truly distinct idea.

This recent work, conceptualising study in contrast—however construed—to learning, challenges my suggestion that we use ‘to study’ to capture the activity sense of ‘to learn’. Even when authors such as Tyson Lewis are clearly employing ‘learning’ with its activity sense, they present it as much more goal-oriented than study: e.g. “learning has a specific purpose with predefined success conditions” (Lewis 2014b, p. 164). The activity sense of ‘learning’ does not imply that learning goals are attained—that is the achievement sense—but it does unarguably encompass the work that students put in towards achieving those goals. It is the ‘seeking’ to the achievement sense’s ‘finding’. If study is as unmoored from aims and goals as this recent work suggests then this would challenge my proposal. The phrase ‘teaching and studying’ would not preserve the implication that teaching is always accompanied by the activity of learning (P4), so it would not—at least by the argument of this paper—serve as a helpful replacement for the phrase ‘teaching and learning’.

The concept of study developed by these writers is a valuable counterpoint to the logic of learning, and it intersects in interesting ways with Biesta’s idea of ‘learnification’. Its importance is not in doubt, regardless of how close its alignment to what we mean by ‘studying’ in everyday speech. For my purposes, however, that is the key question. Is it plausible that there is such clear water between ‘to study’, as we would normally use it, and the activity sense of ‘to learn’? Is it plausible to say that ‘Jenny is learning the history of the welfare state’ paints a very different picture from ‘Jenny is studying the history of the welfare state’? And that the former presents her work as a means to an end while the latter presents it as a “tinkering” (Jimenez 2020, p. 281) or a “meandering” (Zhao et al 2020, p. 240)? Can study not stand as the activity sense of ‘learning’?

The connection with learning goals does seem to be weaker for studying than learning. For example, two students from very different courses, sat together in the library, could naturally be said to be studying together when it would not be natural to say that they were learning together. But how radical is that difference? There are a few reasons to think that the difference is skin-deep. The idea of study as “meandering” suggests an interesting possibility, that study is not an activity without goals, but with goals that are transient and impermanent. We pursue a goal, and break off to pursue another. The logic of completion might be lacking where the logic of goals is nevertheless present. This would fit with Agamben’s idea of the “rhythm of study” being the interplay between closure and meandering, “discovery and loss” (Agamben 1985, p. 64), and Tyson Lewis’s account of the complexity of the relationship.

The studier is...constantly moving forward toward some kind of indeterminate goal while simultaneously withdrawing from the very idea of goals in the first place. (Lewis 2014b, p. 164)

Another possibility is that the difference is—again—not the existence of goals, but where those goals come from. Michael Murphy (2020) makes the interesting suggestion that active learning—practices that “maximize the active participation of students” (p. 73)—can be construed as a form of Agambenian study. By “destabilizing the hierarchy” it shifts power from the teacher to the student, and allows them to chart their own course towards their own goals. Alongside Giorgio Agamben, a key source in the development of the idea of study is Robert McClintock’s 1971 article ‘Toward a place for study in a world of instruction’. His advocacy of the idea of study was based on the idea that learning is the passive receipt of instruction.

[T]eaching is the teacher’s function. But learning, in passive response to the teacher, is not the job of the student. Study is his [sic] business. (McClintock 1971, p. 187).

He himself proposes a version of the idea in this paper: “the motive force of education is not teaching and learning, but teaching and study” (p. 187). In his terms, he is proposing that education focus on the active engagement of the student, rather than the passive absorption of didactic teaching. Times have—to some extent—changed. The lesson of the last few decades of discussion of learning is that it is better seen as an active process where students make their own sense of the world. In today’s terms, ‘to learn’ does much of the work of McClintock’s ‘to study’. The difference for him—as for Murphy—is not in the existence of goals, but in the active or passive role of the student, and whether the effort is “self-directed” (p. 19). These two ideas, of study as meandering between goals, and study as active learning, suggest that the difference between ‘to study’ and the activity sense of ‘to learn’ may be of degree not kind. They do not differ, perhaps, in whether they are goal-directed, but in the role those goals play, and where they come from. If that is true, then ‘to study’ can indeed stand in for the activity sense of ‘to learn’; though it perhaps gives it a different texture, it does not differ in a more fundamental way.

A related challenge is the idea that while learning embodies, and is embedded in, a neoliberal apparatus of performativity and measurement, study differs by providing the possibility of “an educational form of life that is collective, debt-free, and resistant to administration, measurement, and ideologies of productivity” (Zhao et al. 2020, p. 240). As Florelle D’Hoest has argued however (Backer et al 2016) it may be important to draw a distinction between learning, and its exploitation by neoliberalism:

In my opinion, what we should complain about and denounce is not that education in our biocapitalist era has been narrowed down to learning skills, but that the mainstream logic of capitalism exploits the concept of learning in order to rule our society. (Backer et al 2016, p. 413)

On this view the ‘logic of learning’, in the sense critiqued in the work on study, is the role of learning in the current educational paradigm, rather than learning itself. To argue that “learning is closer to study than Lewis claims” (pp. 413–4), D’Hoest makes the point that “[l]earning occurs all the time, in and outside school, and is therefore not essentially related to its current wording in terms of work skills, which Lewis and other scholars timely denounce” (p. 413). Again, this suggests that the difference is less profound than might be thought.

These possibilities are not conclusive for the idea that 'to study' can stand in for the activity sense of 'to learn', and that therefore 'teaching and learning' can be replaced by 'teaching and studying', while preserving the implication that teaching is always accompanied by the activity of learning (P4). All they really do is to complicate an already intricate picture. In problematizing the concept of study, Derek Ford asks "[m]ust studying and learning always be antagonistic, or are they only antagonistic *within* the learning society?" (Ford 2014, p. 110). It is a refrain of recent work on study that its relationship with learning is an open and difficult question, and these ideas about the superficial nature of the differences between learning and study can only be suggestive.

Conclusion

The way we talk affects how we think. As partisan words or phrases that attempt to shift ideas in some particular direction, slogans exploit that fact. Education has seen its fair share of slogans, and 'teaching and learning' used to be one of them, as part of an attempt to shift teachers and institutions away from the instruction paradigm and towards the learning paradigm (in Barr and Tagg's framing). One problem with slogans is that if they are successful they become part of the linguistic furniture, the radical message attenuates and they can begin to carry new interpretations and implications related to the narrow meaning of the phrase rather than the original motivation. The original intention of the phrase 'teaching and learning' seems to have been to promote the idea that the value of teaching lies in its ability to generate learning. That battle has largely been won and the primacy of learning is now an unremarkable and very familiar part of the language of education, rather than a rallying call for a new educational paradigm. It may, like other ex-slogans, have come to carry new meanings. The question is whether the phrase is now likely to be doing more harm than good.

I have suggested that the widespread use of the phrase 'teaching and learning' in place of the word 'teaching' encourages the idea that teaching is always accompanied by learning. Both 'teaching' and 'learning' can be understood as activities or achievements, and there is one interpretation, that the activity of teaching always leads to the achievement of learning—(P3)—that is deeply problematic. The phrase is therefore now a hindrance more than a help, and we should think again. By talking of 'teaching and studying' instead of 'teaching and learning' we can perhaps capture the idea that there is an inextricable connection between the act of teaching and the act of learning (P4), without reinforcing the problematic idea that successful learning is a condition of engaging in the act of teaching (P3).

The language that we use affects how we think. This can be intentional or unintentional, and in the case of slogans that succeed in changing minds and then become part linguistic furniture, it can be both. We need to be vigilant that insofar as we can influence it, educational discourse works for us rather than against us.

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