Methods and appreciations for holistic teaching of the mother tongue: from the expansion of teacher linguistic awareness to the multimodal corpus

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Abstract

The present work investigates perspectives, models and pedagogical and didactic tools applicable to the teaching of the mother tongue, through bibliographic research of comparative and contrasted referents to generate a dialectic between the macro-discourses that Permian the configuration of the linguistic contents. The finding behind these inquiries is the comprehensive description of these trends for future mother tongue teachers, to clarify terminologies and define a few more concepts and models that remain amorphous today.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, multimodal, linguistic awareness, linguistic corpus, text..

INTRODUCTION

The study of language framed in the XXI century offers a multiplicity of discourses and perspectives on the conceptions, methodologies and tools applicable to the teaching of the mother tongue. The disparity of criteria for the selection of content and the application of pedagogical and didactic strategies, at least at the regional level, relegates its experimental efforts to its research departments, while the teaching and learning of the mother tongue remain in a relatively conventional line.

In this line, language is configured from two modalities: 1) as a material act of the speaker, 2) as an abstraction of the said act in systems of categories, elements and grammatical structures. The methodological intention of this division is the development of linguistic awareness, a process that allows the speaker to direct his attention to mental procedures that allow greater depth when reflecting on the language of its structure and its execution, but there is a tendency towards the second modality: language as an abstraction of a concrete fact and expressed in categorical and structural systems.

Language as a complex system of representation and communication of reality, both objective and subjective, is instrumentalized during the teaching process, a process in which it focuses, primarily, on grammatical disciplines as the main paradigm around which to order and review educational content. This theoretical vision is conceptualized by Awramiuk. and Szymańska observing its basic contents:
... as specific units of the linguistic system—especially phonology, morphology, and syntax... therefore, grammatical education means concentrating both on the structure of words and sentences, and on the teaching of concepts such as name, inflection or gerund clauses.

From this approach, highly structuralist, special emphasis is placed on the disciplines of linguistic study whose fundamental objective is to generate an understanding of the syntactic and orthographic rules needed by the student of a language for correct use of it. Thus, the configuration of linguistic knowledge outlines the contents as an index of formal competencies: the ability to read a text and segment its parts into smaller units, to write in an orthographically correct way, the ability to identify the categories that form a linguistic construction, syntactic knowledge, gradual expansion of the lexicon, etc.

But the complexities of linguistic teaching do not begin and end in providing the tools for the correct ordering of lexical and grammatical elements, aimed at the coherent emission of meanings. The linguistic investigations of the XXI century problematize this paradigm and direct their efforts to produce new teaching, didactic and pedagogical perspectives for more holistic teaching of the language, its systems and phenomena.

The contributions of structuralist linguistics have been well studied from multiple angles of scientific knowledge, but they do not offer a holistic understanding of language as a generator of meanings beyond sign and linguistic constructions. For a broader definition of linguistic consciousness, it is necessary to go back to cognitive linguistics, which reveals language as a constitutive process of the subject and his reality through cognitive functions:

These functions are called cognition (...). While Kolb and Whishaw (...) call cognitive functions, among others, working memory, attention, recognition of faces and objects, sensory associations, logical-mathematical operations, planning and organization of movements, decision making, calculation and language.

Valenzuela sees a direct relationship between being, language and linguistic consciousness, the latter being constitutive elements of the former and indivisible of its processes: "Linguistic consciousness precisely appeals to understand me as a subject producer of language, maker of language and, in addition, understand me as a subject, as someone who not only coexists with language but to whom language passes through it."

We can then establish several parameters from which to orient our definitions of linguistic consciousness. It constitutes both the formal and theoretical aspects for the construction of linguistic signs through the correct use of grammatical and lexical categories, as well as cognitive functions that allow the subject the superficial and deep operations of the internalization and reproduction of linguistic structures and categories, as well as metalinguistic skills, all the knowledge and processes that allow the subject to deep reflection on their internal processes in relation to the language.

Linguistic awareness from the teaching profile.

For a better classification of knowledge of linguistic competence that represents a holistic knowledge of the mother tongue, its structures and replicable models for learning a second language, we must deepen the paradigms that have shaped language teaching and educational institutions, both primary and higher.

The first thing is to establish what is considered relevant for the study of the language, a question that is configured from the scientific discourse. Scientific discourse, of an exclusive nature, assigns and shifts attention to various aspects of his objects of study. The exclusion of these aspects is a dialogical process, subject to rigorous rules, which generates historiography of continuity and ruptures; of discourses that generalize principles and discourses that question these principles.

The discursive leaders who generate this debate of continuity and rupture in the area that concerns us, educational linguistics, are the teachers of the mother tongue, who teach the contents from their perspective, a process in which students will develop their sensitivity and linguistic structures by replicating and internalizing the discourse of their teacher, sensitivities and structures that can be questioned by the same student in later stages of the learning process. It is interesting to note that all research that addresses the subject of the teacher as a generator of linguistic discourse assumes a degree of isolation with other perspectives, whether minor or greater:

The learning and teaching of languages is a difficult path in which factors of various kinds of influence: psychological, sociological, academic, etc., to this is added the tradition that in the school each teacher performs his work as he best understands, isolating himself from the rest of the classmates.

Continuing Gumbrecht's definitions, he establishes a paradigmatic point for modern linguistics, located in the nineteenth century, preceding structural linguistics:

In the third generation of linguistics – in the nineteenth century – similar differentiations continue in force, but with the novelty that the predicate of scientificity is attributed to a certain way of doing linguistics, while depriving other ways of dealing with language. Scientific linguistic research is one that has "principles", its own methods and that can render depending on them (...). Those ways of dealing with language that are not able to demonstrate that kind of doctrine of principles cannot vindicate their character as a science.

So, a configuration of the concept of language skills hangs more on methodological principles than on the content. Those positions whose research does not yet produce results that can be transformed into defined categories or clear methodologies are attributed a negative connotation in the scientific debate.
about what we should study in language and, therefore, teach. However, it is debatable to what extent this emphasis on methodological principles presupposes a hegemony of dialogue. Gumbrecht offers avital reflection to glimpse the nature of this debate between what is and what is not considered as a scientific methodology applied to linguistic research:

Under what conditions does scientific (linguistic-) communication take place? By this we mean the conditions of the various institutions and also of what lies outside them. It is a question of the operating conditions of universities with their many divergent fields of work, the lack of time they entail, the obligations of evaluation, but also the duty to always make the legitimacy of certain questions intelligible again for the next generation. These are the conditions of research institutes with greater needs for justification and, therefore, with more publication obligations due to dependence on financial entities, although with greater time margins and more technical possibilities, but nevertheless more strongly separated from the unquestionable fields of knowledge of everyday life.

Principles are indispensable for the scientific validation of work, but today where liquidity fragments cognitive processes in multiple different directions, the processes that develop linguistic awareness acquire new nuances, complexities and dimensions that demand a rupture, even partial, with traditional content and its regulatory institutions. A problem arises when such a rupture is not validated by regulatory institutions, either because the methodologies applied to the study of new phenomena (or the re-contextualization or deepening of old phenomena) still lack sufficient solidity to generate principles, or because the same fluid and elusive nature of phenomena do not allow a satisfactory generalization.

We do not intend to position ourselves from one perspective or another, nor to understand the discourses on linguistic consciousness and its development from educative dichotomies. However, we find it practical to understand trends from two macro-discourses, each consisting of perspectives with their own nuances, correlations and differences. These two discourses are: a) linguistic conscience as an inventory of scientific principles and methodologies that are validated from the exclusion of other contents and disciplines, b) linguistic awareness as a cognitive, interdisciplinary, and multimodal process that generates a break with the hegemonic discourse in academic institutions.

An example of these macro-discourses can be found in the research of Muñoz and Manríquez, academics from the University of Santiago de Chile (Usach), who conducted a qualitative case study on the positions or senses produced by academics of the Usach around the teaching of linguistics, with a defined approach towards the teaching of the mother tongue. The study consisted of an exhaustive analysis of the discourse generated by 11 professors of the university with the following characteristics:

1. Age range: between 30-70 years.
2. Gender: both male and female.
3. Degree of instruction: from the bachelor’s degree to the Master’s Degree.

The analysis of the discourses revealed two dichotomous positions that find their synthesis in two stories constructed by subjects of the study with contrary perspectives: a) linguistics as a discipline with a high terminological and theoretical rigor that benefits from segmentation, b) as a holistic discipline that allows the study of discursive phenomena and that benefits from interdisciplinarity. Both discourses agree that the linguistics teacher must be a highly specialized subject and capable of sequencing the content for a gradual understanding of metalinguistic capabilities.

The first discourse proposes the teaching of linguistics in higher education as an inventory of theories and concepts that the student must learn and subsequently reproduce. The content is valid based on two criteria: a) the handling of an observable terminology, b) the ability to apply linguistic theory in the formation of the student subject. This content is not subjected to critical analysis or revision for future configurations from linguistic didactics or pedagogy. On the contrary, an ideal profile is defined for the linguistics teacher as a hyper-specialized subject in a certain area, thus fragmenting teaching and excluding other disciplines that could be relevant to the teaching process. It is, therefore, a positivist approach, of a high grade of abstraction.

The second discourse starts from a humanistic approach, where linguistics is integrated with other curricular knowledge and is in constant interaction with other disciplines. From this approach, the content is validated from two criteria: a) the management of metalinguistic and interdisciplinary competencies that allow linguistics to be related to other disciplines, particularly pedagogy and didactics, b) the ability to generate spaces and interactions that encourage deep reflection on one's own discourse, that of others and the context in which they are developed. This demands an ideal profile where the linguistics teacher is a critical subject of traditionalism, with a didactic and pedagogical discipline that complements theoretical-practical knowledge. In this discourse of the academic, the authors show a broader conception of language, both as a constitutive faculty of the human being and as a social fact: "language is a space of coexistence in which the subjects in interaction are configured and deployed, in which they conform their own subjectivity and express it".

The analysis of the discourses revealed that the tendency of the interviewees is mostly oriented towards the second approach, which understands language from integrality and considers other disciplines as a transversal axis, indispensable for a holistic review of linguistic knowledge in higher education, without this meaning a reduction in scientific rigor. The aim is to extend what we understand as language
skills beyond the theoretical/conceptual/terminological. Multimodal corpus as a concrete description of the language. Another element that has been problematized is the linguistic corpus. The corpus, as a tool for grammatical teaching, offers useful samples of real discourse that "aim to account for the concrete behavior of languages through the observation and study of vast collections of (quasi)spontaneous text/text". The corpora are subjected to the following requirements to validate their objectivity as a tool for scientific study: 1) a considerable size of samples to be studied, 2) a balance between dialectal varieties, internal structure and synchronous representation of the language, 3) ease of use, depending on their specific purpose (Véliz, Campos, 2008). These quasi-spontaneous constructions represent units of meaning typical of oral discourse, particularly in everyday use where language varies its behavior according to the economy of language, context and discursive modalities. The deficiencies observed in the corpus are mostly concentrated in its textual/auditory format. Being an abstraction of a concrete fact, this description lacks elements that adequately nuance a linguistic construction (context, gesticulation, inflection, prosody, etc.). Therefore, a degree of ambiguity is generated in the constructions that obscure the meaning of the information issued. For a holistic language teaching and expansion of linguistic consciousness, a multimodal approach, which represents the other constitutive elements of meaning in construction, is increasingly pressing. The particular interest of these investigations is in the multimodal elements that arise spontaneously and are outside the text. Studying the ways that the speaker has to conceptualize and express meanings through multiple systems that, united with each other, generate a single one, is vital to reorganize the didactic and pedagogical resources in the teaching of the mother tongue. Among the proposals is that of Red Hen Lab, explained in detail by Dr. Javier Valenzuela in the fourth item "Latest research and Red Hen Lab Laboratory" of an interview conducted by Luis Herreras Vásquez, entitled "Research news and perspectives of cognitive linguistics: time, space and metaphor". It consists of a multimodal corpus that collects 250,000 hours of audiovisual material, extracted from television, and classifies this material into a system of categories. The laboratory uses this experimental corpus for the study of temporal conceptualization and the manifestations of this abstract concept in concrete and observable units during speech. The objective of this research is to observe and describe the correlations between the processes of time embodiment in metaphors expressible through gesticulations, facial expressions, eye contact, etc. These expressions are arranged in sagittal axes, from back to front, and lateral, from left to right. Special emphasis is placed on the latter axis, which correlates directly with the cognitive tendency of Western cultures to establish the past on the left and the future on the right, in the same way that a textual discourse is constructed and read from left to right, unlike Hebrew or Arab cultures, who organize their discourse and their metaphorical perception of time in a space where the past is at the right and the future on the left. That the corpus is constructed from television fragments adds an interesting layer. The degree of spontaneity in the constructions is debatable since television is a performative medium, where specific criteria are used when configuring the discourse. In the present research, we do not know the degree of performative consciousness in the samples of the Red Hen Lab corpus, but from this hypothesis and from the criteria that we established for the validation of the linguistic corpus in the second paragraph of this section, we assume that the variety of the corpus will offer different formats where the context requires a regulation, both conscious and unconscious, of the subject's discourse. It is even more interesting as a model for the concrete study of the phenomena of corporatization established by Valenzuela, where the concept of "meaning" is re-contextualized from cognitive linguistics and theories of simulation:

In this way, a speaker understands the meaning of a linguistic expression when there is a selective brain reactivation of the different modal areas of the brain that were activated in the interaction with the referents of the linguistic expression. Authors such as Glenberg have undeniably shown that understanding a phrase such as "open the drawer" consists of reactivating the motor circuits involved in the act of opening a drawer, as well as the rest of sensorimotor information (visual aspects, such as the shape of a drawer, tactile, etc.) . The meaning correlated with the object becomes a process of cognitive simulation, where the subject recreates in his mental processes the sensations, movements and appearances related to the object in his memory. It is even more interesting in relation to the representation of objects in abstract domains, where the simulation or attribution of characteristics to an object moves in axes of representation, as we mentioned previously over time. But there's more: In different experiments it has been shown that the domain of morality is conceptualized based on the physical concept of cleanliness, importance through weight or size, control relationships through verticality, happiness and sadness too, are organized vertically (happiness-up, sadness-down), similarity as physical closeness, good and bad are organized as top-down, near-far or black-white, depending on the case and a long etcetera. However, all these projections correspond to what is known in cognitive linguistics, of a correlational type. There is much less evidence for another set of more complex, non-correlational metaphors, such as "love is a viaje" or "ideas are food". There are also doubts about in which cases these connections are made and between domains (that is, in what type of tasks). These representations of abstract domains can be very useful in the teaching of the mother tongue when conceptualizing abstract concepts that are difficult to assimilate and whose
expression was relegated to the textual metaphor, whose conceptualization is less discernible. The research, for now, focuses on the multiple ways that we Westerners must represent time in lateral axes, but future research, either by Red Hen Lab or other research collectives, could reveal new ways of embodying the ineffable and describing it in a multimodal way, concretizing a conceptualization. More linked to the material (or at least a material representation of what only exists in the world of ideas).

Although the application of the multimodal corpus to linguistic didactics still presents immense challenges, especially in the section of resources for its design, compilation and categorization, the replication of this model for the teaching of the mother tongue could generate a high educational value. Samples of real language, with a defined context and a multimodal configuration, would contribute to the concretion through multimodal "clues", gestures or glances that draw attention to a specific referent, and when said referent is abstract, the multimodal corpus could correlate it with concrete elements of reality to facilitate its conceptualization.

Video games as a tool for teaching L1 and L2.

There are other interesting models that, although still far from integration into the curriculum due to various obstacles that we will explore in their proper section, are defined as innovative looks at what we understand as a studyable text and the cognitive processes that produce knowledge, both in the classroom and outside it.

Abrams and Hanghøj investigate the didactic possibilities of video games as a tool for the teaching of the mother tongue and the second language, as the learning of both has structural similarities. They define the video game under the following criteria: 1) a multimodal and reactive text, consisting of internal and external stimuli to the reading experience, 2) an interactive space, with which the player(s) interact through digital and non-digital tools, 3) an experience with a high human and collaborative component.

From this point of view, Henríquez y Zuniga’s definition exposes comprehensive uses of other linguistic elements in how the gaming experience is configured to generate descriptive, explanatory, narrative, etc: texts.

From theoretical conceptualizations and analysis, it has been determined that video games are electronic multimodal discourses in which static and moving images are the main vehicles for transmitting meanings. These interact simultaneously with different modes of representation (...) such as sound and written and oral verbal language. Also, these multimodal discourses present the iconic language, colors, sounds and music interacting in a semiotic orchestration that is visible to the video gamer.

In this multimodal space, students of the mother tongue can experience their first exposure to sign and linguistic construction on multiple levels. Categorizing the game as text is not something new. The very concept of "play" as a learning experience has been an interest of developmental epistemology and educational psychology framed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Vygotsky establishes play as the process by which the child generates an imaginary situation, with situational rules that regulate behavior, generating a relationship between the imaginary and the real. This definition shares similarities with the previously established categorization of video games, the differences arise in the format. Vygotsky called the real that belonging to the visual field. Video games have a visual and material component that concretizes them, without that meaning a direct connection with the real; it's more of a simulative text. While children's play is a creative act, the video game is a simulative act, where its spaces, archetypes and dynamics are the results of hard programming work that takes aspects of the real world (it is a common practice among video game developers to take material, historical, aesthetic, etc., references from the real world to design and program the graphic and mechanical elements of their works)., so there is always a reference that the subject can bring to reality. Since Vygotsky, the game serves as a space of action, where the subject establishes the meaning-object relations, a space that is also transitional, since in childhood the action precedes the sense, but in later stages of cognitive development, the sense precedes the object, a relationship that gives rise to infinite new meanings.

The games have greater complexity since in their configuration we find multiple discourses of varied nature: discourses descriptive, an explanatory, narrative, etc. Intertextual relationships are also observable since the constitutive resources of the video game refer to texts of other formats such as literature, comics, music, films that the subject can connect and reference, thus enriching the reading process (as an example consult Hades, a video game classified in the genres of Action Role and Rogue-like, developed by Supergiant Games and that refers archetypes and narratives of mythology Greek in its narrative discourse). It fulfills, in turn, a complementary role to formal teaching in the classroom, since children usually play in their free time, when they develop in activities outside the school that allows them to recreate tacit learning models.

Both share a system of rules. While children's play bases its rules on the regulation of immediate desire for an increase in pleasure during the playful act, the video game bases its rules on the binominal relationships "victory-defeat" and "lack-abundance".

The first relationship establishes two states that symbolically end the total experience of the parties. The first "victory" with a positive connotation and the second, "defeat", is negative. Mostly, these states are cumulative and are validated in "activities" that the player must comply with rigorously, following the rules of the game. These rules are expressed through game mechanics, complex systems that developers establish as the means to interact with the digital world they have built, through elements that regulate possible actions within the game. These mechanics follow criteria like those...
of board games such as chess: the pieces can only be moved in a very specific way, so players must draw their strategies from these defined limits. In the same way, in video games, the player adheres to predefined action systems and regulatory elements that, if learned and executed satisfactorily, will reach the state of absolute victory. If you do not learn and execute these systems, the player will gradually approach the state of "defeat" which, unlike that of victory, is not absolute because there is an obvious intention on the part of the developers that the trend in the progression of the video game leads to victory, so defeat is more a process of trial and error until the systems are properly understood, internalized and executed. Beyond "win-defeat" states, video games are also a technique in themselves; it is common for players to repeat the experience multiple times with the intention of mastering the systems, repetition that is born both from the playful pleasure generated by the experience and an exercise of multimodal competitions.

These multimodal competencies, playful competences if you like to define the term a little more, exist at superficial and deep levels. At the surface level is the basic knowledge for interaction with the video game (knowing the direct relationship that exists between the peripherals and the video game, the "activities" to be performed, etc.). At the deep level is the specialized knowledge for interaction with specific genres of video games, with deliberately abstruse rules and systems or with large differences from the average (specific mechanics, high learning curves, etc.).

The second relationship represents more complex states to define and relates to the exercise of multimodal competencies. There is a trend in the development of video games that follows the principles of operant conditioning, where positive and negative stimuli guide the player to perform a certain action. To highlight these stimuli, the gaming experience starts from the "lack" state, where the player does not yet possess the competencies or resources to complete the "activities" necessary to achieve the state of "victory". As you learn the systems and complete the "activities," developers reward their behavior with positive stimuli that reaffirm their actions within the world.

These stimuli come in the form of concrete units of value, both in individual and collective experience. Coins that players can spend on internal economic systems, some basic, others of great complexity; objects that facilitate the fulfillment of the "activities" to achieve the state of "victory"; aesthetic resources that allow the player an element of expressiveness that distinguishes their visual and graphic experience from that of other players.

The accumulation of these resources rewards something more elusive: the correct internalization and deployment of playful competition, the inventory of processes and knowledge that a player needs for better interaction with game mechanics. This playful competence is gender-specific, as the deep aspects of playful competence are not transferable from one genre to another, and are schematized through a learning curve where the positive stimulus is inversely proportional to the "activity" performed; the greater the effort, the greater the reward.

These coincidences between video games and linguistic texts can be specified with the following characteristics shared between the two formats: a) a discourse expressed using multiple semiotic elements, b) a text capable of producing intertextual relationships between other texts, both internal and external to its format, c) a direct relationship with its receiver, who must interpret its multiple dimensions to produce meaning.

Video games as multimodal text offer interesting educational tools, well captured by Koutsogiannis and Adampa in their study "Videogames and (language) education: Towards a critical post-videogaming perspective":

Scientific research related to the use of video games in language education enriches discussions around literacy and semiosis problems. Most literature relevant to the subject (...) extends this debate on the pedagogical potential to the perspective of digital literacy, arguing that the use of video games in language education offers the opportunity to enrich the curriculum of language teaching in terms of a new textual, interactive and multimodal reality.

This new reality possesses concrete and elusive qualities. Although, it is possible to debate the usefulness of video games as a space to generate learning models and "is understood as a system that provides rules, conditions and some aspects of competition", the pedagogical methodologies to develop the necessary skills to internalize these systems of rules and conditions to the study of the mother tongue avoid a clear definition, being still an amorphous concept and difficult to outline in a coherent methodology:

However, there is something about the act of "gaming" and learning that remains somewhat tacit and elusive, this is the ability and/or inability of young people to make connections between their practices inside and outside the school, as in the impetus and decisions informing their movement up, down or through that of the library space and inside the games.

Conclusions.

The ideas, macro-discourses and perspectives presented in this paper still elude an easy classification due to their permanence in areas of human cognition that do not possess a definite categorization. The discourse that establishes language as a holistic and multimodal phenomenon remains in the hypothetical fields, and its application to modern educational pedagogies and didactics is still a remote possibility, both for theoretical and practical reasons (financing, literacy processes to train the subject in the use of new multimodal texts, etc.).

The curricular, pedagogical and didactic implications are immense, both outside and inside the classroom, which is a
constant that runs through all research: seeing the acquisition and refinement of the mother tongue as a process that belongs to both teachers and students and that can be reaffirmed, deepened and nuanced with activities outside the school, generating new answers to the classical question: what should we teach in relation to the language?:

I think that the question of what linguistics is is super-resolved and I have no doubt and independent of whether the children are advanced in the subject ... I think kids can answer that question. What does it mean to know linguistics? I think it's already a question that's starting to have... a certain falter. Now, if it is necessary to know linguistics? Of course, the articulation that the children are going to do will be associated with respect to whether it is demanded in the curricular reference, if a child says that it is not necessary to know linguistics having read the learning objectives, he is dead. I think not, I think they do believe, and they do understand that it is necessary to know linguistics. Now, what about linguistics is important for a child to learn? I don't know if it's so thoughtful

The main revisions are found in how we understand what should be taught to a student, posing this question from what is important for the learning of the mother tongue and the development of linguistic awareness, since paradigms teachers outline, select and sequence their contents and what constitutes a multimodal text capable of generating multiple studyable senses and that, in addition, generates a playful and emotional connection with the receiver for a constant flow between tacit and explicit knowledge, gradually clarifying the gap between the two: generating knowledge where before there were vague intuitions of structure or conceptualization.

To close we collect a last testimony of the Muñoz/Manríquez research, belonging to the second perspective: the one based on humanism and that raises language as a holistic and multimodal process of immense possibilities not yet discovered for human development and that, we believe, synthesizes well the objective of this work:

I believe that the linguistics of a future teacher of the Usach must be precisely a linguistics that attends as to the acts or the products ... as respecting its nature and that forces it to be linguistics that is in dialogue with all its intersections ... it has to be linguistics that somehow allows... both decompose and compose... and it has to be, also, linguistics that, in some way, is offering meaning from the resources for a child as an actor or as a speaker ... Then it must be linguistics that somehow puts abstraction in permanent dialogue with concreteness. I can't imagine it any other way."

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