Title	Reflections of the concept of Bildung in the current educational context
Sub Title	現代の教育におけるビルドゥング概念の影響
Author	矢田部, 清美(Yatabe, Kiyomi)
Publisher	慶應義塾大学外国語教育研究センター
Publication year	2018
Jtitle	慶應義塾外国語教育研究 (Journal of foreign language education). Vol.15, (2018.) ,p.83- 92
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	研究ノート
Genre	Departmental Bulletin Paper
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA12043414-20180000-0083

Reflections of the concept of *Bildung*
in the current educational context

Kiyomi YATABE

1. Introduction

Bildung is a German word that means "education or realization of oneself" in the sense of self-cultivation and self-edification. The word refers to a traditional philosophical concept that was once deemed important in many other countries but is now viewed by many as irrelevant in the current neoliberal culture of performativity, productivity, and accountability accompanying the reform of educational systems in the twentieth century (Cowen, 1996). This paper is an attempt to demonstrate the viability of the concept of *Bildung* in the current social and educational contexts; it will be my contention that the concept of *Bildung* is still able to play a key role in our lives in current formal and informal educational settings.

2. The fundamental meaning of *Bildung*

We will first take a brief look at the fundamental meaning of the term *Bildung* before we explore applications of the concept in the current educational context.

Originally the concept of *Bildung* was based on Christianity, and it meant the unrelenting pursuit of an inner culture of imaged Goodness or God among medieval mystics and pietistic Christians. Under the influence of Reformation and Enlightenment ideas, the concept of *Bildung* was later given a different meaning: the autonomous, rational, and reflective developmental process of an individual's soul or self through unrelenting training by a variety of experiences in the world (Biehl & Nipkow, 2003; Ringer, 1991). As is made clear by this definition, the term expresses a concept similar to *Allgemeinbildung* (general education), which should be distinguished from *Ausbildung* or *Berufsbildung*, i.e. vocational education intended to help one become a trained specialist.

3. Language education

Let us now discuss the relevance of the concept of *Bildung* to current language education

practices. We will focus especially on a recently developed reference framework called *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) and teaching approaches for language education called *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

From 1989 to 1996, the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Co-operation within the Council of Europe conducted research on foreign language pedagogy with the aim of developing a pedagogical method that will help learners cultivate their ability to think and act independently while cooperating responsibly with other people (Trim, 1997). Because of that research, in 2001 the Council of Europe created a reference framework called *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). This reference framework describes the stages of foreign language learners' linguistic achievement and the corresponding necessary progression through developmental stages of the learners' general competences. The importance of the CEFR, especially regarding the concept of *Bildung*, is that it references the fact that foreign language learners do not merely acquire declarative knowledge about the learned languages but also develop as individuals, cultivating their personalities and acquiring various competencies such as new learning methodologies.

The following quotation from the CEFR is one passage in which these extralinguistic aspects of language learning are discussed.

> Teaching/learning objectives may in fact be conceived in terms of the development of the learner's general competences and thus be a matter of *declarative knowledge (savoir), skills and know-how (savoir-faire), personality traits, attitudes, etc. (savoir-être)* or *ability to learn*, or more particularly one or other of these dimensions. In some cases, the learning of a foreign language aims above all at imparting declarative knowledge to the learner (for example, of the grammar or literature or certain cultural characteristics of the foreign country). In other instances, language learning will be seen as a way for the learner to develop his or her personality (for example greater assurance or self-confidence, greater willingness to speak in a group) or to develop his or her knowledge of how to learn (greater openness to what is new, awareness of otherness, curiosity about the unknown). (Council of Europe, 2001, p.135)

The concept of existential competence (*savoir-être*) and that of the ability to learn (*savoir*

apprendre) are characterized as follows, and are particularly reminiscent of the concept of *Bildung*.

> **Existential competence** (*savoir-être*) may be considered as the sum of the individual characteristics, personality traits and attitudes which concern, for example, self-image and one's view of others and willingness to engage with other people in social interaction. …
>
> **Ability to learn** (*savoir apprendre*) mobilises existential competence, declarative knowledge and skills, and draws on various types of competence. Ability to learn may also be conceived as 'knowing how, or being disposed, to discover "otherness"' – whether the other is another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge. (Council of Europe, 2001, pp.11-12)

The content of the companion volume of the CEFR published in 2018 (Council of Europe, 2018) is even more reminiscent of the concept of *Bildung*. For instance, here is what that volume states about the aims of the CEFR. Note the way individuals' growth within the social world is given prominence in this passage.

> In addition to promoting the teaching and learning of languages as a means of communication, the CEFR brings a new, empowering vision of the learner. The CEFR presents the language user/learner as a 'social agent,' acting in the social world and exerting agency in the learning process. This implies a real paradigm shift in both course planning and teaching, promoting learner engagement and autonomy. (Council of Europe, 2018, p.26)

The concept of *Bildung* is based on the view of humans as individuals who develop ability and acquire new knowledge through activities within social settings (Fellenz, 2016), a view that seems to underlie what the above passage describes as the aims of the CEFR.

The authors of the CEFR are not alone in their implicit reliance on the concept of *Bildung*. Proponents of *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) (Coyle et al., 2010), an approach to language learning based on the four pillars of Communication, Cognition, Culture, and Content, also emphasize the importance of foreign language learning that is achieved through communication in social real-life situations. As students deepen their knowledge of content, they correspondingly develop both their language and thinking abilities, according to the advocates of this approach. As a bridge between the concept of *Bildung*

and the CLIL approach, Breidbach proposed an integrated model of cognitive and social difference (Breidbach, 2007). According to this model, the CLIL approach offers ample opportunities for reflection either of disciplinary knowledge or of social collective meaning, and both types of reflection can lead to autonomous analytical or critical awareness in learners.

These approaches to foreign language learning are based on the premise that language learning can promote not just one's linguistic abilities but other kinds of abilities as well, and this premise has recently received some empirical support from research indicating that language learning can help develop individuals' various competences other than their linguistic abilities. Learning an additional language early on (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012) or later in life (Yatabe, 2018) has been shown to result in a number of cognitive advantages such as better executive control and better reasoning function.

It is to its credit that the CEFR not only references the issue of general competences but mentions numerous practical measures to promote the development of general competences. The CEFR says that linguistic ability development is linked to communicative phonetic awareness, study skills, and heuristic skills, and goes on to make recommendations like the following to those who wish to develop general competences, though it explicitly states that each user should carefully consider each of these recommendations according to their own needs.

> With regard to ability to learn, learners may (be expected/required to) develop their study skills and heuristic skills and their acceptance of responsibility for their own learning:
>
> a) simply as 'spin-off' from language learning and teaching, without any special planning or provision;
>
> b) by progressively transferring responsibility for learning from the teacher to the pupils/students and encouraging them to reflect on their learning and to share this experience with other learners;
>
> c) by systematically raising the learners' awareness of the learning/teaching processes in which they are participating;
>
> d) by engaging learners as participants in experimentation with different methodological options;
>
> e) by getting learners to recognise their own cognitive style and to develop their own learning strategies accordingly. (Council of Europe, 2001, p.149)

Before closing this section, let us briefly consider how the CEFR could be made even more useful. One particularly important aspect of *Bildung* is its insistence on autonomous self-formation and reflective and responsible action based on interaction with society (Fellenz, 2016). This makes it very difficult to pursue *Bildung* continually for a long period of time; it is only when one engages in unrelenting training by a variety of experiences in the world that one can hope to achieve autonomous self-formation through reflective and responsible action. We could make this process somewhat easier by making clear what the goals are and evaluating how much progress we are making toward them. The CEFR mentions and promotes various kinds of self-assessment grids to describe the levels of linguistic proficiency: "The main potential for self-assessment, however, is in its use as a tool for motivation and awareness raising: helping learners to appreciate their strengths, recognise their weaknesses and orient their learning more effectively" (Council of Europe, 2001, p.192).

Organizing learning goals systematically will help make students' learning effective, and it will also help teachers formulate teaching programs and appropriate forms of instruction. At the moment, however, the CEFR does not offer metrics that help learners to assess the level of their own cognitive competences apart from their linguistic abilities. Thus, one thing we might want to add to the CEFR is an example of a taxonomy of cognitive processes that would facilitate such self-assessment. One example of such a taxonomy has been proposed by Bloom. In their book *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Bloom and colleagues present a framework for categorizing educational goals; they point to what could be considered the main categories in the cognitive domain (Bloom, 1956). These categories have been refined by his successors (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and are now used to classify learners' cognitive processes.

Some of those categories are shown below. Here they are classified according to the cognitive functions they perform, ordered from lower-order to higher-order functions.

Remember (Recognizing, Recalling)

Understand (Interpreting, Exemplifying, Classifying, Summarizing, Inferring, Comparing, Explaining)

Apply (Executing, Implementing)

Analyze (Differentiating, Organizing, Attributing)

Evaluate (Checking, Critiquing)

Create (Generating, Planning, Producing)

Students as well as teachers would be able to assess the students' different cognitive levels by asking questions ranging from "Can the students recognize or recall what they learned?" to "Can the students give some examples of what they learned?"

4. Teacher education and continuing education

Let us now turn to an entirely different area of education where the concept of *Bildung* is being found helpful. In this section, we will see that the literary genre of the *Bildungsroman* has an educational relevance in the present world. During the exposition, we will also see how continuing education is being pursued in present-day Germany.

The word *Bildungsroman* means "novel of *Bildung*" and it refers to stories that depict personal growth, self-development, and self-cultivation. In a *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist encounters a wide variety of experiences in the outer world at each developmental stage, cultivates his or her talents and abilities, and achieves inner maturity.

There have been numerous attempts to use *Bildungsromans* in educational contexts in a variety of ways. The narrative thinking embodied in *Bildungsromans* helps us examine existential questions of significance, purpose, and meaning, and thus can be instrumental in a variety of educational contexts.

It was once common to regard *Bildungsromans* as textbooks that help us improve ourselves, and there have been various criticisms regarding that reading of the concept. I will defer systematic discussion of those criticisms to a different occasion; presently, I will limit myself to noting that in the educational context *Bildungsromans* are now being read in new and innovative ways not susceptible to those criticisms.

First, there have been attempts to use *Bildungsromans* in teacher education. There have been reports that having teachers write a narrative on their own *Bildung* could yield valuable results in teacher education. It is claimed in Kim and Zimmermann (2017) that writing such a narrative helps cultivate teachers' professional attitudes and beliefs, aids them in assessing their own development, and helps them evolve a subjective interpretation of their lived experience through interactions with others (Kim & Zimmerman, 2017). Likewise, it has been claimed by some authors (The Self-Study Group at Texas Tech University, 2018; Williams, Ritter, & Bullock, 2012) that an experience of writing a *Bildungsroman*-style narrative on their own and reading such narratives written by their peers could help teachers to better understand how both positive and negative experiences have formatively shaped their work and identity. We might envision a tool that will help users produce such a narrative—for

instance, a tool that will create such a narrative based on the users' responses to a set of questions.

Second, there have been attempts to use *Bildungsromans* in adult or continuing education (Fellenz, 2016). *Bildungsromans* are primarily concerned with self-formation or maturity as well as with the creation and transformation of specific relations between the forming and formed self and the world. Thus, *Bildungsromans* can be especially helpful in developing new theories of professional or adult education and development.

The *Bildungsroman* has evolved into various different forms over the centuries, and that variety can usefully be exploited in the context of adult education. For example, McKenzie suggests that it can be educationally meaningful to compare the stages of human development depicted in one novel to the stages of development chronicled in a novel by another author (McKenzie, 1975). We could perform such a comparison between *Bildungsromans* from entirely different eras. For instance, it could be highly instructive and educational to perform such a comparison between *Bildungsromans* from the nineteenth and from the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, modernist writers revived the *Bildungsroman* in a new pragmatic ideological context (Castle, 2006). Modernists resisted the bureaucratized *Bildung* of the nineteenth century, opting instead for the aesthetic and spiritual manifestation of the *Bildung* concept. In the present century, various new types of *Bildungsromans* are being produced, making reference to contemporary issues such as gender, the ageing population, the financial divide, and multiculturalism (Gunning, 2012). In the context of continuing education, a close reading of such a variety of *Bildungsromans* can be conducive to a closer examination of the self-world-relationship and thus be highly valuable.

In Germany, roughly one of every two adults is studying in some form of continuing education setting (Bilger, Behringer, Kuper, & Schrader, 2017). According to a questionnaire study involving 4626 people aged between 18 and 64 who were participating in some form of education outside of a structured curriculum (Bilger et al., 2017, p.120), when asked about the motivation for their participation in continuing education, 37% of the respondents cited "expansion of knowledge/ability on an interesting theme" and 36% cited "acquisition of useful knowledge/ability for everyday life." These respondents can be considered to have participated in continuing education for *Bildung*-related reasons, despite the fact that as a motivation for their participation, 57% of the respondents cited "performance of professional activity," 29% "enhancement of professional chances," and 23% "obligation to attend the courses"; these motivations are related to the concept of *Ausbildung* or *Berufsbildung* and seemingly

unrelated to the concept of *Bildung*. According to a different study involving 1193 people aged between 18 and 64 (Bilger et al., 2017, p.231), 38% of them were receiving education in the subject area of "basic education, language, culture & politics," 26% in the area of "health & sport," 20% in the area of "nature, technology & computer," 6% in the area of "education & social competences," and 6% in the area of "economy, labor & law." The subject area of "basic education, language, culture & politics," which is the most popular, is the most obviously *Bildung*-related area among the subject areas cited. These observations arguably point to the conclusion that the idea of *Bildung* continues to be a significant motivating force in present-day Germany.

Currently in the context of continuing education, the relevance of the idea of *Bildung* may be increasing even more. Many have recognized that continuing education in the present world needs more elements of general education rather than practical training in single areas, since it is becoming ever more difficult to predict what types of jobs will be available in the future. Thus, Hellmut Becker, the former president of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V.) and the cofounder of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung) has stated that continuing adult education should provide a new framework in which to develop the autonomous and critical maturity of individuals; this can facilitate coping with the future major challenges of a competitive, dynamic globalized, and multi-sectoral environment (Adorno & Becker, 1999). In a sense, the dichotomy between *Allgemeinbildung* and *Berufsbildung* is now dissolving, as suggested in (Gruber, 2009).

5. Summary

In this short article, we have seen that the concept of *Bildung* is still able to play a key role in our lives in current educational settings. In the area of language learning and teaching, a new reference framework has been published that aims at a kind of language learning in which learners are able to enhance their ability as social agents in a manner reminiscent of the concept of *Bildung*. I have proposed above that we might add to this reference framework a classification scheme for stages of cognitive development, so that learners will be able to better assess their own development in extralinguistic competences as well. In the areas of teacher education and continuing education, which can both play an important function in language education, various new attempts are being made to use *Bildungsromans* as a means to elucidate how one can update one's competences in new and rapidly changing situations.

In relation to these attempts, I have suggested that one reason why continuing education remains very popular in Germany may be the persistent importance of the idea of *Bildung* in German society.

References

Adorno, T. W., & Becker, H. (1999). Education for maturity and responsibility. *History of the Human Sciences, 12*(3), 21-34.

Anderson, L., & Krathwohl, D. (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning Teaching and Assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.* New York: Longman.

Bialystok, E., Craik, F. I. M., & Luk, G. (2012). Bilingualism: Consequences for Mind and Brain. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 16*(4), 240-250. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2012.03.001

Biehl, P., & Nipkow, K. E. (2003). *Bildung und Bildungspolitik in theologischer Perspektive.* Münster: LIT Verlag.

Bilger, F., Behringer, F., Kuper, H., & Schrader, J. (2017). *Weiterbildungsverhalten in Deutschland 2016: Ergebnisse des Adult Education Survey, Daten und Berichte zur Weiterbildung.* Bielefeld: wbv Media GmbH.

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals: Handbook 1 Cognitive Domain.* New York: David McKay.

Breidbach, S. (2007). *Bildung, Kultur, Wissenschaft: Reflexive Didaktik für den bilingualen Sachfachunterricht.* Münster: Waxmann Verlag.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment Companion Volume with New Descriptors.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Cowen, R. (1996). Performativity, Post-modernity and the University. *Comparative Education, 32*(2), 245-258. doi:10.1080/03050069628876

Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *Content and Language Integrated Learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fellenz, M. R. (2016). Forming the Professional Self: Bildung and the ontological perspective on professional education and development. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 48*(3), 267-283. doi: 10.1080/00131857.2015.1006161

Gruber, E. (2009). Humboldt ist tot - es lebe Humboldt. *Erwachsenenbildung, 2*, 75-79. doi:10.3278/ EBZ0902W075

Gunning, D. (2012). Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Empathy in the Realist Novel and Its Alternatives. *Contemporary Literature, 53*(4), 779-813.

Kim, J.-H., & Zimmerman, A. (2017). Bildung, Bildungsroman, and the Cultivation of Teacher Dispositions. *The Teacher Educator, 52*(3), 235-249. doi:10.1080/08878730.2017.1315624

McKenzie, L. (1975). Analysis of Bildungsroman Literature as a Research Modality in Adult Education: an Inquiry. *Adult Education, 25*(4), 209-216. doi:10.1177/074171367502500401

Ringer, F. (1991). *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Self-Study Group at Texas Tech University. (2018). Storytelling as Self-Study: Exploring the Bildungsroman of Teacher Educators. *Learning Landscapes, 11*(2), 345-353.

Trim, J. (1997). *Language Learning for European Citizenship: Final Report of the Project Group (1989-96).* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Williams, J., Ritter, J., & Bullock, S. M. (2012). Understanding the Complexity of Becoming a Teacher Educator: Experience, belonging, and practice within a professional learning community. *Studying Teacher Education, 8*(3), 245-260. doi:10.1080/17425964.2012.719130

Yatabe, K. (2018). Effects of multilingualism on the general cognitive development among young people (Die Auswirkung der Mehrsprachigkeit auf allgemeine kognitive Entwicklungen bei Jugendlichen). *Journal of Foreign Language Education (Keio Research Center for Foreign Language Education), 14*, 1-25.