

Introduction: Multilingual approaches for teaching and learning

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Abstract

In the wake of the increasing societal diversity in Europe, it is imperative that teachers reflect on their teaching approaches and adjust them to cater for the growing number of multilingual pupils. This introductory chapter outlines the monolingual mindset and language hierarchies that still exist in European education systems, and explains these are a result of the nation-forming movements of the nineteenth century. Next, four types of language instruction are presented: foreign language instruction; second language pedagogy; bilingual/monoglossic instruction; and plurilingual/heteroglossic instruction. The chapter continues with different types of multilingual approaches in mainstream educational settings that capitalise on multilingualism for teaching and learning, among them intercomprehension and translanguaging. Having explained these, the chapter explores the importance of partnerships with parents, professional development, and language policies because these actors and factors contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of the approaches. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the structure of this volume as well as of the individual chapters.

1. From monolingual to multilingual approaches in Europe

People have never been more internationally mobile. Nor has information spread so widely, as communication technologies have brought groups from various language and cultural backgrounds in contact. This has changed the ethnolinguistic characteristics of many regions. These phenomena have resulted in multilingualism both at the societal level (that is, the use of multiple languages in society), and at the personal level as individuals increasingly communicate in more than one language (Cenoz, 2013). The demographic changes have led to 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007), a term that refers to the interplay of a variety of factors related to social, cultural, and linguistic diversity, which triggers transformation in societies (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015). In the field of education, the impact of superdiversity is visible in classrooms where each day teachers encounter a variety of home

languages, and where they may teach several institutional languages. In Europe (the focus of the authors' work in this volume) the national languages of the nation-states have often become the dominant institutional languages, and thus figure predominantly in language policies. Other languages, such as some minority or migrant languages, are given little space in schools, and are generally valued mainly for their functional benefits (Lo Bianco, 2014). This language hierarchy illustrates the status of different languages within education systems. Ellis, Gogolin, and Clyne (2011) claim that languages occupy different positions within the (implicit) language hierarchy of a given nation-state, and that its analysis offers a useful lens through which to examine the different statuses of languages. In their analysis, national languages tend to be at the top of the language hierarchy pyramid, followed by foreign languages taught at schools. The role of English as a foreign language needs to be highlighted, as English is by far the most commonly taught language in Europe from primary school onwards. It is also increasingly used to teach academic content, as seen by the growing numbers of CLIL programmes (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in compulsory education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015). At the bottom of the pyramid are community languages such as autochthonous minority languages, immigrant languages, and immigrant ethnolects. Ellis et al. (2011) conclude that such hierarchies, visible in language ideologies, policies, and national curricula, reflect a 'monolingual mindset' of nation-states. The language ideologies are an inheritance of the creation of nation-states in the nineteenth century in Europe (Gogolin, 2002; Spotti & Kroon, 2017) and led to monolingual education systems to foster 'unity through homogeneity', an ideology that is still strong in most European countries (Horner, 2009; Cooke & Simpson, 2012). It has severe consequences for multilingual students less fluent in the institutional languages, as it influences their learning processes, academic achievements, and the ways students with minority background are perceived.

Research studies demonstrate cognitive and linguistic effects of bilingualism (e.g. Bialystok, 2017). Yet international assessment studies show that children with a migrant background and low socioeconomic status underachieve, compared to children who grow up speaking the national language(s) or high-status languages (OECD, 2015). According to Tajmel (2010), the lack of attention paid in schools to the language competences of these children, and the possible mismatch between

school languages and home languages, is related to the monoglossic ideologies underpinning curricula. Thus, multilingual students risk a more limited access to the curriculum due to the combination of language dominance and monolingual standards. Furthermore, monolingual assessment practices mean that students' understanding (developed through institutional languages) and skills are measured in the institutional language(s) in which students may be less proficient (Shohamy, 2011; De Backer, De Cooman, Slembrouck and Van Avermaet, in this volume). According to Scarino (2014) and Spence-Brown (2014), there is now an urgent need to 'unlearn monolingualism' and align teaching and learning practices at schools, and the language practices of the changing populations they serve.

Languages lie at the heart of teaching and learning processes. They shape the ways in which students communicate with each other, express themselves, engage with concepts, make sense of their world, think, and learn (Halliday, 1993). Drawing on Hélot, we argue that it is essential to recognise the existing language diversity, have an open-minded stance regarding all languages being used, and capitalise on students' resources in education.

Understanding linguistic diversity in education means more than referring to a plurality of linguistic systems or to the coexistence of different languages in society, it means analysing the role of language(s) in education with a shift of perspective from the singular to the plural, or from a monoglossic to a heteroglossic perspective stressing the plurality of uses within each language and across different languages.
(Hélot, 2012, p. 216)

The current volume presents research studies on the structural inclusion of multiple languages in mainstream educational settings. It sheds light on existing multilingual approaches—in several European education settings—that capitalise on multilingualism for teaching and learning. The chapters testify to the success of several multilingual approaches and provide insights into effective methods and strategies that teachers can use to draw on students' diverse multilingual repertoires in classrooms.

2. Plurilingual or multilingual, competence or practice?

Throughout the volume, the existence, development, and use of multiple languages in individuals, families, schools, and societies is referred to in two different ways. Some authors choose to adhere to the terminology of the Council of Europe and call individual multilingualism ‘plurilingualism’ (e.g. Chapters 6 and 7), defined as one’s ability to use several languages to varying degrees, and for distinct purposes. Others (e.g. Chapters 2 and 5) use the term ‘multilingualism’ to refer to ‘the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society’ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4).

The debate about the use of ‘plurilingualism’ vs. ‘multilingualism’ is ongoing. On the one side, researchers reinforce the encompassing nature of the term ‘plurilingualism’ as:

a unique, overarching notion, implying a subtle but profound shift in perspective, both horizontally, toward the use of multiple languages, and vertically, toward valuing even the most partial knowledge of a language (and other para- and extralinguistic resources) as tools for facilitating communication. (Piccardo, 2016 p. 319)

On the other side, the term, which is rooted in European ideologies and policies, has been criticised for being a European ‘marketization of multilingualism as a skill’, having ‘done little to address the power imbalances’ and having neglected other types of multilingual practices (García, 2018, p. 883).

Several other terms can be found in the literature to refer to individuals’ ability to use several languages. These go hand in hand with a reconceptualisation of bilingualism. The concept of ‘additive bilingualism’, which aims at achieving native-like competence in two languages, has been replaced by the idea of an integrated bilingual or multilingual competence (Cook, 1992; Grosjean, 1985; Franceschini, 2011). Following the ‘multilingual turn’ (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014), the focus shifted from competences and languages to the actual practices of language users. Nowadays, there is an array of alternative terms to describe the language practices of multilinguals: code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2006), transidiomatic practices (Jaquemet, 2005), polylingualism (Jørgensen, 2008), and heteroglossia (Pavlenko, 2005). Translanguaging (García, 2009), the deployment of one’s entire linguistic repertoire for communication, enjoys a special status in this

volume (e.g. Chapters 2, 5, and 6). These recent notions share an understanding that languages are not separate entities, and focus on the dynamic and hybrid aspect of languaging or language use.

3. Multilingual approaches in education

The hybrid language practices of bi-/multilingual students are increasingly being acknowledged, and new teaching approaches need to be developed both in bilingual and mainstream education. Different socio-educational contexts have resulted in several teaching approaches, which, according to García and Flores (2012), can be separated into four different types: foreign language instruction; second language pedagogy; bilingual/monoglossic instruction; and plurilingual/heteroglossic instruction. We will explain each of these but focus on the final two.

Foreign language instruction teaches students an additional language, often English, which they can use in different national and other societal contexts. In contrast, second language pedagogy focuses on the development of a second or additional language. This is used within the same space as the national language (e.g. a minority or migrant language) in certain community or family contexts. Third, in bilingual/monoglossic instruction, two languages are used as a medium of instruction. Early conceptualisations of bilingual education argued for strict language separation to keep the languages of bilinguals separate as this was thought to avoid confusion (for a historical overview see Baker, 2011; García, 2013). This is still the case in many bilingual education programmes in Europe and elsewhere. Two-way immersion with minority languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015) and dual-language models in the US (García, 2009) are a case in point. The programmes are therefore monoglossic in nature. Many schools were (and still are) mainly monolingual in their ideological approach to languages. Their main language-related policy was/is to develop students' academic abilities in the school language(s) and phase out home languages. Hence, it is not unusual for language practices in schools to bear few similarities to family language practices, which can lead students to underperform at school (García, 2013). It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the human rights movement started to make the case for the acceptance and use of home languages in all schools, rather than only in bilingual institutions (Wright, 2007). This

movement was accompanied by greater understanding that all languages are part of a single language repertoire. This led to plurilingual/heteroglossic instruction in which the use of several languages is a central part of the curriculum, language policies, and practices. It aims to develop national and foreign languages as well as minority language(s). The framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (Candelier et al., 2012) presents four main types of multilingual instruction: intercultural approaches, awakening to languages (*éveil aux langues*), intercomprehension, and integrated didactic approaches. These approaches incorporate several languages into the instruction processes, based on the idea that students and teachers have various linguistic resources that can be acknowledged and used for learning. For instance, in integrated didactic approaches, students draw on their home languages to learn a first foreign language and, subsequently, use knowledge of both of these to learn a second foreign language. In intercomprehension approaches, learners study several languages of the same language family in parallel, thereby focusing on receptive skills. Awakening to languages targets mainly primary school children and offers them opportunities to encounter a wide range of institutional and home languages.

The chapters in this volume discuss several multilingual approaches, as well as some factors required for their successful implementation, such as educational partnerships from an intercultural perspective (Chapters 3 and 4), assessment (Chapter 8), and language policies and teachers' professional development (Chapter 11). Chapters 2, 5, 6, and 11 present an approach not mentioned in Candelier et al. (2012): the translanguaging pedagogy (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; Kirsch et al., forthcoming; Duarte, 2016). On the one hand, translanguaging is a theoretical lens that offers an alternative view of the language practices of bi-/multilingual speakers. They draw naturally and flexibly on their linguistic repertoires to make meaning and negotiate communicative contexts. On the other hand, translanguaging has been developed into a pedagogy that builds on students' linguistic resources and attempts to leverage these for meaning-making and learning (García et al., 2017). Although the 'transformative potential' of translanguaging has been questioned (Jaspers, 2017), there is no doubt that the concept offers an enormous contribution to redefining language pedagogy that 'draws attention to the speakers' agentive

behaviour and creative practices' (Kirsch, in this volume). Kirsch (Chapter 2) presents the translanguaging pedagogy that early childhood professionals developed as a result of a professional development course in Luxembourg. Duarte and Günther-van der Meij (Chapter 5) discuss translanguaging as part of a model to support teachers in implementing multilingual education in secondary schools. Kirsch, Duarte, and Palviainen (Chapter 11) provide insights into the ways in which teachers learned to implement flexible language approaches in Finland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Chapter 4 moves beyond the multilingual approaches presented in Candelier et al. (2012) and explores promising pedagogies of linguistically and culturally sensitive teachers in England, that help multilinguals develop their potential.

A second multilingual approach featured in this volume is intercomprehension. According to Burley and Pomphrey (2002, p. 46), intercomprehension refers to a broader approach relating to, among other factors, multilingualism, multiculturalism, language learning strategies, intercultural competence, language transfer, and language comparisons. It facilitates the communication of speakers of different backgrounds but from similar language families, owing to the typological closeness of the languages (Pinho, 2015). Language families play an important role in intercomprehension. Speakers learn to be aware of similarities within and across language families, while explicitly identifying skills that can be easily transferred from one language to the other. Intercomprehension has been widely used in primary, secondary, and higher education. Drawing on intercomprehension approaches implemented in four secondary schools in Brazil, France, Italy, and Spain, Melo-Pfeifer (Chapter 6) analyses the ways in which written online conversations promoted the learning of Romance languages. Polzin-Haumann and Reissner (Chapter 7) provide an overview of the implementation of intercomprehension approaches in secondary and tertiary education in Germany, as well as current research projects. Ticheloven, Schwenke-Lam, and Fürstenau (Chapter 3) explore the potential of language comparisons in primary schools. Research has provided strong empirical evidence that language comparisons facilitate conceptual learning in several areas (for an overview, see Gentner, 2010; Rittle-Johnson & Star, 2011). The comparison contributes to deeper processing of particular language features (Ziegler & Stern, 2014), and

the development of problem-solving skills (Catrambone & Holyoak, 1989). A further approach mentioned in Chapter 8 is functional multilingual learning (Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014). It presents a framework for exploiting multilingual repertoires as didactical capital for learning, through the functional use of home languages in mainstream education, raising multilingual awareness and creating positive attitudes towards home languages. The concept puts forward a social interaction model for learning, including multiple languages, as an alternative to the traditional language learning model. In Chapter 8 this approach is mentioned in relation to the assessment of multilingual students.

Apart from these multilingual approaches, we discuss key actors and factors which facilitate or impede the implementation of these approaches. Regarding the different actors, Chapters 9 and 10 focus on parents, while Chapter 11 highlights the role of policy-makers. Chapter 9 provides a systematic review of partnerships between language minority parents and professionals in early childhood education and care. Departing from an intercultural, power-sensitive and power-critical perspective, the authors of Chapter 10 provide insights into various types of cooperation between educators and parents in early childhood and primary education in Germany. The role of policy-makers in facilitating multilingual education is presented in Chapter 11. In relation to factors influencing the development and implementation of multilingual approaches, Chapter 5 explores existing multilingual pedagogies in the Netherlands, and describes the ways in which teachers develop and perceive them. Geography teachers' beliefs towards assessment of multilingual students and their assessment practices in a secondary school in Belgium, are discussed in Chapter 8. Finally, the authors in Chapters 2, 5, and 11 show the ways in which language policies are appropriated by practitioners in three different national contexts. They explore the influences of professional development programmes on their traditionally monolingual practices.

4. The structure of the volume

The volume is divided into three sections. The first focuses on multilingual pedagogies in early childhood education and primary education in Luxembourg, Germany, and England. In Chapter 2, called 'Translanguaging pedagogies in early childhood education in

Luxembourg: theory into practice’, Kirsch presents the results of a professional development course aimed at promoting multilingual pedagogies in Luxembourg. The observations, video-recordings, and interviews indicate that the course was successful, in that it enabled the practitioners in formal and non-formal education settings to implement a multilingual programme. The practitioners developed a positive stance towards multilingual education and translanguaging, designed a holistic multilingual learning environment, and used languages flexibly. Their translanguaging pedagogy facilitated communication and participation, thus contributing to improving the learning outcomes and well-being of children. Existing differences between the practitioners’ flexible language-use related mainly to the frequency, planning, and use of home languages in the school setting. Anouk Ticheloven, Trang Schwenke-Lam, and Sara Fürstenau present ‘Multilingual teaching practices in primary classrooms in Germany: language comparisons’ (Chapter 3). The teachers worked in 17 German primary schools, and each participated in a professional development programme aimed at helping them incorporate home languages into their teaching. To examine the use of language comparisons, the authors used quantitative and qualitative data. Results from questionnaires indicate that two-thirds of the teachers reported using language comparisons. Observations in four schools provide insights into various teaching practices. These revealed three different levels of initiative with the teachers reacting to the students’ language comparisons, improvising spontaneous language comparisons, and planning language comparisons. In Chapter 4, Ratha Perumal, Naomi Flynn, Kara Mitchell Viesca, Johanna Ennser-Kananen, and Sara Routarinne present the results of the project OPETAN (Observations of Pedagogical Excellence of Teachers Across Nations), focusing on England. Their contribution ‘What is effective pedagogy for multilingual learners? Observations of teaching that challenges inequity from the OPETAN project in England’ addresses the need to identify and operationalise classroom practice, both to help multilingual learners develop the language of schooling, and to help them succeed academically. The authors present the ‘Standards of Effective Pedagogy’, an observation tool for observing classroom pedagogy, and show how they used it to evaluate practices in four schools. They found that the teachers sought to draw on children’s languages in a respectful fashion, that teaching practices were dialogic

and inspiring, and that this increased learners' confidence and enthusiasm.

The second section with four chapters addresses multilingual approaches in secondary education. 'Multilingual interaction in secondary education in the Netherlands: multilingualism to learn or learning to act multilingually?' is the title of Chapter 5, written by Joana Duarte and Mirjam Günther-van der Meij. Focusing on the bilingual region of Friesland in the Netherlands, the authors analyse the multilingual interactions of teachers in three secondary schools that had participated in an intervention to develop multilingual education. Their analysis shows that the framework from Gajo and Berthoud (2018)—developed to analyse multilingual interaction in a university setting—needed to be expanded. Specifically, they show the need to reflect the complex set of practices in which teachers and students engage when multilingualism is actively used in language and content classrooms. The chapter also gives an overview of the practices in which the teachers engaged. These range from engaging in language comparisons, involving migrant languages for learning new concepts, and reflecting on the role of languages and dialects for speakers. In Chapter 6 entitled 'Intercomprehension in the mainstream language classroom at secondary school level: how online multilingual interaction fosters foreign language learning', Silvia Melo-Pfeifer explores the advantages of integrating intercomprehension in mainstream foreign language classrooms in secondary education, in order to facilitate the learning of typologically related Romance languages. She analyses the online written communication of several speakers. Through this she explores the potential of intercomprehension to enhance language learning, through the negotiation of the rules of multilingual interaction, the collaborative resolution of linguistic problems, and the perception of multilingual communication as a potential language learning situation. In Chapter 7, Claudia Polzin-Haumann and Christina Reissner present a theoretical perspective on intercomprehension and provide an overview of research outcomes from the implementation of intercomprehension techniques over a ten-year period in Saarland, Germany. In their chapter entitled 'Research on intercomprehension in Germany: from theory to school practice and vice versa', the authors describe the ways in which intercomprehension has been put into practice, both at the university and in primary and secondary schools. In addition, they

explain the ways in which language teaching and learning in foreign language settings can benefit from the multilingual perspectives on languages which are inherent in the intercomprehension approach. Fauve De Backer, Eva De Cooman, Stef Slembrouck, and Piet Van Avermaet look at multilingual assessment in Chapter 8. ‘Multilingual assessment: beliefs and practices of geography teachers’, presents various types of assessment accommodations which allow students to draw on their multilingual repertoires in tests. Such accommodations include the use of dictionaries, bilingual tests, and extra time. These can reduce language obstacles for multilingual students. The authors also report on the beliefs of Flemish geography teachers about the assessment of multilingual learners. The results of ten semi-structured interviews show that while teachers acknowledge the language barriers faced by multilingual students, they also express concerns in relation to multilingual assessment regarding feasibility, fairness, and the comparability of test results.

The last section of the volume brings together a study of other influences on the implementation of multilingual approaches. This includes the experiences of key actors such as families, and the impact of factors such as policies and professional development. Two chapters address questions around cooperation between educational institutions and parents. Rachida Aghallaj, Anouk Van Der Wildt, Michel Vandebroek, and Orhan Agirdag present a meta-analysis in Chapter 9, called ‘Exploring the partnership between language minority parents and professionals in early childhood education and care: a systematic review’. The authors identified 1,434 studies related to the previously-mentioned subject, and closely analysed 26 in the light of (dis)continuities between language policies of parents and practitioners. They found that the three components of the policy—practices, management, and beliefs (Spolsky, 2004)—were equally important for developing partnerships. The authors conclude with implications for future research and practice. In ‘Parental cooperation in early childhood education in Germany—bridging language barriers in multilingual settings’ (Chapter 10), Tanja Salem, Janne Braband, and Drorit Lengyel take an intercultural perspective on collaboration with parents. They begin with a literature review on participation and quality in early childhood and care, educational concepts, and the perspectives of parents and professionals on multilingual education. They then provide insights into three research projects on cooperation

between educators and parents. These indicate, among other things, that collaboration contributed to children's language development, and that an investment in professional development is necessary. The authors call for further research, including an analysis of participants' conditions of life and the dominant orders in migration societies. Chapter 11, written by Claudine Kirsch, Joana Duarte, and Åsa Palviainen, entitled 'Language policy, professional development and sustainability of multilingual approaches', provides an overview of research on language policies and professional development. The aim is to examine effective and sustainable ways in which teachers can implement multilingual approaches. The authors claim that an alignment between pedagogical skills, beliefs, and teacher agency is needed to ensure sustainable multilingual teaching approaches. The chapter explores three case-studies. A Finnish case demonstrates the ways in which recent policies advocating diversity and multilingualism gradually change teacher beliefs. Then there were two case-studies of professional development in Luxembourg and the Netherlands, where teacher beliefs and agency were central to moving towards multilingual practices. The final chapter of this volume called 'Conclusion and future research', written by Claudine Kirsch, brings all chapters together and offers suggestions for future research.

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