

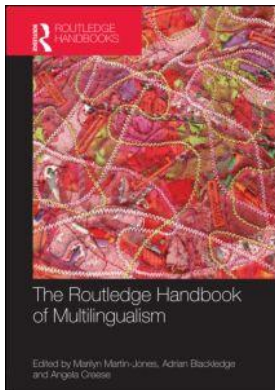
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 04 Jun 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism

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Linguistic diversity and education

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203154427.ch12>

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Published online on: 31 May 2012

How to cite :- Christine Hélot. 31 May 2012, *Linguistic diversity and education from: The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism* Routledge

Accessed on: 04 Jun 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203154427.ch12>

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Linguistic diversity and education

Christine Hélot

Introduction

With increased mobility and migration all over the world (Castles and Miller 2003), multilingualism has acquired a new visibility. Linguistic diversity is now a regular feature of our everyday experiences as can be witnessed in exchanges in public spaces, the workplace and in homes. Multilingualism is also visible in the linguistic landscape all around us, in films where it is no longer uncommon to hear actors speak in several languages, in various other media and on the World Wide Web where one is free to use any language in any form or shape.

Paradoxically, although schools everywhere and especially in urban centres have seen a growing change in their populations, the increased visibility of linguistic diversity is not reflected in classroom practices. Extra and Gorter (2001), for example, report 150 different languages spoken by pupils in schools in Hamburg and more than 350 in London, yet very few of these languages are supported by our education systems. Increased language contacts in the world and the growing need to communicate across language borders mean that educational language policies need to be reframed in order to take into account societal multilingualism. But although it is now accepted that multilingualism is the normal state of society as most people in the world speak more than one language, linguistic diversity remains a difficult challenge to address in education systems built on the ideology of linguistic uniformity, an ideology engrained in the formation of European nation-states. Conceived as linguistically and culturally homogenous spaces, our schools find it difficult to question their monolingual habitus, and to imagine that multilingual practices could become the norm in education as well.

Linguistic diversity in education raises many complex questions, which relate to language policy, language ideologies, educational history and language learning pedagogies. First, linguistic diversity challenges our traditional conceptualizations of language and language education. Second, it questions the assumption that teaching foreign or second languages is enough to protect linguistic diversity and, third, it points to the lack of recognition of migrant minority languages and different forms of bilingualism developed outside of the school context. What I would like to argue in this chapter is that the issue of linguistic diversity in education should

not be approached only from the point of view of how to include as many languages as possible in the curriculum, or of how to answer the needs of students who do not speak the language of instruction. Although linguistic diversity in education obviously relates to areas of research such as foreign language teaching (FLT) or second language acquisition (SLA) and bilingual and multilingual education, it also has to do with developing new relationships to language and languages, new understandings of how language is used in society, an awareness of the rights of minority speakers to be educated in their home languages and a recognition that many languages in the world today are endangered.

These very wide issues concern society at large, politicians, employers, policy makers, the teaching community, parents and all learners. They should be a major concern for educationalists but it could also be considered paradoxical to ask schools to help sustain linguistic diversity when their main objective for over a century was to educate linguistically homogenous citizens through the eradication of differences. Indeed, over several centuries languages have been ‘constructed’ by states wanting to consolidate political power (Makoni and Pennycook 2007), and this has led to the division of language into different and discrete languages, to a belief that there is a privileged link between people and a territory and to languages functioning as autonomous entities in exclusionary relationships with each other. A long-held assumption was that knowledge of one language hindered the acquisition of another. Another common representation of languages is based on a hierarchy of values assigned to different languages and varieties, the national standard variety always being favoured, particularly by school systems, which reinforce and reproduce these attitudes.

Furthermore, language categorization and denomination as foreign or second, official or national, minority or majority, as well as speakers as native or non-native, have had a major influence on curriculum design and teaching approaches. On the one hand there is the ‘mother tongue’ and on the other ‘foreign’ languages, which have become separate university disciplines with distinct epistemologies. Even when foreign languages were introduced in the primary curriculum and taught by mainstream teachers they remained separate from the teaching of ‘the’ school language, in a somewhat similar manner to bilingual education models where the two languages of instruction are kept strictly separate. It is only more recently that the work of sociolinguists stressing the social dimension of language use and language learning has begun to have an influence on the way second languages are being taught, i.e. within a lifelong perspective that takes into account all the previous language experiences of the learner and recognizes both the cultural dimension and the process of identity negotiation involved in the learning of any new language.

The inclusion of foreign or second languages in school curricula is often believed to be a way of supporting linguistic diversity. For example, the European Commission Action Plan elaborated in Barcelona in 2002 decided that all Europeans should study at least two languages other than the school language during their obligatory schooling. Traditionally in Europe, many countries have had a long experience of offering several foreign languages in the curriculum but recent research (Cenoz 2009; Hélot 2008; Edwards 2010) has shown that it is not sufficient to ensure the sustainability of linguistic diversity: one of the reasons for this is that policy makers always favour dominant European languages at the expense of minority languages. Another reason is that many bilingual speakers of minority languages are not offered any support at schools to develop their home language, and often schools make them monolingual again. Furthermore, the wide choice of pedagogical approaches for the teaching of second languages are all aimed at improving linguistic competence – admittedly in more than one language – but teaching and learning strategies are designed with one specific language in mind. In other words, the monolingual perspective of foreign language learning,

and up to a certain extent also of bilingual education (García 2009), has made it difficult to expand beyond the limited number of languages offered in schools and to include in classroom activities the diversity of languages spoken by today's students. Alongside focus on form and learning languages in isolation from one another, students should be made aware of the relationships between the multiplicity of languages spoken in the world today, of the extraordinary variety of writing systems, of the variety of speech forms within one single language and of the importance of valuing each language as part of an individual and societal form of cultural heritage or transmission (see, for example, the Ethnologue website, which offers an encyclopaedic reference work cataloguing all of the world's 6,909 known living languages at www.ethnologue.com/ and the Terralingua website at www.terralingua.org, which stresses the link between cultural and biological diversity).

One obvious way of opening our classrooms to linguistic diversity would be to include all the languages spoken by pupils at home in the pedagogical activities implemented in schools and to allow bilingual students to use their various languages to learn in class. I have previously pointed to the waste at work in our schools, which ignore the bilingualism of some students who end up becoming monolingual again in an education system where the aim is to educate future plurilingual citizens (Hélot 2006). The issue here concerns the linguistic support that should be given to bi- and multilingual learners irrespective of the status of the languages concerned. Bilingual education in Europe and elsewhere tends to be the preserve of elites who want to ensure a better future for their children; it is far less often offered as a model of language education to support immigrant minority language speakers. However, bilingual education in Europe has been a means to protect national or regional minority languages as in Ireland, Wales, the Basque Country and Catalonia for example, but immigrant minority languages on the whole have been left out of these programmes. Indeed, these languages are still being marginalized by most education systems reflecting immigration policies, which discriminate against immigrants from non-European countries. Yet in the same way that immigration brings wealth to a country, migrant languages are the very resource we need to sustain linguistic and cultural diversity and to foster intercultural understanding. For example, making space in a classroom for the languages spoken by some students whose parents or grandparents have migrated will give all students an opportunity to understand multilingualism, to become aware that some languages can become endangered when they are not passed on from parents to children and that they should be protected because they are part of our human heritage. Through the exploration of how different languages function, students can be brought to understand the relativity of differences at the linguistic and cultural level and that bi- or plurilingual speakers are the very ones who build bridges between people of different cultures (Hélot 2009).

In other words, 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. And sustaining linguistic diversity in our schools is not the preserve of second or foreign language teachers, all teachers of all disciplines at all levels are concerned, including teachers working in bilingual programmes, because in a multilingual society we need citizens who can communicate in different languages and understand what it means to negotiate different languages and cultures in everyday exchanges. In terms of education this implies looking for a new conceptualization of language teaching as a whole, related not only to language use and needs in society, but also to the human and creative dimension of language central to our survival.

Early developments in the field: language awareness and knowledge about language

Following on from the remarks above, I consider that the area of research that has addressed the question of linguistic diversity in education is language awareness (LA) and/or knowledge about language (KAL) and, more recently, critical language awareness (CLA).

As distinct from aiming at linguistic competence in one or two languages other than the language of schooling, the objectives of LA as put forward by Hawkins (1999) were to develop a bridging subject that would

stimulate curiosity about language as the defining characteristics of the ‘articulate mammal’ too easily taken for granted, to integrate the different kinds of language teaching met at school, and to help children to make an effective start in their foreign language learning.

(Hawkins 1999: 413)

Hawkins was the first to point to the lack of coherence in language education and on the absence of any investigation into the phenomenon of language itself, in Britain in particular. He was critical of the lack of links between the teaching of the school language, of second languages (including classical languages) and of the languages of minority speakers. He saw the traditional borders within language education as preventing cooperation between teachers of English and teachers of other languages, and thought that the traditional approaches to foreign language teaching (FLT) developed excessive Eurocentricism. Hawkins was looking for a more integrated approach to language education to challenge the traditional atomistic curriculum. He believed that all languages at school – the language of instruction, the ‘foreign’ languages and the languages spoken by ethnic minorities – should serve the purpose of understanding the nature and the function of language in society. In other words, as made clearer by van Lier (1996) learners in school should make sense of their language learning experiences, they should be made aware of what language is, of its role at the individual as well as at the societal level, and of what language (and languages) does for us and for others.

In the context of TESOL, Bolitho and Tominson (1980) also used the term ‘language awareness’ to refer to three components in language teaching: knowledge of language, knowledge about language, and pedagogical practice. Knowledge about language (KAL) was further investigated by Carter (1990), who took a functional view of language and explained that in KAL emphasis is placed on the description of language in social contexts. According to van Hessen (2008), who gives a very incisive historical overview of LA going back to the nineteenth century, Carter’s approach is more political than Hawkins’, in that Carter argues for the empowerment of learners; he explains that the aims of KAL are to bring learners to see through language ideologies, to be informed about the sources of attitudes to language, to be aware of its social use and misuse and of the way language is used to manipulate. In other words, Carter believed that KAL should help learners to take ownership of their own language competence and understand the power of language to change their lives. Other authors such as James (1999) define KAL as knowledge aimed at bringing to the conscious attention of the learners particular aspects of how language functions as a system and how it can be used in society to exclude or discriminate speakers of minority languages, for example, or of non-dominant varieties.

LA and KAL have both been seen as important tools for learners but also for the education of language teachers in order to assist their understanding of language structure *and* function.

Both LA and KAL have been an issue of interest in the teaching of the language of instruction and in foreign language education, although with somewhat different perspectives and emphasis according to the linguistic and cultural background of researchers (see Kots 2008 for KAL). Van Lier (1996) considers that the range of interpretation of both terms makes it difficult to decide whether they are synonymous terms or whether one is a subset of the other. One notes the same ambiguity in the definition given on the website of the Association for Language awareness (www.languageawareness.org/), which states that LA is about ‘explicit knowledge about language and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use’.

In continental Europe, the work of Hawkins influenced researchers working in the field of ‘language didactics’ such as Dabène (1994) and later on Candelier (2003) and Hélot (2007) in France, Haenisch and Thürmann (1994) and Oomen-Welke (1998) in Germany. In Switzerland Perregaux (1998) and De Pietro (1995) were researching the domain of intercultural education and looking for ways to integrate minority languages and cultures in the mainstream primary curriculum. The expression ‘language awareness’ was translated, stressing different dimensions according to the various contexts of research: Candelier (2008) in France chose ‘Awakening to Languages’, whereas Perregaux *et al.* (2003) in Switzerland preferred ‘Education and Opening to Languages and Cultures’.

However, what should be noted here is that the same objectives were present in these new approaches to language education: knowledge about language and linguistic diversity should be included in the mainstream curriculum alongside FLT, and learners speaking a minority language should see their linguistic competence in their first language (L1) acknowledged and valued in the school context. In other words, all learners should be given the opportunity to observe the differences between the language(s) of the classroom and the language(s) of real life, and should be educated to value linguistic and cultural diversity. Such aims were notably absent from FLT objectives, mainly because FLT implies that only one or two languages are taught, and the didactics of foreign languages (FL) are based on keeping each language separate, preventing learners from developing a more integrated or holistic approach to language learning. Such an approach would imply an engagement with language learning not only in the FL and mother tongue classrooms, but also across all subjects in the curriculum, and should eventually lead to multilingual education, i.e. the use of several different languages for instruction.

Furthermore, one needs to understand that starting FLT at an earlier stage in the curriculum might have some beneficial effect on linguistic competence, but it can also be counter-productive as far as supporting linguistic diversity is concerned: in most countries, because of the preferred choice for a dominant international language from the start of schooling, the hegemony of English has grown considerably, and affects all levels of education. For example, in the 1990s, when many European countries introduced the teaching of a foreign language into their primary curricula, English became the prevalent language taught in most schools across Europe, and such a choice means that it remains the main language learnt at university and in teacher education (see the Eurydice website for statistics: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php).

Moreover, it soon became obvious that starting FLT earlier in the curriculum did not change attitudes nor approaches towards language learning: all learners were considered as beginners and as monolinguals who had no prior experience with language except with the language of schooling (Hélot 2007; Hélot and Young 2005). Not surprisingly, early FLT had no impact on attitudes towards students who came to school with a different home language. It did not help to dispel negative attitudes towards second language speakers of minority

languages whose priority to acquire the school language should not be impeded by the learning of yet another language. This means that adding new languages in a curriculum does not necessarily work towards a better understanding of linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

Policy issues

Linguistic diversity in education has been at the core of all the language policy documents emanating from European institutions, as well as from some international organizations such as UNESCO or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For example, UNESCO (available online at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19635&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html), has reconsidered its position on linguistic diversity in education: whereas the declaration of 1953 insisted on the use of vernacular languages in education, the 2003 report entitled *Education Position Paper: Education in a Multilingual World* now stresses the role of languages and cultures – in the plural – as well as bi- and multilingual teaching at all levels of education. UNESCO still supports the rights of children to be educated in their first language, but the recent emphasis lies more with multilingual education as a key element of linguistically diverse societies and as a means to promote both social and gender equity. And safeguarding linguistic and cultural diversity is viewed as one of the most urgent challenges facing our world.

In the same way, European institutions such as the Language Policy division of the Council of Europe and the European Commission keep producing policy documents, recommendations and reports insisting that linguistic diversity must be protected because it is intrinsically linked to democratic citizenship. As the linguistic reality in Europe is of the utmost complexity and because everyone is aware that multilingual public spheres (Frazer 1994) will be a long-term phenomenon, the European Commission launched a new framework strategy for multilingualism in 2005. Part I.1 of this document refers to diversity in the following way:

The European Union is founded on ‘unity in diversity’: diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs – and of languages. [...] It is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a ‘melting pot’ in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding.

(*European Commission 2005: 2*)

Further on in point 1.2. the main aims of the strategy are outlined in the following terms: ‘to encourage language learning and to promote linguistic diversity in society’. Not surprisingly, the two dimensions refer to the distinction discussed above between knowledge of languages and knowledge about languages, the main problem remaining in the way both dimensions can be articulated in practice. But interestingly, the European Commission now sees multilingualism as a new field of policy in order ‘to promote a climate that is conducive to the full expression of all languages, in which the teaching and learning of a variety of languages can flourish’ (2005: 3).

The Council of Europe with its Language Policy Division created in 1994, has been particularly prolific in producing policies, reports, studies and frameworks all related to the promotion of language learning and to the protection of linguistic diversity in society and in education. At a conference organised in 1999 in Innsbruck entitled *Linguistic Diversity for Democratic Citizenship in Europe*, the various experts present recognized that learning one dominant language from the start of schooling did not necessarily lead to values such as openness to others, intercultural understanding and solidarity. As Byram (2000: 57–8) writes in the proceedings of the conference: ‘We have to admit that the fact of teaching foreign languages is not enough to

guarantee the development of a multilingual identity or other values such as tolerance, understanding of others and the desire for justice as is often proclaimed as a declaration of intent’.

The next year (2001), the *Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* was published with two main goals for language education in Europe: education for plurilingualism as a targeted competence with plurilingual awareness as a value. In this now well-known document among second language professionals, it is the notion of plurilingualism, which is seen as the form of education appropriate to European reality. Although everybody agrees with the necessity of learning several languages, or plurilingualism as a targeted competence, plurilingual awareness as a value has been more difficult to translate into pedagogical terms. As stated by Beacco and Byram (2003: 16), ‘plurilingual awareness should be structured and assisted by schools since it is in no sense automatic’.

I would like to argue that this is where the various pedagogical approaches developed within language awareness (LA) find their *raison d’être* and there are several reasons for this: first, LA activities do not focus on just one language but include many languages that can be compared to one another and to the school language; second, they lend themselves particularly well to the inclusion of minority languages that can become integrated in pedagogical projects; and third, they are designed to foster an understanding of linguistic diversity and positive attitudes towards multilingualism. In other words, at the heart of LA approaches lies a new conceptualization of language education where the question of values – such as linguistic tolerance for example – is as important as the question of competence. Thus education for plurilingual awareness is seen as one of the requirements for the protection of linguistic diversity and through education for linguistic tolerance, it is linked to education for democratic citizenship.

What is noteworthy about the various policies promoted by the Council of Europe is that they are informed by the work of experts looking for a coherent and common approach as the basis for the development of language education policies and a global concept for languages. The best example of such work is Beacco and Byram’s *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (2003), which is available on the Council of Europe’s website (www.coe.int/lang). This guide is not only highly readable, it is a model of the genre because the authors do not advocate any particular language education policy measures, rather they seek to clarify the issues involved and to define the goals at work in such policies. In their attempt to draw up common principles complying with the values of the Council of Europe, they see the concept of plurilingualism as central to a renewal in thinking on the language education policies that different member states have conducted (see the excellent report on Ireland for example, Council of Europe 2008). And plurilingualism, along with the notions of diversity, tolerance, and cohesion, is reorganized around two central concepts: plurilingual repertoire and plurilingual competence.

Plurilingual repertoire

A plurilingual repertoire encompasses all the language experiences of a person irrespective of the level of competence attained in the different languages. This means that all the languages (or varieties of languages) known by a person should be recognized and then supported so that her various linguistic competences find their legitimate place within her lifelong learning experiences. This is very important for languages acquired or learnt outside of formal schooling, such as minority languages for example, which should also be recognized as part of the linguistic repertoire of learners. Moreover, a plurilingual repertoire is by nature heterogeneous: it is a repertoire of communicative resources that speakers use according to their needs, and

because it is dynamic it changes in time and in composition according to the person's experiences. Thus plurilingualism is seen as an unexceptional ability shared by all speakers and in terms of a competence that can be acquired and which is within everyone's grasp.

Plurilingual competence

Likewise the notion of plurilingual competence is interesting because it helps to reframe the notion of competence or mastery of several languages away from the benchmark of native-speaker ability. A plurilingual competence is not synonymous with mastering a great number of languages at high level but with acquiring the ability to use more than one linguistic variety to differing degrees and for different purposes. This has consequences for teaching as explained by Beacco and Byram (2003: 39):

It is less a matter of deciding which and how many foreign languages should be taught in education systems than of directing the goals of language education towards the acquisition of a competence in fact unique, encompassing the mother tongue, the national language(s), regional and minority languages, European and non European languages, etc. This is a realistic goal if it is accepted that plurilingual repertoires developed through education can be diverse, that the languages that are components of plurilingual competence do not all have to be learnt at the same level and that language education takes place throughout life and not exclusively during school years.

To summarize, the language policies of the Council of Europe aim to promote multilingualism, to sustain linguistic diversity, to develop mutual understanding and democratic citizenship and they also consider access to language learning throughout life as a factor for social cohesion. However, one should not forget that such values are being promoted by European institutions working at a supranational level towards the development of a European identity, but that the policy documents are only recommendations, interpreted differently by each state in a Europe that has made sure education should remain a national prerogative. For example, the widely used *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe: 2001) claims to be an instrument to assist member-states to develop policies for plurilingualism, but its main focus is to propose a common basis for the elaboration of curricula, syllabuses and reference points to plan and evaluate foreign language learning and teaching. At no point does it question the use of the national official language as the main language of instruction and one is struck by the way the different competences described are also framed within a monolingual perspective. Although it is possible to use the language levels to evaluate one's competence in different languages, it remains based on an additive vision of plurilingualism, which does not take into account hybrid practices, translanguaging and the recursive and dynamic nature of bilingual practices (García 2009).

Key issues of theory and methods

Diversification vs diversity

One of the key issues relating to linguistic diversity in language education lies in the meaning ascribed to the term 'diversity' and to the way it is interpreted by policy makers and subsequently implemented in education systems. For example, it is quite common to think that linguistic diversity can be promoted through offering a wider range of languages in a curriculum, so that

students have a large choice and do not all end up studying the same dominant European language. Although it seems obvious that a large choice of different languages should be offered to sustain linguistic diversity in our education systems, I agree with Beacco and Byram (2003: 36) who explain that ‘Diversifying the supply of languages is a necessary, but insufficient condition for acting on motivation to undertake plurilingual education’.

I shall use France as an example to illustrate the limits of a policy of diversification. All children in France start studying a foreign language at the age of seven and have to learn a second one at the age of 12 and a third one is offered on an optional basis later on. When they take their final secondary examination (baccalaureate) they can choose from 56 ‘foreign’ languages including eight ‘regional’ languages (BO 13 2008). The primary curriculum offers a choice of eight different languages: Arabic, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Portuguese and Chinese, and the Ministry of Education has published very useful pedagogical guidelines for teachers in each one of these languages. Detailed programmes for the teaching of regional languages and recently for French Sign Language have also been published (B0 33 2008), which means that FSL is now one of the many languages that can be taught in French schools. In reality, 86 per cent of primary students choose English and at secondary level 93 per cent choose English as a first FL (representing five million students) and 70 per cent Spanish as a second FL.

Clearly, it cannot be denied that at policy level, the Ministry of Education is putting into place all the necessary legal dispositions for a great variety of languages to be taught, as well as clear curricula for each language and pedagogical orientations based on the Council of Europe recommendations for language teaching. But the gap between support for linguistic diversity at the policy level and the restricted choice in practice at the school level is glaring. The reasons for this are numerous, no doubt relating to the cost of implementing such policies, as well as to social pressure for the teaching of English and a reluctance to give too much space to some languages of immigration like Arabic or Turkish. In other words, a policy of diversification does not mean that more languages are studied, or more space is given to language teaching or more importantly that the unequal status of languages is questioned. In fact, the way FLT is organized means that FLs are in competition with one another, as parents have to decide on one language at primary, and most minority languages stand little chance in the face of a dominant language like English. This means that top-down policies are far from sufficient to ensure that linguistic diversity is sustained in our education systems, and that linguistic diversity cannot be conceptualized solely on a quantitative basis.

Diversity as heritage

A different interpretation of the term diversity is proposed by Beacco and Byram (2003) who see linguistic diversity as heritage and thus distinct from the issue of foreign languages. They mention 220 Indigenous linguistic varieties in Europe, not including the languages of immigrants and refugees, and in the name of biodiversity this overall multiplicity of languages must be considered as an anthropological and cultural heritage worthy of protection. What is at stake here is the preservation of the living diversity of languages spoken in Europe and the multilingual nature of European societies. However, these authors do not use the term heritage to refer to the languages of minority speakers, as is the case in the USA for example (García 2005). Diversity as heritage is envisaged from a historical point of view, the linguistic and cultural diversity of the countries that make up the European Union being one of the core features of European identity, and language policy makers always assert the need to protect this diversity in the face of any threat of linguistic and cultural homogenization.

Many of these so-called regional, national minority or immigrant minority languages are spoken and transmitted in the family context before schooling. The question arising here is the extent to which schools acknowledge these minority languages, support their maintenance or prefer to ignore the linguistic and cultural competence acquired outside of the school context. Although many different answers to this question have been proposed throughout the world, the PISA evaluations (Programme for International Student Assessment 2009) have clearly shown that in all OECD countries most immigrant minority students achieve lower scores than their autochthonous peers. This is the very reason why many researchers have argued for more school support of the L1 of minority language speakers and for bilingual education (Cummins 2000, 2001; Baker 2001).

But today bilingual education is only available to very few students and, given the extent of linguistic diversity in some of our classrooms, it has become more difficult for teachers to envisage how to support the L1 of their pupils. Teachers often express their helplessness in terms of their limited competence in FLs as if the only answer was to be found in linguistic competence rather than in devising new pedagogical approaches that accommodate linguistic heterogeneity and support language transmission in the home. Several researchers have shown that teachers are inadequately prepared for dealing with linguistic diversity (Bourne 2003), which features remain on the margins of teacher education curricula. Young (2006) explains that it demands a lot of time for teachers' representations of multilingualism to evolve in a country like France, for example, but Hélot (2010) also shows that beginner teachers are able to negotiate their own language policies at the classroom level and become agents of change for their multilingual pupils.

Again, LA approaches are useful because they aim to normalize linguistic diversity in schools and to build knowledge about diversity from the language competence students bring to the classroom. Furthermore, as noted by Dabène (1994), LA approaches have a welcoming function in that the pedagogical activities make it possible to welcome as many languages as are present in a class. This welcoming function is particularly important for minority language speakers, who see some value put on their family culture as well as their bilingualism becoming an asset in traditionally monolingual classrooms. For example, in the Didenheim project researched by Hélot and Young (2006) and Hélot (2007) the teachers developed language awareness activities in collaboration with parents, which involved exploring 18 languages over three years. The project was inclusive of the languages spoken by the students and their families, and led to the formerly untapped resources of minority-language speakers becoming part of school knowledge. As a result, a new form of socialization developed in the classroom (and to a certain extent outside of the school) based on solidarity and reciprocity (Perregaux 1998) because students learnt from one another and teachers also learnt from their students and their parents. Without the collaboration of parents, the teachers could not have carried out their project; at the same time the project led to the empowerment of the minority language-speaking parents, because they were given real responsibilities in the new learning situation (see Feltrin's 2008 film for more details).

From language awareness to multiliteracy pedagogies

However, one should not forget the danger of tokenism associated with LA approaches when they consist in superficial activities, which are not integrated into the mainstream curriculum. And rather than suggesting like Hawkins that LA should be integrated as a separate subject in the school curriculum, researchers have argued for a cross-curricular approach in which all school subjects can give rise to projects or activities in several different languages, bilingual learners can build on their knowledge of their L1 to acquire their second language (L2) and they

can invest their identity to make sense of their learning experiences. One such example is given by Cummins (2006) who explains how educators can challenge the exclusion of students' linguistic and cultural capital from the school through the development of new forms of pedagogies for multiliteracy development.

These pedagogies are based on several principles: that students should be able to develop strong literacy skills in their home language as well as in the school language, that new technologies should be used to give a space to less dominant languages and that home language literacies should be supported. In other words, what Cummins (2006) is arguing for is the creation of interpersonal spaces within the mainstream classroom that support literacy in both the school language and the home language. The texts produced are called 'identity texts' because students invest their own identity in their creative work, which then holds a mirror up to them in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When these texts are shared with multiple audiences or posted on the web, they get an expanded exposure, they also have to be more accomplished and they can enhance the process of identity investment and affirmation.

Multiliteracy pedagogies go further than LA activities as conceived originally by Hawkins and European researchers who have developed materials for teachers to deal with the linguistic diversity of their pupils, because multiliteracy pedagogies allow bilingual students to learn at school through their two languages. Students not only learn about language diversity, but also use a diversity of languages to learn to read and write, for example, and are thus involved in a form of multilingual education.

Whereas in LA activities, the materials and the didactic approaches developed alongside make space for a diversity of languages to enter the mainstream classroom, and allow for the recognition of the cultural and linguistic capital that students bring to the classroom, multiliteracy pedagogies include a further dimension. As explained by Cummins (2006) in his analysis of a project in a school in Toronto, they challenge teachers in the mainstream classroom to rethink their approach to literacy teaching for all students, and at the same time they empower second language learners to build on their literacy skills in their L1 and the school language. In other words, multiliteracy pedagogies challenge further the exclusion of students' cultural and linguistic repertoires from instruction, rather than just sharing their knowledge about their L1 with their peers, they are allowed to learn through their L1, and build on it to learn through the language of instruction as well, thus developing bi- or multiliteracy. And because the languages of minority language speakers are more than just a subject of study but the means through which literacy is acquired alongside literacy in the school language, multilingualism is not merely valued, it becomes part of the learning experience of students who all experience the transformation of their classroom into a multilingual space.

Cummins is right to remind us that traditional pedagogical approaches based on transmission cannot accommodate the diversity of languages and cultures present in our classrooms because learning objectives are set to fit the whole class without taking into account the specificities of each learner and the social dimension of language. Social constructivist or transformative pedagogies, on the contrary, mean that students take ownership of their own languages by actively using their language for learning at school and out of school, they expand their linguistic and cultural capital and they have some control over their learning process. Therefore what must be implemented in our diverse classrooms today is not just a set of activities to include the numerous languages of students in a class but bi- and multilingual instructional strategies that make it possible for learners to transfer knowledge and cognitive strategies across languages, to compare language use and critically assess information; in other words to develop critical literacy.

From language awareness to multilingual language awareness in teacher education

Teacher education about linguistic and cultural diversity is a crucial domain to research if we expect our schools to prepare students to live and act in a complex world in which they will have to interact with various kinds of differences. But, as explained by Young (2006) who evaluated a new teacher education module in France, the journey can be very long for teachers who start with negative representations of their students' linguistic and cultural competence, or who frame the second languages spoken by their pupils as a problem for the acquisition of the school language and for learning in general. Compensatory approaches are so entrenched in educational practices aimed at supporting minority language speakers that it takes not only time, but also a complete shift of representations, for teachers to envisage their bilingual students' linguistic and cultural knowledge as central to the needs of contemporary society. Although most teachers are aware of the challenge posed by linguistic diversity, it is a rather complex matter to bring them to rethink pedagogical approaches to literacy within a multilingual framework.

As Hawkins (1999) noted, one of the principal challenges for the LA movement was to provide adequate preparation for teachers to guide their pupils in the kind of discovery-based learning that is required and at the same time to challenge their own linguistic prejudices towards bilingual learners (Hélot and Young 2006). Although we agree with García (2008) that today 'it behoves language teachers to put language difference at the centre of the educational enterprise', it entails a profound change of attitudes and beliefs in societies and education systems in which a very monoglossic ideology still prevails. And I would like to add that like Hawkins (1999) and Bourne (2003), I believe it is vital to design LA courses not just for language teachers but for all teachers, because all teachers of all disciplines are concerned by language and languages, issues of exclusion, discrimination, inequity, etc.

García (2008) is right to insist that what she calls 'Multilingual Language Awareness' (MLA) must be a thread that runs right through the entire teacher education curriculum, and for teachers working with multilingual populations as well as for bilingual teachers working in bilingual and multilingual schools. For example, Luxembourg is a country well known for its trilingual education system, yet the curriculum does not address the languages of all its learners (there are many Portuguese-speaking children, see Weber 2009) and teachers are left to find their own approaches to use the full repertoire of linguistic resources in the classroom. Again, this is not a question of merely adapting strategies, which have been used before with second language learners and bilingual children, rather it is about finding ways of using multilingual language awareness pedagogically.

'The key role played by teachers highlights the challenge for teacher education to address the continually changing needs of diverse multilingual populations', write Kenner and Hickey (2008: 186) who see teachers at the interface between policy and learners and who by necessity adapt their practices and their pedagogies to the needs of their students (Hélot 2010; Menken and García 2010). Nevertheless a lot of teachers feel ill-equipped to teach in multilingual classrooms and teacher education institutions are often slow to take on board the growing linguistic diversity of the school population because it means finding space in very crowded curricula for what is often perceived as an extra domain of knowledge rather than a cross-curricular issue. A noteworthy initiative has been developed at Goldsmiths, University of London where a teacher education course in five 'minority languages' is offered. As explained by Anderson (2008), the course builds on the experience of multilingualism that the student teachers bring with them, which means that the institution not only values minority languages as much as dominant European languages but that it also empowers bilingual students of

minority background to join the teaching profession and to change general attitudes towards multilingualism in schools.

New research directions

Many reports highlight the urgent need for appropriate initial and in-service education for teachers and if linguistic diversity is to be sustained in and by our schools, educational institutions should be supported to prepare large numbers of bi- and multilingual teachers, not only for bilingual programmes but also for mainstream classrooms. As explained by Skilton-Sylvester (2003) and Menken and García (2010), teachers are at the epicentre of language policy in education and they can act as change agents of the various policies they must translate into practice. But in order to be able to act on their professional environment, they need an understanding of the reasons why models of language education as we know them have been dominated for years by concern for monolingual speakers.

The linguistic exclusion of bi- and multilingual students of immigrant background and of speakers from socially deprived backgrounds remains one of the main challenges for researchers and practitioners today. Despite all the discourses on inclusion and integration, very few bilingual students are given adequate support to develop their home languages fully alongside the language(s) of instruction and the variety of language use within one language is rarely given space in the teaching of the language of instruction. Apart from the serious issue of the linguistic rights of speakers, the result is loss of linguistic diversity and lower achievement at school.

There are various research directions in several domains that open up new doors for our understanding of the complex interactions between linguistic diversity in society and the necessary transformation of our education systems in the twenty-first century. We will mention particular studies that are based on an understanding of the social, political and economic struggles surrounding the use of language and languages.

Central to a new framing and a recontextualization of linguistic diversity is the work carried out by post-structuralist researchers focusing on language ideologies: rather than seeing linguistic diversity only in terms of a plurality or multiplicity of languages, they envisage it also as the expression of difference (see Le Nevez 2006 for a very clear review of theoretical approaches to linguistic diversity). The notion of difference adds an important dimension to the discussion because as Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) have shown, linguistic diversity also has to do with social differences bound up in language and these differences result in the reproduction of inequalities by our education systems. However, more importantly, Heller and Martin-Jones (*ibid.*) stressed the need to uncover the way ideologies pervade language choice and language policy in schools. The same concern for the deconstruction of ideologies is at the heart of the work of Creese and Martin (2003), Hornberger (2003) and García (2009).

The language ecology metaphor used by Creese and Martin and Hornberger is a further development to help rethink linguistic diversity in its relationship between the wider cultural and political environment and the classroom environment. Mühlhäusler (1996) was one of the first researchers to argue for a radical reframing of language education within an ecological perspective. Because he was working in the Pacific region, he analysed the effects of education programmes on local linguistic ecologies, and questioned the impact of language learning at school on language maintenance outside the classroom. Creese and Martin studied specifically multilingual classrooms through an ecological perspective and explained how

an ecological approach to language in society requires an exploration of the relationship of languages to each other and to the society in which these languages exist. This includes

the geographical, socio-economic and cultural conditions in which the speakers of a given language exist, as well as the wider linguistic environment.

(2003: 161)

Their excellent introduction and the subsequent chapters elaborating on the complex relationships at play between language use and interactions in the classroom and the wider environment, give a clear understanding of the dominant role of ideologies in language policies and practices and how the ecology of the classroom is influenced by the wider linguistic ecology.

As for Hornberger (2003), also working within the ecology of language approach, her ‘continua of biliteracy’ model not only makes transparent the ideologies that pervade language policies and language choice, but also helps to uncover the reasons for the unequal balance of power across languages and literacies, and why some languages and linguistic practices are supported by education systems and others are not. Through her model, educators can begin to understand how their language choices and practices in their own classrooms reproduce the relationships of power at play in society or challenge them to implement new learning spaces in which a diversity of linguistic practices can thrive.

García’s recent volume (2009: 16) on *Bilingual Education for the Twenty-First Century* sees bilingual education as the only way to educate children as the world moves forward. She argues that, ‘the challenge of bilingual schools is to prepare children to balance their own linguistic ecology, enabling them to go back and forth in their overlapping languages and literacies’. Most interesting is the way she analyses the notion of translanguaging as ‘multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds’ (García 2009: 45). By focusing on discourse and the language practices of the bilinguals from the perspective of the users themselves and moving beyond the notions of language contact or codeswitching, as is so often the case in bilingual teaching, she points to a different epistemology of language. Like Pennycook (2004) she is interested in language as a productive effect of expression rather than as a prior defined system or code that exists independently of its speakers and she stresses the fact that the concept of translanguaging means that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the languages of bilinguals. Moreover, her proposal for new discursive and dynamic models of bilingual education based on a heteroglossic ideology in which the diversity of languaging practices and the linguistic heterogeneity of students is acknowledged, clearly shows that traditional bilingual education models are also challenged by the increased linguistic diversity of our globalized societies.

To conclude, I would like to quote Le Nevez’s (2006: 77) remark that ‘the question is not so much how can minority languages be promoted but rather how can linguistic diversity be rethought in ways that do not discursively disempower speakers whose language represents diversity and difference?’ Exploring alternative ways of thinking about linguistic diversity in education is also about opening new spaces in which language activism can be situated. In my opinion, the most stimulating research to help rethink teacher education in terms of language activism comes from various critical approaches, such as critical pedagogies (Freire 1970; Giroux 1988), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough and Wodak 1996), critical literacies (Shor 1992; Street 1995) and critical applied linguistics (Pennycook 2001).

All these related critical approaches are involved in emancipatory educational practices, where difference is recognized within teaching as an oppositional practice in which all participants are working towards the prospects for empowerment, especially of students or structures that have been disempowered or excluded in the past. Critical language awareness (CLA) more specifically offers a new orientation to language education because it addresses teachers’ awareness of the ideological and political nature of language functioning, it provides them with the linguistic tools to be socially committed and engaged, and it stresses their social

responsibilities (Fairclough 1992). As argued by Pennycook (2001), not only do we need to focus on the politics of language (and text) and the politics of pedagogy, we need to understand *the politics of difference*, or the way the notion of otherness is framed in our methodologies and whether we conceive of learners as having multiple identities and drawing on their multiple linguistic resources or not. Because linguistic diversity and difference is about respect for the languages of people belonging to different linguistic communities, and we know that respect is essential to peaceful cohabitation. And because, as van Lier (2004) convincingly argues, diverse societies in terms of language, ethnicity, religion, etc., may in the long run be much healthier than homogeneous ones.

Related topics

Discourses about linguistic diversity; multilingualism in education in post-colonial contexts; regional minorities, education and language revitalization; immersion education; multilingual pedagogies; multilingualism and social exclusion; disinventing multilingualism; multilingual literacies; linguistic landscapes and multilingualism.

Further reading

Cenoz, J. and Hornberger, N. H. (eds) (2008) *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, vol. 6, Knowledge about Language, New York: Springer.

(Twenty-nine review articles on language awareness and knowledge about language, language learning, bilingualism and multilingualism.)

Commins, N. L. and Miramontes, O. B. (2005) *Linguistic Diversity and Teaching*, NJ Mahwah, Lawrence: Erlbaum.

(An opportunity for teachers and educators to reflect on their teaching methods and principles through case studies of real classroom situations in the USA, classrooms with a very diverse student body.)

Conteh, J. (2003) *Succeeding in Diversity: Culture, Language and Learning in Primary Classrooms*, Trentham: Trentham Books.

(Interesting case study of ethnic minority students who became high achievers at primary school in Britain. For policy makers, teacher educators and teachers to understand the importance of linking home and school languages and cultures.)

Edwards, J. (2010) *Language Diversity in the Classroom*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

(Provides a comprehensive coverage of language contact in classroom settings and an analysis of the sources and implications of social 'disadvantage' brought about by the use of non-standard dialects. Interesting volume for teacher educators.)

García, O. Skutnabb-Kangas, T. and Torres Guzman, M. E. (eds) (2006) *Imagining Multilingual Schools: Languages in Education and Glocalization*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

(For teachers and researchers. Analyses pedagogical and policy efforts in different parts of the world to develop multilingualism in schools with different populations: immigrant students, Indigenous peoples, traditional minorities, majorities and multi-ethnic groups.)

Kenner, C. and Hickey, T. (eds) (2008) *Multilingual Europe: Diversity and Learning*, Trentham: Trentham Books.

(Analyses how to create multilingual learning communities and describes interesting case studies of innovative practice promoting language expertise, intercultural education and educational achievement in seven different countries in Europe and in Israel.)

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