The Exploration of Multilingualism

Edited by Larissa Aronin Britta Hufeisen

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The Exploration of Multilingualism

Development of research on L3, multilingualism and multiple language acquisition

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The Exploration of Multilingualism

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Volume 6

The Exploration of Multilingualism. Development of research on L3, multilingualism and multiple language acquisition Edited by Larissa Aronin and Britta Hufeisen

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Table of contents

	Acknowledgements	VII
1.	Introduction: On the genesis and development of L3 research, multilingualism and multiple language acquisition: About this book Larissa Aronin and Britta Hufeisen	1
2.	Defining multilingualism Charlotte Kemp	11
3.	The genesis and development of research in multilingualism: Perspectives for future research Rita Franceschini	27
4.	The development of psycholinguistic research on crosslinguistic influence Gessica De Angelis and Jean-Marc Dewaele	63
5.	The role of prior knowledge in L3 learning and use: Further evidence of psychotypological dimensions Muiris Ó Laoire and David Singleton	79
6.	Methods of research in multilingualism studies: Reaching a comprehensive perspective Larissa Aronin and Britta Hufeisen	103
7.	The study of multilingualism in educational contexts Jasone Cenoz and Ulrike Jessner	121
8.	Multilingualism resources: Associations, journals, book series, bibliographies and conference lists Peter Ecke	139
9.	Crossing the second threshold Larissa Aronin and Britta Hufeisen	155
	Name index	161
	Subject index	165

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

On the genesis and development of L3 research, multilingualism and multiple language acquisition

About this book

Larissa Aronin and Britta Hufeisen University of Haifa / Technical University of Darmstadt

Although the regions where people used multiple languages were known from the earliest years of humankind, in recent times multilingualism transpires as a phenomenon whose nature is to be investigated afresh and on its own terms.

Unlike the numerous plurilingual locations, populations, and individuals in the past, those cumulatively featuring current multilingualism came into the spotlight as a distinctive linguistic dispensation. Compared to the previous patterns of use and acquisition of two and more languages, it is manifested in different manner, to a different extent, and more importantly, is crucially integral to the construction of the contemporary globalized reality (Aronin and Singleton 2008).

This book is manifestly about multilingualism rather than bilingualism although the latter is very often included in the concept of multilingualism as its specific case. Our stand is that multilingualism subsumes bilingualism. The issue of distinction between bilingualism and multilingualism is given considerable attention in this volume.

In recent times both the awareness of multilingualism and research in this area have become increasingly conspicuous. A significant amount of books that look deeper into various aspects of contemporary multilingualism and third language acquisition have appeared. De Angelis (2007) on third or additional language acquisition, Jessner (2006) on language awareness, Ringbom (2007) on cross-linguistic similarity in foreign language learning, Cenoz (2009) on multilingual education, Lasagabaster and Huguet (2006) on language attitudes and use of multiple languages in European context and the Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication by Auer and Li Wei (2007) are some of the recent and the more prominent ones.

This book adopts a more synthesized view on the topic. The need for such a perspective is warranted by what can be called the 'coming of age' of trilingualism research. Indeed the field has reached a point whereby it stands in need of arriving at an overarching framework. The distinctive feature of this book is its ontogenetic perspective on research on L3, multilingualism and multiple languages acquisition. Along with factual and historical material from previous and current decades of research, it includes main theories, prominent researchers and important research trends, into its purview.

The reader will not find the contents arranged in a neat chronology, but rather is presented with state-of-the-art accounts of several prominent aspects of multilingualism. Taken together, the contributions by prominent and committed scholars in the field, each from a different angle, allow the reader to identify the milestones in the development of multilingualism and L3 research.

In the following section of this chapter, we are going to look very briefly into the genesis and development of L3 research, multilingualism and multiple language acquisition (for a comprehensive discussion see Jessner 2008) which eventually led to the establishment of the International Association of Multilingualism (2003) and "The International Journal of Multilingualism" (2004).

Early researchers of multilingualism and multiple language acquisition such as Braun (1937) or Vildomec (1963) did not yet study the phenomenon systematically but they identified it as a field of study in its own right. They were also the only ones who did not concentrate only on the negative side of the existence of multiple languages in the learners' repertoires, but emphasised the positive effects of being multilingual, such as enjoying a broader knowledge about cultures. Wandruszka published many books and articles (one of the earliest in 1979) about the inherent multilingualism in each learner and referred to variants such as dialects, variants in different situations and with different communication partners (he did not yet call these varieties ideolects or sociolects). He concentrated on the metaphor of languages in contact referring to the contact of languages within each learner.

Researchers such as Oksaar (1977) were the first ones to describe – almost in passing – their own children's progress in acquiring three languages simultaneously. Others such as Hoffmann (1985), Hélot (1998), Barron-Hauwaert (2000), Dewaele (2000), Gatto (2000) or Barnes (2006) followed much later.

Consolidation of research began in the late 80s and early 90s of the twentieth century when there was further concentration on studies which involved more than the traditional two languages in one person. Researchers insisted that bilingualism is more than the sum of two monolingualisms, and that tri- and multilingualism is more than L2 plus yet another language. They tried to bring together research results of bilingualism studies and SLA studies on the

one hand, and to apply these results to questions of multilingualism and multiple language acquisition and learning on the other.

As L3-researchers seldom really felt at home at SLA-meetings where research in multilingualism and multiple language acquisition and learning was regarded as a mere sub-form of SLA, they started to organize their own meetings and organisations. In the framework of the German Association of Applied Linguistics, Britta Hufeisen organized L3-workshops on a regular basis between 1992 and 1997 (Hufeisen 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998). In 1998, Ulrike Jessner happened to participate in the workshop, and together with Jasone Cenoz they decided to organize a conference on an international scale. This took place in Innsbruck in Austria with as many as 120 participants at the first L3-conference. More L3-conferences were to follow, namely

in Leuwaarden, Netherlands, organized by Jehannes Ytsma,

2003 in Tralee, Ireland, organized by Muiris Ó Laoire,

2005 in Freiburg, Switzerland, organized by Claudine Brohy and Christine Le Pape Racine,

2007 in Stirling, Scotland, organized by Charlotte Kemp.

Parallel to the founding of a conference tradition, successful attempts were undertaken to establish an association for interested researchers in all fields connected to multilingualism and multiple language acquisition and learning. Consequently, in 2003 the *International Association of Multilingualism* was founded (http://www.daf.tu-darmstadt.de/l3.). The founding members are Britta Hufeisen, Jasone Cenoz, Ulrike Jessner, Muiris Ó Laoire, Larissa Aronin, Patricia Bayona, Gessica De Angelis, Jean-Marc Dewaele, Peter Ecke.

In 2004, Jasone Cenoz and Ulrike Jessner launched the *International Journal of Multilingualism*, published with Multilingual Matters, Avon, UK. Reviewed publications in this journal are about multilingualism, however the publication language is exclusively English. Therefore, in 2005, through the launch of *Multilingualism and Multiple Language Learning* a multilingual book series, with Schneider publishing company, situated in Hohengehren, Germany, was established. In 2008 the first quadrolingual publication – selected papers from the 2005 conference in Freiburg, Switzerland – was published (Gibson, Hufeisen and Personne 2008).

The main strands in multilingualism seem to be situated in the framework of the following research domains:

 sociolinguistics (cf. Cenoz and Genesee 1998, Cenoz and Jessner 2000, Hoffmann and Ytsma 2004) with subgroups in societal areas (cf. Aronin and Ò Laoire 2004, Cenoz 2005) and individual multilingualism (cf. Dewaele 2004),

- psycholinguistics (cf. Herdina and Jessner 2002, Jessner 2006, Hammarberg 2001, Ringbom 2007),
- neurolinguistics (cf. Franceschini 1996; Franceschini, Zappatore, and Nitsch 2003),
- pragmalinguistics (cf. Franceschini 2000, Safont Jordà 2005),
- applied linguistics (cf. Hufeisen and Marx 2007, Meißner 2004),
- teaching/instructing/learning (cf. Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner 2001, Ó Laoire 2006),
- applications to the concrete learning events with initiatives such as CLIL, immersion, and the common curriculum (cf. Hufeisen 2007, Hufeisen and Lutjeharms 2005).

Future challenges entail questions about how to deal adequately with the number of variables, the complexity of sciences and the relevance for life in education, morals, religion, politics, interpersonal relations, globalisation, and business. Thus it seems consequential to think about the current situation and describe it along-side the above-mentioned developments. It seems logical that research in societal and individual multilingualism takes place mainly in countries with more than one official language and/or in countries which have heavy immigration rates. Research in multiple language acquisition and learning happens in countries which have established the learning of languages in their school curricula. The articles of this volume also draw on the data collected from various parts of the globe and therefore the implications are wide.

Chapter 2, Defining multilingualism, written by Charlotte Kemp, is devoted to methodical examination of terms and definitions referring to multilingualism and related concepts. As the amount of data, both of practical and theoretical kind, is approaching the critical level, elevating multilingualism to a fully-fledged field of its own, research into multilingualism stands in need of agreement on the use of its major terms and concepts. In her article Kemp explores the diversity of definitions originating from different research traditions, ideologies, purposes and contexts of investigating multilingualism. Current debates held with the purpose of enhancing understanding by delineating the terms 'bilingualism', 'multilingualism' and 'bilingual', 'multilingual' individuals. The questions such as 'What is a language?' 'How may languages be counted?', and also what degree of proficiency and of functional capability is required for an individual to be considered bilingual or multilingual, are central. Kemp concludes that as more differences between bilinguals and multilinguals are uncovered by research, there is less basis to consider bilingualism and multilingualism differing solely in the number of languages. Accordingly most researchers refer to individuals who use two languages as 'bilinguals' and to those who use three and more languages as 'multilinguals'.

In Chapter 3, Genesis and development of research in multilingualism: perspectives for future research, Rita Franceschini unfolds the discussion on the genesis and development of research in multilingualism. Her arguments are organised around the key concepts of diversity, the historical foundation of multilingualism and cultural sensitivity. Franceschini advocates a change in the perspective on multilingualism, the grounds for which are laid by a reinterpretation of linguistic diversity, a differentiated approach and development of awareness of the complexity of multilingual social and learning environments. The change is particularly perceptible in the field of language learning where systemic comprehensive approaches, which consider family, cultural and learning contexts jointly, took over the 'monocausal' treatments of the multilingual situations.

The author suggests several perspectives for future studies in areas which have already been researched, as well as in others which need further research. Among them are receptive multilingualism, multilingualism on the Internet, 'language and power', the static basis and legal status of multilingualism.

In Chapter 4, The development of psycholinguistic research in crosslinguistic influence, Gessica de Angelis and Jean-Marc Dewaele trace the development of psycholinguistic research on cross-linguistic influence from the 1950s to the present day. The authors show the gradual breaking off from the tradition of seeing language transfer as a phenomenon mostly concerned with two languages. Over the years the focus of interest in the domain of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) shifted from the transfer phenomena from the L1 to the L2 to the non-native languages transfer. While in the 1950s and 1960s studies on language transfer from non-native languages were practically nil, the beginning of the present century is marked by the intense debate on the uniqueness of the trilingualism research and a remarkable increase in the number of studies on multilingualism and CLI. The psycholinguistic research on crosslinguistic influence is clearly no longer confined to traditional perspectives initially developed for second languages.

The branching out of this new field of investigation – non-native cross-linguistic influence – was accompanied by emergence of novel additional issues specific to multilingual, but not bilingual phenomena. The issues of prior knowledge of bilinguals in the process of learning subsequent languages have begun to be investigated from various angles and it seems they will remain central to future research too.

Chapter 5, written by Muiris Ó Laoire and David Singleton, deals with *The role of prior knowledge in L3 learning and use: further evidence of psychotypological dimensions.* Recent research points to the age factor, the level of proficiency, level of metalinguistic awareness and the degree of formality of the context of language use as to relevant determinants of the success in learning the third language. Ó Laoire and Singleton discuss the two critical factors of crosslinguistic influence

which stand in urgent need of exploration – psychotypology, that is, the perceived distance between the languages, and the "L2 factor" i.e. perceiving a language as 'foreign' non-native to the learner. The authors direct the attention of the reader to the conditions and ways in which prior experience and knowledge of an additional language might influence subsequent acquisition processes. Making use of the empirical data from their own research in Ireland, Ó Laoire and Singleton look into the nature of cross-linguistic influence in the speakers/learners of third languages by analysing two studies which involved several groups of third language learners. The findings on Irish-English bilinguals and Anglophones with Irish, who were learning French and German as their tertiary language allowed the authors to suggest that the learners tend to draw from the language they perceive as typologically closer to the target language.

One of the aims of Chapter 6, Methods of research in multilingualism studies: reaching a comprehensive perspective, written by Larissa Aronin and Britta Hufeisen, is to demonstrate the wide variety of methods and approaches available to students of multilingualism. The new linguistic dispensation, the current multilingualism, calls for reconsideration of the use of methods in multilingualism studies. The contribution includes a discussion of the inherent properties of contemporary multilingualism identified as complexity, liminality and suffusiveness. These necessitate additional apposite methods for multilingualism research. Special attention is given to emerging and promising methods of research which especially fit the specific nature of multilingualism studies. Among them are methods of complexity science, as well as the use of metaphors and conceptualization serving as methods of research. The authors argue in favour of introducing a full range of contemporary scientific research methods from other scientific domains, combining them with existing theories and methods of linguistic and sociolinguistic investigation.

In Chapter 7, The study of multilingualism in educational contexts, Jasone Cenoz and Ulrike Jessner provide a systematic overview of international research on multilingual education, as distinct from the research into bilingual education. Multilingual education "is defined by the use of languages other than the L1s as media of instruction (despite the languages which are taught as school subjects) with the aim for communicative proficiency in more than two languages". Although third language acquisition (TLA) in the formal context shares a number of essential characteristics with second language learning in school, TLA is grounded in second language learning as it depends on the degree of bilingualism of the third language learner. The authors concentrate their attention on socioand psycholinguistic aspects of multilingual learning.

A special focus is placed on the issue of the optimal age for starting of second/ foreign language learning. In particular, the data from the new research project on the effect of age on third language acquisition carried out in the Basque country do not support the assumption that the provision of a few hours of English class for the pre-primary age children leads to a higher level of proficiency in this language. The results of this and other studies carried out in the schools of Catalonia and Basque Country provide an insight for dealing with a predicament in decision making on the best age to start learning a second or foreign language.

Peter Ecke, author of Chapter 8, Multilingualism resources: associations, journals, book series, bibliographies and conference lists, supplies helpful information for the collaboration and consolidation of partnerships between researchers of related disciplines and between researchers and practitioners devoted to bi/multilingualism worldwide. His contribution includes reviews of resources for multilingualism research and practice with the aim of assisting researchers working in the field of bi/multilingualism to cope with an immense increase in research and publication in the field. Ecke provides data on several kinds of resources: associations, organizations and networks involved in the study and promotion of multilingualism; professional journals and magazines focusing on, or including multilingualism and third language acquisition as an area of interest; bibliographies on multilingualism research and listings of conferences which include the issues of multilingualism and third language acquisition in their purview.

Finally, the updated re-conceptualization of various aspects of multilingualism is summarized in Chapter 9 by Britta Hufeisen and Larissa Aronin.

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