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2

Linguistic Superdiversity in Urban Areas

Research approaches

EDITED BY

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and Ingrid Gogolin

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Linguistic Superdiversity in Urban Areas

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Volume 2

Linguistic Superdiversity in Urban Areas. Research approaches

Edited by Joana Duarte and Ingrid Gogolin

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Table of contents

List of contributors	IX
Introduction: Linguistic superdiversity in educational institutions <i>Joana Duarte and Ingrid Gogolin</i>	1
Capturing superdiversity	
Using correspondence analysis to model immigrant multilingualism over time <i>Robert W. Schrauf</i>	27
Capturing diversity: Linguistic land- and soundscaping <i>Claudio Scarvaglieri, Angelika Redder, Ruth Pappenhagen and Bernhard Brehmer</i>	45
Measuring language diversity in urban ecosystems <i>Hagen Peukert</i>	75
Language acquisition and practice	
Foreign language acquisition in heritage speakers: The acquisition of articles in L3-English by German-Turkish bilinguals <i>Tanja Kupisch, Neal Snape and Ilse Stangen</i>	99
Heteroglossia in English complementary schools <i>Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese</i>	123
Enough is enough: The heuristics of authenticity in superdiversity <i>Jan Blommaert and Piia Varis</i>	143
The primary classroom as a superdiverse hetero-normative space <i>Massimiliano Spotti</i>	161

Assessing narrative development in bilingual first language acquisition: What can we learn from monolingual norms? <i>Enkeleida Kapia</i>	179
Examples of language contact and change	
Detecting historical continuity in a linguistically diverse urban area: The present perfect in modern Singapore English <i>Julia Davydova</i>	193
Four decades of study of synchronic variation in varieties of Dutch. A sketch <i>Frans Hinskens</i>	227
Language contact in heritage languages in the Netherlands <i>Suzanne Aalberse and Pieter Muysken</i>	253
Chinese and globalization <i>Sjaak Kroon, Jan Blommaert and Dong Jie</i>	275
Author index	297
Subject index	301

Introduction

Linguistic superdiversity in educational institutions

Joana Duarte and Ingrid Gogolin

University of Hamburg

The relatively recent phenomenon of rapidly increasing migration flows in multiple forms and channels has been termed *superdiversity* (Vertovec 2007). The resulting new social constellations see an increase in the amount and types of language proficiencies, particularly in large urban areas. Linguistic diversity per se is not a new phenomenon, yet education systems continue to respond to this diversity with the construct of the monolingual habitus (Gogolin 1994) that associates a single language with one nation. National education systems interlace mono- and multilingual features, displaying monolingual self conceptions in their constitutions, structures and practical arrangements on the one hand, and a multilingual student body on the other. Moreover, European education policies show a frustrating facet of this phenomenon. The Council of the European Barcelona objective of 2002, for example, promotes that every child in Europe learns two foreign languages from an early age (Union 2009). At the same time, member states who adopted this document insist on their monolingual mainstream school systems with sections devoted to foreign language teaching, and exceptional provisions for other autochthonous languages on the nation's territory. Such a system does not cater for the needs of speakers in superdiverse constellations.

Our contribution begins with an overview of the concept of superdiversity, particularly focusing on issues of linguistic superdiversity. It provides a summary of research topics, as well as methodological issues. Consequences for traditionally monolingual education systems will then be highlighted. We will then draw an example of monolingual thinking in a bilingual context before our introduction to the volume.

Keywords: superdiversity, education, multilingual repertoires, monolingual habitus

1. Preamble

The new migration phenomena since the end of the Cold War, brought about by increased globalisation and characterised by the intensification of migration typologies (in terms of countries of origin, language, ethnicity and religion; motives, patterns and itineraries of migration; processes of integration into host communities, etc.) provoked a new discourse on the appropriateness of the multiculturalism paradigm (Vertovec 2010). Critics of this paradigm that focus on so-called “ethnic minorities” (Blommaert & Rampton 2011) perceive it to be incapable of capturing the actual diversity of current migration and as being responsible for social breakdown, class-based inequality and the increase in ethnic tensions (Vertovec 2010). In this post-multicultural globalised era, the term superdiversity is about to replace the multiculturalism paradigm in its attempt to describe and apprehend migration-induced phenomena of the last two decades (Vertovec 2006)¹. According to Vertovec, “the time has come to re-evaluate – in social scientific study as well as policy – the nature of contemporary diversity” (Vertovec 2009: 86)

The superdiversity framework relates to the image of “the world in one city” which has, on occasion, been used to describe London’s growing diverse composition (Vertovec 2007, Vertovec & Baumann 2011). Observing the complex phenomena of superdiversity was mostly carried out from sociological and anthropological perspectives. More recent research, however, has been conducted on linguistic practices amongst multilingual speakers (Blommaert & Rampton 2011, Creese & Blackledge 2010). Within this framework, little attention is given to the repercussions of superdiversity (in particular concerning language use) on educational settings and systems; in many respects, we can argue that nowadays the world exists within one school.

Our contribution aims at providing an overview of the consequences of linguistic superdiversity for educational institutions. We will start by explaining the concept of superdiversity, as presented by Vertovec. We then give an overview of what has been described up to now as “linguistic superdiversity”. This perspective collides, to a certain extent, with the majority of approaches to teaching and learning in schools with a “multilingual” population. In general, such approaches refer to a binary concept of dealing with “bilingual” students, on one hand, and “monolingual” students, on the other. We will illustrate the shortcomings of this

1. Another approach in the study of social complexity is offered by research on intersectionality (see for example MaCall 2005), which analyses various socially and culturally constructed categories (such as race, class, gender, as well as identity forms) and how they interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. Most research conducted from this perspective focuses on identifying and describing gendered forms of social inequality and discrimination.

perspective through a brief portrait of children attending a bilingual school. In the final section, we introduce the contributions to this volume.

2. The superdiversity framework

2.1 The dynamics of migration and growing diversity

In the period since the early 1990s, there has been a rise in migration flows (including refugees) worldwide. It is estimated that there are approximately 214 million migrants worldwide at present (Vertovec 2009). The number of places of origin, the forms and aims of migration have become increasingly diversified, giving rise to a so-called 'diversification of diversity' (Martiniello 2004). When compared with the large immigrant groups that were identifiable in migration movements of the 1950s to the 1970s, current migrant groups are smaller in numbers, more mobile, socially more stratified and legally more differentiated. The term superdiversity has been used to designate these global changes in migration flows and forms which have occurred in the past twenty years (Vertovec 2006).

Traditional views on diversity assumed that the heterogeneity of migrants could be adequately captured by separating them according to their country of origin (Hopf 1987) or their ethnicity. In light of superdiversity, such methodological categorisations make little sense. Vertovec (2006: 17) uses Somalis in the UK to exemplify the inadequacy of such approaches: "[W]e will find British citizens, refugees, asylum-seekers, persons granted exceptional leave to remain, undocumented migrants, and people granted refugee status in another European country but who subsequently moved to Britain. A simple ethnicity-focused approach to understanding and engaging minority groups in Britain, as taken in many models and policies within conventional multiculturalism, is inadequate and often inappropriate". However, a methodological hurdle arises for research within superdiverse contexts. On the one hand, the homogenisation of groups, which per se are diverse, has to be avoided. On the other hand, by adding manifold variables such as legal status, milieu, language, etc., the research designs become very complex – possibly too complex for most forms of empirical research (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008).

From a sociological perspective, attempts have been made to capture the rising differentiation of migration forms and practices through the concept of "transmigration". This can roughly be defined from the standpoint of migrants as on-going migration processes (Pries 2004, Gogolin & Pries 2004). Gogolin and Pries presented the variables influencing migration outcomes – such as the

relationship to the countries of origin and destination, the reasons for migrating and the envisaged length of stay in the new country – and characterised them vis-à-vis the types of migrants, thus designing a typology of categories of current migration (see Table 1).

The concept of transmigration draws attention to the dynamism of migration processes, resulting in an understanding of such movements as fluid and malleable. The rapid development of technical possibilities for instantaneous communication, as well as the growth in more cost-effective travel options, serve to reinforce such assumptions. This understanding crosses the basic patterns ruling migration regimes up to now, which focus on migration ending in an act of complete “integration” whereby a former migrant transfers to a member of the group of non-migrants². The differentiation of migration is related to the variation in ways of living, identification forms and social positioning processes in which different variations of diversity partially overlap. Steven Vertovec has attempted to grasp these phenomena and their consequences for the formation of current societies with the notion of superdiversity.

Table 1. Four ideal types of international migrants (Gogolin & Pries 2004: 9)

	Relationship to region of origin	Relationship to region of destination	Main impulse for moving	Timeline for migration
Emigrant/ Immigrant	roots/ancestry/ permanent departure	integration/new homeland	economic/ socio-cultural	long-term/ unlimited
Return Migrant	continuous point of reference	maintenance of difference/“host country”	economic/ political	short-term/ limited
Diaspora Migrant	(at least symbolic) reference to the “homeland”	maintenance of difference/space of suffering or of mission	religious/ political/ organizational	medium-term/ limited
Transmigrant	ambiguous mixture	ambiguous mixture	economic/ organizational	indeterminate/ sequential

2. Esser (2006) for example speaks of the integration of migrants in the sense of systemic (general social system such as a society) and social integration (at the level of the individual actors). In his concept, the idea of multiple integration of a migrant in both host community and ethnic group is a rare phenomenon, which cannot happen in most migration situations. Migrants can thus only assimilate (at least functionally) or live separately from the “host community”.

This concept is understood as a characterization of social practice and positioning by means of a dynamic interplay of linguistic, cultural and social phenomena which exceeds the magnitude and present understanding of complexity in societies: “Super Diversity [is] a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country³ has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic of interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants” (Vertovec 2006: 1).⁴ With respect to research on or in “super diverse constellations”, Vertovec names three main aspects that have to be taken into account:

- a. *countries of origin* of the migrants, which covers a variety of possible sub-traits such as ethnicity, language[s], religion, regional and local identities, cultural values and practices;
- b. *migration channels*, relating to gender aspects in the flows, to specific social networks and particular labour market roles; and
- c. *legal status*, including numerous categories determining a hierarchy of entitlements and restrictions.

This growing linkage of variables of a complex and unsteady nature brings about methodological requirements for research. Vertovec (2009) refers to the theoretical framework of understanding superdiversity as a “conceptual triad” where one domain requires investigation of the other two in order to grasp the whole phenomenon. The triad is made up of “configurations of diversity”, referring to the ways in which diversity is displayed in structural and demographic settings. Variables belonging to this part of the triad are mostly those featuring in official data and statistics and leading to more traditional characterisations of migrants (what Vertovec calls putting people in “different packages”, see 2009: 11). In addition, he problematizes the fact that such statistical information must be constantly updated. The second part of the diversity triad is termed “representations of diversity” and refers to the ways in which diversity is depicted through “images, representations, symbols and meanings”. Examples of known metaphors for diversity are the idea of the melting pot, the mosaic, or the rainbow. The triad is completed by the “encounters of diversity, reflecting how diversities are actually

3. The author refers to Great Britain, but his conclusion can be applied to other European and probably even more contexts.

4. For further explanation see also the research cluster “Globaldivercities”, directed by Vertovec. Its core research question is: “In public spaces compared across cities, what accounts for similarities and differences in social and spatial patterns that arise under conditions of diversification, when new diversity-meets-old diversity?” <http://www.mmg.mpg.de/research/all-projects/globaldivercities/> (16 February 2012).

experienced or encountered” (2009: 23) and including processes of boundary making and marking where several types of diversity become salient.

In view of the complexity of the superdiversity framework, Vertovec (2006; 2007) calls for multilevel analysis in order to allow variance to be examined at the different hierarchical levels and in their multifaceted interplay.

2.2 Research on linguistic diversity: “New repertoires”

The concept of language within the superdiversity framework has entered the discourse on the linguistic texture of societies. Here, Blommaert and Rampton (2011) identify three main areas where a revision or paradigm shift has taken place over the last decades. These concern essential ideas about (a) languages themselves, (b) language groups and speakers and (c) actual communication. The conceptualisation of research in these three areas has, according to the authors, been subject to a fundamental change: “Rather than working with homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication” (2011: 4). This research rises in opposition to what the authors define as notions of linguistic diversity still transmitted as a “hegemonic force in public discourse, in bureaucratic and educational policy and practice, and in everyday common sense, as well as in some other areas of language study” (2011: 5), but considered non-operational in light of new superdiverse phenomena. An example of such an “archaic notion” still prevailing in many of the aforementioned institutions is that of a “language” as a homogeneous and clearly defined or definable object, which can be linked to a likewise identifiable “people”. While this notion may no longer be reflected in state of the art research on language phenomena, it prevails in the political sphere, educational practice and as a common belief in European societies.

Concerning (a) *languages*: most research conducted under the “multiculturalism paradigm” (Vertovec 2010) has been based on traditional categories, whereby a language is often associated with a given (usually monolingual) nation-state. This association thus has consequences for the hierarchisation of languages in society – accepting monolingualism as the rule implies that multilingual forms of practice, particularly those that are migration-induced, acquire the status of deviant or “illegitimate” practices (Gogolin 2007). In the superdiversity framework, the conceptualisation of languages as “bounded systems linked to bounded communities” (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 5) is seen as an ideological artefact.

As regards (b) *language groups and speakers*, the superdiversity framework calls for a shift towards research on “communities of practice” (Blommaert & Rampton 2011) where linguistic repertoires of a fluid and fragmentary nature may