Language Awareness in Multilingual Learning and Teaching

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Introduction

Over the last few years, interest in the social and individual phenomenon of multilingualism has considerably grown. Aronin and Singleton (2012) have identified multilingualism as the new world order. Scholars working in the area of third language acquisition and multilingualism are interested in the exploration of the most important factors guiding the language learning process in a multilingual context. Metalinguistic awareness has been identified as one, or even the key factor of multilingual learning. The primary goal of this chapter is to look into the nature of metalinguistic awareness and identify it as an emergent property in multilingual learners and users, which at the same time describes it as a feature of multilingual proficiency which cannot be studied with a monolingual yardstick.

A considerable amount of work has been carried out in mainly psychological studies of monolingual children with the aim of identifying the age of onset of metalinguistic awareness. Yet, the importance of metalinguistic awareness in the language learning process seems to increase along with a growth in intensity and amount of exposure to other languages. Therefore, the main focus of this contribution is on work going beyond the study of two languages in contact. A secondary and complementary goal is to show that a dynamic systems or complexity theory approach to language learning is a necessary prerequisite to make progress in the study of multilingual awareness. The chapter starts with a description of the various research forums in which (meta)linguistic awareness has been studied before continuing with the discussion of the complex nature of multilingualism and multilingual development, and the crucial role multilingual awareness needs to play in a fruitful discussion of the phenomenon of multilingualism and multilingual education. Multicompetence approaches in multilingual teaching will also be discussed as an option to put a stronger focus on multilingual awareness in the classroom.
Strands of Research on Metalinguistic Awareness

Metalinguistic awareness has been studied in various forms depending on the theoretical framework of the research ranging from linguistics, developmental psychology and educational psycholinguistics (Pinto, Titone and Trusso, 1999). According to James (1999), “knowledge about language”, “language awareness” and “metalinguistic awareness” are used interchangeably although the two former are broader in scope. The several strands of research have been continued and the challenge of studying metalinguistic awareness in multilinguals has been added to the research trends more recently, as documented in volume 6 (entitled Knowledge about language) of the Encyclopedia of language and education (Cenoz and Hornberger, 2007). It seems to be clear that the difference in orientedness has led to the use of different research methods and debates about methodological choices. Nowadays, scholars interested in the topic of awareness are theoretically rooted in linguistics, developmental and/or educational psychology.

Linguistics

Linguistics is interested in metalanguage only in terms of words, thereby referring exclusively to other words or classes of meaning. For instance, Jakobson (1963) included metalanguage among the secondary functions of language and referred to it as consisting in speaking of a word itself becoming its own content. The creation of both the adjective ‘metalinguistic’ and its noun form ‘metalanguage’ is rooted in linguistics. In contrast to a psychological perspective, which describes things from the point of view of the human subject by concentrating on processes, abilities and behaviour, a linguist is interested in metalanguage only in terms of words, referring exclusively to other words and classes of meaning, such as in linguistic terminology (cf. Berry, 2005).

Psychology

In contrast, psychologists are more concerned with processes, abilities and behaviour. Metalinguistic abilities, which expand along with the cognitive and linguistic development of children, can be observed in children as young as two years of age, when they are capable of self-corrections of word form, syntax and pronunciation, of showing concern about the proper word choice, pronunciation and style, and of commenting on the language of others (for an overview see Birdsong, 1989). Gombert (1992), whose work focuses on monolingual children, views metalinguistic activities as a sub-field of metacognition and defines metalinguistic activities as activities of reflection on language and its use as well as subjects’ ability to intentionally monitor and plan their own methods of linguistic processing both in comprehension and production (cf. Gombert, 1992: 13). Karmiloff-Smith (1992), one of the most influential scholars in the field, describes the emergence of conscious access to the mind via metalinguistic abilities as a cyclical process by which information already present in the organism is made progressively available via redescriptive processes to other parts of the cognitive system.

Particular attention to the development of metalinguistic abilities in children, adolescents and adults was paid by Pinto et al. (1999), who distinguish between epi- and metalinguistic processes. Whereas the former reflect an enhanced intuition with regard
to the use of language, the latter relate to the intentional reflection on language. The Italian group of psychologists developed one of the most comprehensive testing batteries of metalinguistic abilities. The originally Italian testing material has been translated into various European languages such as English, French, Spanish and also German (see Pinto, 2015). Since differences in development are clearly related to exposure to other languages, in parallel with the growing interest in bi- and multilingualism, metalinguistic awareness has been widely researched in bilingual children. So it is no real surprise that Pinto et al. (1999) reported on the advantages of bilingual children in metalinguistic awareness testing (cf. also work by El Euch and Pinto, 2016).

That emergent metalinguistic abilities reflect underlying changes in cognitive abilities was already pointed out by Piaget and Vygotsky who stated that “… a child’s understanding of his native language is enhanced by learning a foreign language” (Vygotsky, 1986: 160). Interestingly enough, the publication of Vygotsky’s book *Thought and Language* in English in 1962 (1934 in Russian) coincided with the publication of the classic study by Peal and Lambert (1962). Their work introduced a rather enthusiastic attitude towards bilingualism, following a detrimental phase which described the bilingual as cognitively handicapped (!) (for a historical overview see Baker, 2011: 140–146). Bialystok’s famous work on bilingual children going back to the 1990s has been supplemented by her studies on bilingual processing in adults more recently. The study by Bialystok, Craik, Klein and Viswathan (2004) suggests that lifelong bilingualism protects older adults from cognitive decline. A number of scholars have applied Bialystok’s model of analysis and control as the metalinguistic dimensions of bilingual proficiency to investigate the impact of bilingualism on cognitive skills (e.g. Ricciardelli, 1992; Jessner, 2006). Analysis of linguistic knowledge is described as the skill component responsible for making explicit those representations that had previously been implicit or intuitive, and control of linguistic processing is the ability to selectively attend to specific aspects of a representation, particularly in misleading situations. Bialystok (2011) concludes from her studies that there are no universal advantages for bilinguals but that high levels of proficiency in both languages lead to advantages on tasks requiring more analysed linguistic knowledge. Recently, a strong focus has been laid on research concerning the executive functions in the brain since they seem to influence bilingual processing mechanisms (e.g. Kroll and Bialystok, 2013).

**Education**

By taking into account the British model, in a number of European countries such as Germany (e.g. Edmondson and House, 1997), France (e.g. Candelier, 2003) and Austria (e.g. Matzer, 2000) educationalists have focused on awareness-raising in the classroom. Several terms in education-oriented second language acquisition (SLA) studies dealing with consciousness-raising, input enhancement and focus on form have been used to refer to similar concepts, which all imply the use of metalanguage and the facilitation of learning through an attention to form (see e.g. Sharwood Smith, 1997). A number of studies have concentrated on the metalinguistic knowledge, often expressed as terminology, of both teachers (e.g. Andrews, 2003) and students (Fortune, 2005).

Swain’s output hypothesis (1995), which is based on metalinguistic skills developed in language learning, has exerted considerable influence in the field. According to Swain, output can, under certain conditions, promote language development since language
learners become aware of their linguistic deficits during language production in the L2. The language output serves three functions, which are noticing, hypothesis formulation and testing, and the metalinguistic function. These functions enable the learner to control and internalize linguistic knowledge or in other words, when learners reflect on the language they produce, learning would result.

The Complexity and Dynamics of Multilingualism and Multilingual Development

Over the last 15 years, research on third language acquisition (TLA) or multilingualism has been increasingly intensified (Aronin and Hufeisen, 2009) and an overview of the new work reveals that scholars have focused on sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and educational aspects of multilingualism. Rather recently, the SLA research community, which so far had mainly concentrated on the influence of the L1 on the target language, has turned to a more multilingual understanding of SLA (May, 2014). The increase in studies on the contact of more than two languages has also forced researchers to rethink definitions used in a complex field with diverse interdisciplinary interests.

Terminology

The term ‘multilingualism’ covers a range of meanings. For some researchers, multilingualism is used to refer to bilingualism as the most commonly studied form of multilingualism. It has, for instance, become common that a book on multilingualism contains only book chapters on bilingualism. Other scholars take the strong stand that bi-, tri- and quadrilingualism should be seen as subtypes of multilingualism. They also believe that TLA is not extended SLA but presents a different language learning process in various respects (see also Jessner, 2008a). All in all, in the field of multilingualism, a variety of terms have been used to refer to identical phenomena. The variety of terms and their origins derive from (a) the complex nature of use of various languages in a multilingual context and (b) the researchers’ backgrounds, ideologies and purposes (for a detailed discussion see Kemp, 2009). In European Union language policy, mainly in educational oriented research, the term plurilingualism has been established to denote individual multilingualism in contrast to multilingualism on a social level. From an international perspective, multilingualism is the most prominently used term.

Crosslinguistic Influence in TLA and the L2 Status

In contrast to bilingual systems, crosslinguistic influences in a multilingual system not only take place from the first language to the second and vice versa but have also been detected from the L1 to the L3 and from the L2 to the L3 and vice versa. Combined crosslinguistic influence occurs “when two or more languages interact with one another and concur in influencing the target language, or when one language influences another, and the already influenced language in turn influences another language in the process of being acquired” (De Angelis, 2007: 21). This expansion of transfer possibilities already shows that multilingual acquisition is a far more complex process than SLA, where the role of the L1 in the development of the L2 has been researched extensively.
One of the most crucial questions in psycholinguistic research on TLA is related to the status of the L2 in third language learning. In a number of studies, it turned out that in L3 production the speakers did not rely on their L1 as expected, but on their L2, and in several studies of learning an L3 of Indo-European origin, it could be shown that L3 learners whose L1 is typologically unrelated to the L2 and/or L3 tend to transfer knowledge from their L2, or in the case of bilinguals from the related L1. The activation of prior language knowledge is influenced by factors such as psychotypology (perceived linguistic distance between languages), recency of use, the level of proficiency in the target language, the foreign language effect, the tendency in language learners to activate an earlier second language in L3 performance, and the learner’s perception of correctness of a target word (for an overview and list of TLA studies, see Jessner, 2008b).

**Forms of Multilingual Learning**

In contrast to second language learning, in third language learning the routes of learning or order of acquisition show greater diversity. Where SLA research has to deal with two ways of how two languages are acquired, in TLA at least four forms of acquisition have been identified:

1. the three languages can be learnt consecutively;
2. the three languages can be learned simultaneously;
3. L1 and L2 are learned simultaneously before learning the L3;
4. L2 and L3 are learned simultaneously after the acquisition of the L1.

The number of routes of learning increase with the number of languages so that in their overview of forms of acquisition of seven languages Todeva and Cenoz (2009: 7) present 32 possibilities.

**Multilingual Use**

In many contexts in the world, more than one language is used on a daily basis. Multilingualism can be encountered as an institutional, societal, discursive and individual phenomenon. In multilingual contexts, it is common that language skills are developed in various languages for use in certain domains, but that the language proficiency in some of the languages can be limited. Today, multilingualism is interpreted as a phenomenon that views language choice and proficiency as necessarily dependent on use in specific domains of life, thereby moving away from the notion of multiple monolingualism (Baker, 2006). The fact that “[d]ifferent aspects of life often require different languages” is called the complementarity principle by Grosjean (2010: 29ff.).

**Applying Dynamic Systems and/or Complexity Theory to Multilingualism**

Over the last decade, interest in the application of dynamic systems or complexity theory (DCT) to SLA and multilingualism has considerably grown (Herdina and Jessner, 2002; Kramsch, 2002; de Bot et al., 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008; Aronin and Hufeisen, 2009). The Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM) applies DCT to multilingual development and use (Herdina and Jessner, 2002). In DMM it is emphasized that ‘multilingualism’ necessarily embraces all types of language acquisition...
but also concentrates on the changes in language learning in a multilingual context. In the following, considerations forming crucial parts of a DCT-approach to the study of multilingualism will be discussed.

**Relating the Socio- to the Psycholinguistic Level of Multilingualism**

According to DMM, the individual multilingual system is dynamic and adaptive. As an adaptive system, the multilingual system, characterized by non-linear growth and continuous change, possesses the property of elasticity, the ability to adapt to temporary changes in the systems environment, and plasticity, the ability to develop new systems properties in response to altered conditions. A DCT approach is able to take into account all the relevant characteristics of multilingual learning and use, such as (i) non-linearity, including language attrition as a common phenomenon of multilingual systems, and (ii) complexity in a changing system.

DMM focuses on language development and language use in multilinguals as interdependent areas of language learning. Variation in multilingual development and use is strongly linked to the dependence of the system on social, psycholinguistic and individual factors, not to mention the mode of language learning in the form of either natural or instructional learning but also various combinations of both types. For instance, the complexity and variability of the multilingual system are also influenced by individual cognitive factors such as motivation, anxiety, language aptitude, self-esteem etc. as well as social factors which can show influence on the linguistic aspects of the multilingual system. Emotions and other psychological factors play a bigger role than has long been assumed. Connected to emotions is the factor of language prestige, which can exert enormous influence on various language contact situations.

In DMM, perceived communicative needs, which are psychologically and sociologically determined and can also be subject to change, are identified as the driving force of language learning, language choice and use. The speaker decides which language to use with whom and in which situation, and also when and why another language should be added to the multilingual’s repertoire. According to Grosjean (2001), a trilingual person can function in a monolingual, bilingual or trilingual mode with various levels of activation (see also Stavans and Hoffmann (2015) on language choices).

**Holistic Thinking as a DCT-Based Principle**

In DMM, a holistic approach is the necessary prerequisite for understanding the dynamic interaction between complex systems within a multilingual system. Such a view is a necessary presupposition of a dynamic view of multilingualism and assumes that the presence of one or more language systems influences the development not only of the second language but also the development of the overall multilingual system. The behaviour of each individual language system in a multilingual system largely depends on the behaviour of previous and subsequent systems, and it would therefore not make sense to look at the systems in isolation. Therefore, in DMM, language systems are seen as interdependent and not as autonomous systems, as which they are perceived in mainstream SLA research.

Since its creation, multicompetence as a kind of supersystem differing in distinct ways from the knowledge of monolinguals has established itself as the most widely
used term for bilingual (and multilingual) competence in applied linguistics. Cook (2006) bases his concept on Grosjean’s work on the bilingual as a competent but specific speaker-hearer (2010).

According to Cook (2002: 4–8), L2 users are characterized as follows:

1. the L2 user has other uses for language than the monolingual;
2. the L2 user’s knowledge of the second language is typically not identical to that of a native speaker;
3. the L2 user’s knowledge of his or her language is in some respects not the same as that of a monolingual;
4. L2 users have different minds from those of monolinguals.

Cook’s ideas about the integration continuum, which captures different relationships between two language systems in the same mind from separation to integration, thus fits with the DMM. That is, “it sees the language system of the L2 user as a whole rather than as an interaction between separate language components” (Cook, 2003: 11).

In DMM, which acknowledges Grosjean’s and Cook’s work, multilingual proficiency is defined as the dynamic interaction between (i) the various psycholinguistic systems (LS₁, LS₂, LS₃, LSₙ) in which the individual languages (L₁, L₂, L₃, Ln) are embedded, (ii) crosslinguistic interaction, and (iii) what is called the M(ultilingualism)-factor. The latter refers to all the effects in multilingual systems which distinguish a multilingual from a monolingual system, that is, all those qualities that develop in a multilingual speaker/learner due to the increase in language contact(s) (see studies on the M-factor by for example Peyer et al., 2010). Crosslinguistic interaction (CLIN) in multilinguals also refers to cognitive phenomena, a view which in the meantime has also been adopted by other researchers working on crosslinguistic influence, such as Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008).

The Butterfly Effect or Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions

The M(ultilingualism)-factor is an emergent property, which can contribute to the catalytic or accelerating effects in TLA. The multilingual system is not only in constant change but the multilingual learner also develops certain skills and abilities that the monolingual speaker lacks.

The key factor of the M-effect is metalinguistic awareness, which can be defined as the multilingual’s ability to focus attention on languages as objects in themselves and consequently to manipulate languages. The domains that can be affected by metalinguistic ability are linguistic development in general, the development of cognitive, metacognitive and information-processing abilities, and the development of literacy skills.

Whereas in SLA, the learner refers to a monolingual norm, that is, s/he bases second language learning on the acquisition of the first language (Herdina and Jessner, 2002: 131), in TLA a metasystem in multilinguals, which is the result of a bilingual norm, is developed. Following Lorenz (1972), who used the Butterfly effect or sensitive dependence on initial conditions to refer to the unpredictability of dynamic systems, in DMM an M-effect, which refers to this qualitative change in third language learning, is assumed to exist in multilingual systems (see Aronin and Jessner, 2015).
Multilingual Awareness: Emergent Property of the Multilingual System

The Role of MLA in DMM

Metalinguistic awareness in multilinguals has also become known as multilingual awareness. In DMM, multilingual awareness has been identified as an emergent property of the multilingual system. Emergent properties are the result of autocatalytic effects. They are only to be found in open systems and they are a function of the interaction between systems. Yet, they are not systems (gestalt) properties per se. Metalinguistic awareness comprises a set of skills or abilities that the multilingual user develops due to her/his prior linguistic and metacognitive knowledge. This knowledge and metalinguistic awareness influences further language learning or learning a second foreign language (Jessner, 2008a).

Components of Multilingual Awareness

The construct of metalinguistic awareness, which most commonly refers to grammatical knowledge, has to be widened to meet the requirements of research on multilingual learning and use. The relationship between crosslinguistic interaction, that is, the activation of other languages than the target language during third language production, and metalinguistic awareness was the main concern of Jessner (2006) in order to shed light on the dynamic interplay between crosslinguistic interaction and metalinguistic awareness as key variables forming part of the M-factor. James (1996: 139) defined crosslinguistic awareness as knowledge held at the explicit (declarative) level of metacognition. In his crosslinguistic approach to language awareness he pointed out that the “language transfer issue of classical Contrastive Analysis becomes a new issue of metalinguistic transfer – its relationship to cross-linguistic awareness” (James, 1996: 143; italics in original).

In her introspective study on lexical search in third language production, Jessner (2006) found that crosslinguistic awareness and metalinguistic awareness, tested in the form of explicit metalanguage, exerted influence on the activation of the individual languages in the multilingual mental lexicon. Crosslinguistic awareness in multilingual production is described as (a) tacit awareness shown by the use of cognates in the supporter languages (mainly in the use of combined strategies) and (b) explicit awareness in the case of switches that are introduced by metalanguage. In another study, Jessner (2005) showed that the application of metalinguistic knowledge and also the application of metalanguage can influence multilingual processing. This was supported by her student Graus in her study on crosslinguistic lexical influence from English (L2) on Italian (L3) in spontaneous written production (see Jessner, Megens et al., 2016b). Differentiation and selectivity in multilingual production seem to be governed by different levels of awareness, which clearly question a bipolar discussion of the various phenomena (see also Leow et al., 2011).

In recent studies on both the primary and secondary educational level carried out at Innsbruck University, the multilingual learner has indeed turned out to be a specific language learner, with a significant advantage in the development of her metalinguistic skills. It has become obvious that in two obviously differing sociolinguistic contexts, Tyrol and South Tyrol, the learners developed an enhanced level of multilingual awareness based on various multilingual teaching approaches (Jessner, 2014; see also below).
Exploring and Testing Metalinguistic Awareness

It has to be emphasized that the theoretical background of the studies has been reflected in the methodology chosen for investigation. For instance, in SLA research grammaticality judgement tests to elicit metalinguistic data have been widely acknowledged as predictors of success or failure in the language-learning process and to judge interlinguistic competence (Birdsong, 1989). The differences in scientific backgrounds have also resulted in controversial attitudes towards testing methods. For example, whereas applied linguists accept intro- and retro-spective methods to test metalinguistic awareness, (psycho)linguists would rather call them speculative.

Bialystok (2001: 17) pointed out that metalinguistic awareness consists of two cognitive processes, analysis of representational structures and control of selective attention. Tasks focusing on analysis are, for instance, grammaticality judgement tests, identification of ungrammatical elements, monitoring of errors and their correction, whereas those focusing on control are concerned with rhyming and synonymy.

There are two areas of research that have dealt with the learning and development of three or more languages:

a the effect of bilingualism on further language learning;
b the effect of bilingualism on artificial language learning.

In both areas, the concept of metalinguistic awareness has played a strong role in the explanation of language development.

The Relationship Between Bilingualism and Third Language Learning

In a number of studies, mainly carried out in Scandinavia and the Basque Country, an additive effect of bilingualism on third language learning, in both cases English, was found (Ringbom, 1987; Thomas, 1992; Cenoz and Valencia, 1994; Lasagabaster, 1997). Based on an extensive overview of research on bilingualism and additional language learning, Cenoz (2003) presented a detailed critical review of the studies on the effects of bilingualism on cognitive development. She concluded that most studies on general proficiency indicate a positive effect of bilingualism on TLA and that this effect can be explained as related to learning strategies, metalinguistic awareness and communicative ability, in particular if the languages in contact are typologically close.

Artificial Language Learning

Nation and McLaughlin (1986), Nayak et al. (1990), and McLaughlin and Nayak (1989) studied the learning of an artificial miniature linguistic system. The first study showed a positive transfer of learning strategies only for the domain of implicit learning. In the second, there was no clear evidence for a general superiority of multilinguals in language learning abilities, although they were found to adapt their learning strategies more easily to task requirements. The third study suggested a learning advantage of expert learners over less experienced foreign language learners. Kemp (2001) found that the performance of multilingual learners on tests of grammaticality depended on the number of languages they knew. As a group, multilinguals turned out to be better at the explicit than the implicit parts of the metalinguistic tests. The authors suggested that
the multilinguals were more capable of structuring their strategies to the requirements of the task, which leads to the conclusion that one reason for the superior performance of the multilingual participants is their greater flexibility in switching strategies. This line of research has turned out to be of crucial importance for current knowledge on the good language learner. In fact, in recent studies, the learning of not only artificial but also existing languages new to the learners have become part of TLA and multilingualism methodology, as can be seen in the studies mentioned below.

Learning an Unknown Language

Dahm (2015), for instance, reported on a strategy study that is part of a large-scale classroom investigation on PAUL sessions (Pluralistic Approach to Unknown Languages), in which students were confronted with three unknown languages: Dutch, Italian and Finnish. The three successive sessions focused on metasemantic, metasyntactic and metaphonological activities. The findings of this highly innovative multilingual strategy training show that the choice of strategy mainly depends on the perceived linguistic distance between the source and the target language. It highlights the necessity to introduce strategy training in L2 English in order to benefit from the transferability of strategies and increase of creative transfer (see also Jessner, Allgaeuer-Hackl et al., 2016a).

In a large-scale study on linguistic awareness in language attrition carried out in both Tyrolean and South Tyrolean contexts, in one of the tasks young adult students were asked to produce introspective think-aloud protocols during the decoding of a Roumanian text, a language hitherto unknown to the students. At the time of the study, the Tyrolean students had had contact with at least three languages (German, English, Latin and, optionally, Italian or French) during their school career. The protocols show that the students use compensatory strategies and a high degree of creativity in the application of problem-solving activities. Furthermore, the examples discussed give evidence of unconscious/tacit and conscious/explicit awareness (Jessner and Török, 2017). The following two studies in the Greek context present good examples of such work on strategies.

Strategy Use in Multilingual Learning

Psaltou-Joycey and Kantaridou (2009) investigated the possible relations between degrees of plurilingualism and strategy use. The subjects were 1,555 Greek university students learning foreign languages in an academic context. The results of the study indicated that the trilingual students used more strategies more frequently than bilinguals, especially those strategies that promote metalinguistic awareness, and that more advanced trilinguals made more frequent use of strategies, which mainly belonged to the cognitive and metacognitive categories.

Mitits (2015) carried out a large-scale study with over 1,200 participants attending junior high schools in Komotini, Thrace. She concentrated on the question of whether multilingual early adolescent language learners transfer language learning strategies from their L2 Greek to FL English. The study found that the multilinguals exceeded the monolinguals in the use of strategies for learning EFL, which can be attributed to prior language learning being a benefit for the multilingual learners, in that they tend to transfer the strategies they already employ in the languages they have been using and developing.
Focus on Multilingual Awareness in Multilingual Teaching

Multicompetence Approaches

Over the last years, a tendency to incorporate the main conceptual ideas of multicompetence (see above) into new ways of thinking in research of bi- and multilingualism can be detected (e.g. Hall, Cheng and Carlson, 2006; Wei and Cook, 2015). In fact, recent publications, such as May’s (2014) edited book on the multilingual turn in SLA, TESOL and bilingual education, take up the idea of criticizing the monolingual bias which has been followed in applied linguistics for a considerable time. Many of these new tendencies are associated with efforts in multilingual education contexts to raise metalinguistic awareness or to promote broader cognitive benefits from a heightened level of metalinguistic awareness in experienced learners (e.g. Conteh and Meier, 2014; Hofer, 2015).

In a number of studies concerned with lexical transfer phenomena in third language learning, the activation of other languages than the target language has been evidenced in the form of crosslinguistic consultation (for an overview see Jessner, 2006: 74ff.; see also Green, 1998). These links between the languages in a multilingual’s repertoire can be used as a counterargument against the traditional attitudes of both teachers and educationalists to keep the languages in the classroom apart in order to avoid confusion through the activation of prior language knowledge. Recently a number of cross-language approaches to language education have been suggested to foster synergy effects and cross-fertilization through cooperation between the languages and the language subjects in a classroom.

Such an approach also reintroduces L1 into the classroom. Until recently, due to the influence of traditional Contrastive Analysis, the intrusion of L1 in the classroom was viewed as interference or negative transfer on second and further language learning. But since transfer was attested a facilitative role in second language learning quite a while ago (e.g. Lewis, 1997), the L1 or prior linguistic knowledge has been used as a cognitive basis for further language learning. From a holistic perspective, this fairly new development is related to the L1 maintenance programmes in migration contexts (e.g. Krumm, 2005; see also below).

Cook’s concept of multicompetence suggests a holistic view of the L2 user. This fairly new perspective implies the introduction of new, that is, bi- and multilingual, norms instead of monolingual or traditional norms in linguistics. Although in a number of studies in second and third language learning, well-trodden paths have already been left, it is clear that a number of problems still need to be solved in order to arrive at a holistic perspective of the multilingual learner or user.

Some of these concern the status of the native speaker in language research and teaching, the range and order of languages to be taught in a curriculum, as well as teaching material.

Recently the native speaker has come under strong attack in discussions of norms in multilingual research and teaching. Introducing multicompetence, Cook (1999) suggested that it should replace the native speaker norm as the goal of language teaching. In fact, the native versus non-native teacher discussions mainly concern teachers of English. Ellis (2016) points out that the non-native teacher is able to pinpoint linguistic problems and offer metacognitive learning strategies that the native teacher without other language experience is unable to detect. (See also the chapter by Llurda et al. in this volume).
Choice of Languages and Order of Acquisition in a School Context

As discussed above, various studies on third language acquisition made clear that learning a second language differs from learning a third one. For the teaching context, this has implications with regard to the level of proficiency to be reached in each of the languages in the curriculum, the starting age for each of the languages and the nature of crosslinguistic contact between the languages of the curriculum, with a special focus on prior language knowledge and language learning experience in multilingual learners (Hufeisen and Jessner, 2009). Recently, Garcia and Li Wei (2014) proposed translanguaging as a possibility to capture the fluid language practices of bilinguals and how such an approach can change traditional understandings of education.

The typology of the languages offered in a curriculum also plays an important role in the order of acquisition, as was shown by Grießler (2001) in her comparative study of level of proficiency in English in three Austrian secondary schools. She found that those pupils who were introduced to French in parallel to English at an early stage outperformed pupils from regular school types where French is taught some years later than English. In a Swiss study on primary level education, it was shown that the two languages can influence each other very positively, in contrast to the bias against introducing a second, not to mention a third language, too early in an instructed context (Haenni Hoti et al., 2011). Furthermore, a successful language curriculum should be able to integrate minority and/or heritage languages, as well as a number of foreign languages which are of interest to the social community (Krumm, 2005).

Additionally, in reaction to the rapid increase of English as a lingua franca, the role that English should play in the teaching context has received considerable attention in scientific debate. One of the most frequently asked questions is whether English should take a prominent role in education as the first foreign language in those countries where English is not used as a first or second language or whether it would make more sense to focus mainly on other languages than English in instruction since English would be learned anyway due to daily contact with the language outside the classroom (e.g. Vollmer, 2001). An etymological approach to English focusing on the history of the language, for example, on the high number of words deriving from the Romance language background, has also been suggested in order to capitalize on the positive cognitive effects of multilingual learning (Jessner, 2006). Such an approach would be able to integrate both the strong wish of parents for early English learning and the awareness-raising for multilingualism with English.

Teaching Material

Although multilingual teaching methods have already been around for a while, unfortunately multilingual teaching material is still rather scarce. As pointed out by Oomen-Welke (2006), a great deal of multilingual learning happens through comparisons and promotion of metalinguistic awareness, and awareness of language learning strategies can build on the constructive potential of comparing languages. Open material is needed to incorporate new languages, even if they are only known by the pupils who can act as experts, which strengthens the role of the learners, particularly in migration contexts. Ideally, the development of multiliteracies presents an integral part of multilingual education (Cummins, 2006).
In a number of European projects, new approaches to multilingual teaching have been developed. For example, the EuroCom (European Comprehension) project (www.eurocom-frankfurt.de) has concentrated on how to provide European citizens with a solid linguistic basis for understanding each other, at least within their own language family. Such an approach includes optimal inferencing techniques in typologically related languages in order to develop at least receptive skills in the new language and has so far been applied to Romance, Germanic and Slavic language families. Language awareness-raising material has successfully been introduced by Candelier and his collaborators over the last 15 years. *Éveil aux langues* (Candelier, 2003) and the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* (FREPA) have been developed among other material suggested to be used in plurilingual approaches to language teaching (Candelier et al., 2012). It should be noted that although more attempts to develop material used to raise language awareness in children (Feichtinger et al., 2000) have been made, more textbooks still need to be developed for multilingual education. Ideally, multicompetence approaches to teacher material development have to consider developing common grammatical terminology as one of the prerequisites for multilingual learning.

The ultimate goal of all these efforts is to arrive at a whole language common curriculum for teaching languages in institutional contexts (Allgäuer-Hackl et al., 2015). Such an integrated approach to language teaching requires the cooperation of all the language teachers in an institution as well as teacher training that focuses on developing language and language learning awareness among the teachers, students, and teachers as learners, since language learning is a life-time process. And as already mentioned above, it should be able to integrate both heritage and minority languages (see also the chapter by Young in this volume).

**Future Perspectives**

The study of language awareness in multilingual learning and teaching is situated at the core of research on multilingualism. Multilingual awareness-raising in education concerns

- learners (bridging of languages and exploiting resources)
- teachers (native vs. non-native teachers)
- teachers as learners (dynamics of language learning over a lifespan).

Ideally this awareness is accompanied by the implementation of whole language curricula.

Although research on language awareness has existed for a while, there are a number of questions remaining to be tackled in future discussions. Since the study of language awareness is rooted in a variety of theoretical backgrounds, to reach a definition of language awareness which could be acknowledged by all linguistic disciplines might present an unrealistic albeit wishful endeavour. In future research on language awareness, to focus on the boundaries between consciousness/awareness and explicit/implicit learning and/or knowledge would seem to lead to fruitful contributions. This discussion might result in redefinitions or new approaches following a discussion of the usefulness of such categorizations in hitherto neglected language-learning scenarios. The definition of the role that language awareness plays in multilingual learning and use certainly presents a challenge to research on language learning in general and to
common theoretical paradigms in particular. Multilingualism has been defined as an umbrella term to include first, second and third language-learning processes and products and would accordingly provide the adequate framework for a synthesis of interdisciplinary studies on language awareness. New methodological approaches to the study of language awareness are needed. For instance, the concept of language aptitude needs to be discussed in its relation to metalinguistic awareness (Jessner, 2006, 2014). In the same research context, better insights into learning artificial languages might also prove fruitful.

As suggested by Aronin and Hufeisen (2009), it is absolutely necessary to cross the second threshold, which implies that following the crucial contributions by Grosjean and Cook on the bilingual view of bilingualism and Herdina and Jessner (2002), we now have come to see that multilingualism can only be adequately researched by applying a multilingual norm to multilingual research. Linking research on the social level to research on the individual level presents a big challenge for future studies of multilingual learning and teaching. To understand a multilingual person as somebody who has a different way of using and knowing her or his languages in contrast to the native speakers of the respective languages, means that we acknowledge the cognitive chances that a life with multilingualism can offer and profit from the benefits of the contact with two or more languages. Such a perspective requires that we accredit a less prominent role to the linguistic deficits of second language learners and users in exchange for the cognitive benefits that a life with more than one language can offer, so that we will be able to understand that multilingualism is not just additive monolingualism in several languages.

Consequently, a reorientation towards the dynamics of multilingualism should replace a conventional monolingual norm. Only by applying multilingual norms to institutional language contexts will we be able to understand the requirements of successful multilingual education. Multilingual assessment will have to take holistic constructions of bi- and multilingualism into account. This implies that scholars involved in the development of new language assessment tools will have to face tensions between linguistic homogenization imposed by nation states and real-life multilingualism (García, Skutnab-Kangas and Torres-Guzmán, 2006; Jessner and Kramsch, 2015).

Related Topics

Third Language Acquisition; multicompetence; metalinguistic awareness; crosslinguistic influence; Dynamic Complexity Theory; Dynamic Model of Multilingualism

References


