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Multilingualism

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What is multilingualism and what are its roots?

 The first issue to discuss in terms of what multilingualism is and encompasses involves defining 'language' in multilingualism and the role of ideologies. Next, the notion of multi lingualism as an evolving construct along with names and implications is discussed, followed by stumbling blocks in inclusive ideologies, and domains of language use. Defining 'language' in multilingualism and the role of ideologies One immediate response to the former question is: knowledge of several languages, but that brings up the question of what even is a language? To some, the notion itself is fuzzy. First, some varieties may be seen on a continuum in relation to a 'standard' national language. Language varieties have often been referred to disparagingly (as 'dialects'), i.e., not seen as 'legitimate' languages. While some varieties may be less related to a standard national lan guage than others (e.g., Friuli and standard Italian), some groups may accentuate the differ ences for purposes of identity claims and claims to language rights. Weber and Horner (2012) cite as an example, unionists in Northern Ireland who situate the variety of English they speak (Ulster-Scots) as a different 'language' than the English spoken by nationalists in Northern Ireland in an attempt to identify more closely with Great Britain than to a reunified Ireland (p. 30). Some people might see someone who speaks Ulster-Scots, understands 206 Taylor standard English and knows French as multilingual, but another person who conflates the two varieties of English may just view the speaker as bilingual. To others, the standard/variety distinction is not fuzzy at all, although it may still be used to validate a concerted effort to deny recognition of a language. For instance, different varieties of Kurdish are spoken in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Georgia, and it is estimated that one-quarter of the population of Turkey speak Kurmanji (the variety of Kurdish most widely spoken there). In the past, neither the considerable number of Kurmanji speakers, nor the fact that it is an Indo-Eur opean language (whereas Turkish is a Turkic language), stopped Turkish national ists from calling Kurdish as a whole a 'dialect'

spoken by people 'who forgot their mother tongue' (i.e., Turkish). Neither did it stop the Turkification process, which involved forcible relocation from primarily Kurdish regions to areas mainly popu lated by Turkish-speakers, or the policy of educating children through the medium of Turkish while stigmatizing their mother tongue. In both respects, the goal was cul tural/linguistic assimilation in support of a one-nation-one-language ideology; i.e., the belief that silencing Kurdish was in the best interests of Turkish society (Hassanpour, 1992; Üngör, 2012). Blommaert (2008) observes that institutions can freeze conditions for 'voice' by narrowly defining languages (as in the Kurdish example, above) and language varieties, thus stigmatizing some and legitimizing others. Piller (2015) discusses the ideological bases on which language varieties are deemed (il-) legitimate, and Otsuji and Penny cook (2010) discuss ideologies and processes involved in individuals pushing the boundaries of fixed languages in fluid local practices. Multilingualism as an evolving construct: names and implications Extending the discussion, Kontra, Lewis and Skutnabb-Kangas (2016) suggest that questioning whether languages exist undermines groups' agency when they name 'their' language and 'their' mother tongue, and link them to 'their' identity. Black ledge and Creese (2008) also refer to the passionate beliefs people sometimes hold about links between 'their' languages and identities. Questioning whether languages exist can lead to more social friction than adopting multilingual language policies that recognize ethnic and linguistic pluralism as resources for nation-building and protecting minority rights (Hornberger, 2002; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Therefore, naming and having the power to name languages as (il-) legitimate are important. In answer to the questions: 'What's in a name?' and 'Why name a language?', Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson's (2017) work suggests that it is to recognize lan guage rights and combat the invisibilization of minority languages in society and in institutions such as schools– institutions that have the power to (not) transfer minority languages to the next generation. Also with regard to naming, in the past few decades, researchers have explicitly renamed the term 'bilingual' for pragmatic purposes. When they realized that the stigma attached to the name closed doors on innovative educational programming, they began a renaming process; replacing bilingual with 'dual language education' and 'emergent bilinguals' in the US (Smith, 2000), and 'multilingual children' in Denmark (Holmen, 2008). The latter accounts, in part, for increased use of the term 'multi lingualism' and its offshoots (e.g., plurilingualism). Multilingualism 207 The definition of multilingualism adopted for purposes of this chapter is based on the Council of Europe's (2001) distinction between societal multilingualism and indi

vidual plurilingualism: Plurilingual … competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication …, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages. … This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (Council of Europe, 2001: 68) The purpose of the researchers involved in developing the key notions behind the con struct of plurilingualism for the Council of Europe (2001) was to counter binary images such as monolingualism and bilingualism, and balanced and unbalanced proficiency in languages (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009). They observed that learner self-definitions based on these binaries sometimes prevented them from valorizing their partial com petences in languages, or daring to lay claim to languages in which their proficiency was deemed lacking as part of their personal linguistic repertoires (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009: 10). The construct of plurilingual social actors was intended to go beyond the idea of bi or multilinguals striving to attain 'native-speaker' (or native-like) proficiency in two or more linguistic codes (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009: 19). Just as Norton Peirce's (1995) notion of 'investment' stresses identities changing over time and space (Norton, 2013), plurilingualism does not describe fixed competences (be they reciprocal or not reciprocal; horizontal or vertical) as individuals 'develop competences in a number of languages from desire or necessity, in order to meet the need to communicate with others. Plurilingualism is constructed as individuals pursue their lives, it is a reflection of their social paths' (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009: 17). There are clear links between the dynamic nature of plurilingualism and the dynamic model of multilingualism (DMM) (Herdina and Jessner, 2002). The DMM aims to explain shared properties of language in the brain, represent languages as one complex system in which the languages an individual knows are interdependent and non-linear (not separate and fixed) and predict multilingual development across languages. As the DMM stresses non-linearity, reversibility, instability, interdependence, complexity and change of quality, it meshes well with Larsen-Freeman's (1997; 2017) focus on the dialectical interplay between moving parts in specific contexts in dynamic systems theory; Cummins' (1981) interdependence hypothesis; and Norton Peirce (1995), Norton (2013), and Coste, Moore and Zarate's (2009) work on change occurring over time and space, depending on social actors' life circumstances. It also complements and supports those aspects of Bialystok's work that suggest one linguistic code is not turned off when another one is in use; rather, a learner's executive control manages which resource(s) to draw on at appropriate times, (dis-) allowing multiple codes (or trans

languaging) to meet speakers' social needs (Bialystok, Craik and Luk, 2008). Like Herdina and Jessner (2002), Bialystok sees plurilinguals' brains as functioning differ ently than monolinguals, as did Peal and Lambert (1962) much earlier. The DMM also meshes well with Otheguy, Garcia and Reid's (2015) work on translanguaging, which they define as 'the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic 208 Taylor repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named … languages' (p. 281). When applied to educational contexts, translanguaging reframes education as a space for plural language practices. Otheguy, Garcia and Reid (2015) refer to the amalgams of individuals' linguistic histories (or repertoires) as their 'idiolects'. Their notion of idiolects explains how even people who consider themselves 'monolingual' have complex, multifaceted linguistic histories (idiolects) in a way that supports Piccardo's (2013) assertion that everyone is plur ilingual; i.e., they can draw on the different registers, varieties or genres of language their life paths expose them to (as parent/guardian or some form of family member, perhaps with adherence to some sport, or as aficionados of 'fan fiction' or online gaming, or as members of various communities of practice). Recognizing the dynamic interrelatedness of languages, and drawing on plur ilinguals' ability to transcend Otheguy, Garcia and Reid's (2015) 'defined boundaries' (p. 281) between the languages, language varieties, etc. that they know does not suggest that plurilinguals cannot distinguish between the various elements of their linguistic repertoires (see Jørgensen, 2008: 174). Bialystok, Craik and Luk (2008) suggest that plurilinguals' executive control manages which resource(s) to draw on and when, allowing them to translanguage. That is, they can draw on the bricolage of languages understood in their speech communities. Kontra, Lewis and Skutnabb-Kangas (2016) discuss languages as both processes and as concrete, providing the following analogy: There is no more 'contradiction between treating languages as processes and, at the same time, as concrete' than there was in Albert Einstein, Max Planck and Niels Bohr's experiments, which showed that 'light could behave both as waves and as a particle' (Kontra, Lewis and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2016: 8). That is, though languages change (processes), they can be captured in the sense that they can be named and documented in dictionaries, and written in books; therefore, they are also concrete. The main implication for educators is that they should view the varying competences that students have in the languages in their linguistic repertoires as resources to be drawn on, not deficits. Second/foreign language (L2/FL) educators commonly learned in their teacher education courses to only speak the target language in classroom time for fear of negative transfer from the other

languages in their repertoires. Cummins (2005: 588) refers to the latter view as the 'language separation ideology'. Also, the 'end goal' for L2/FL educators was for students to become balanced bilinguals (i.e., to have balanced compe tencies across all languages), which Heller (1999: 271) refers to as 'parallel mono lingualism' (or students with full monolingual competences in Lx and Ly in one body), which is rarely attainable and, as discussed, does not recognize the value of partial com petences. Rather, educators should recognize the dynamic nature of plurilingual bricolage (creative use of the languages in their students' repertoires as needed or desired), and encourage translanguaging as a useful resource supporting learning. As yet, there is no consensus in the research community on whether to use the term multilingualism or plurilingualism to describe individual social actors (Cummins, 2017). In some cases, choice of term is influenced by geography (plurilingualism in Europe, multilingualism elsewhere except for growing use of the term plurilingualism in Canada); others use the term plurilingualism for its specific attributes (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009). Contributors to a recent book on plurilingualism used varying terms while adopting a common, plurilingual stance (Choi and Ollerhead, 2018); while others describe a translanguaging stance (Menken and Sanchez, 2019). Despite the absence of Multilingualism 209 consensus, there is growing openness to drawing on multilingualism in teaching by 'softening the boundaries between languages' (Cenoz and Gorter, 2013)