Exploring the Benefits and Challenges of Multilingualism in Today's Society

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this study is to evaluate the sociopolitical impact of learning and using foreign language in a multicultural environment such that Italy, rather than northern European countries, through an experience of eTwinning, between Liceo Artistico L.F. Signorini of Faenza and the Brevet des Collèges classes of Collège du Patriarcat Grec Melkite Catholique of Antélias in Lebanon. *Methodology*. This qualitative research examines policy documents and focuses on the description of a practical project. *Main results*. The case analyzed demonstrate that the countries with a longer tradition of multilingualism (including multiculture and multi-faith) are less motivated than others, to remove the linguistic barriers and implement the real multilingualism as wished by the 2002 UNESCO Road Map objective. *The importance of this study*. The investigation may shed light on how current difficulties can be overcome and give ideas for the future, through the analyses of the past. The two original and actual case-studies, may have the merit that they come from a fresh (Italian) and rarely explored perspective, reversing the current attitude: in order to accomplish, shares on can be made partners, the effective one must be seen more as a passive learner than active doer (Rizk, 2013). *Keywords*. Multicultural-social-cultural; UNESCO; England; Foreign language; Practice; Learning; Work. *Abstract*. *Purpose*. Student exchanges are seen as a way to develop and / or review the language they learn at school; using it in authentic communication context of the peers turns into a koinè or link language. *Methodology*. At the end of a project of eTwinning, surveys were conducted to highlight the subtleties that all the concerned parties might have missed. In order to contrast the two situations, the tools used, although still of a qualitative nature, are different for having greater evidentiary power. *To* An overview of the historical critical events of the linguistic and sociopolitical situation in comparison, they are providing tools for cross-border work: guidelines, rules, translations into other languages. *What has emerged*. Native English children. The conflict leads to terrorising others, representing Satan with the Islamic veil, others advocate peace, restore faith in human goodness and cultivating tolerance. *Intersting the reader*. The unexpected results and the critical overview provided by the discussion. Many of the evidences presented by the eTwinning experience are useful for developing a conscious comparison.

Keywords. *English; School; Pupils; Parents; Politic; Terrorism; Language; Teaching*

1. Introduction

Modern society is characterized by the processes of globalization, technological change, and the increasing mobility and complexity of human migration. An immediate impact of these processes is the rapid proliferation of linguistic diversity. This phenomenon not only diversifies existing processes but also redefines the very nature of multilingualism itself. However, in the globalized world, the role of the multiple strands of complex interrelations between language, mobility, communication, and sociocultural practice has remained understudied. The typical response of national and international institutions to this widespread, 'hyperdiverse' multilingualism remains, for the most part, crudely monolingual, often framed within a reductive multilingual competence. As a result, it arises political conflict, discrimination, and parochialism at the cost of both local and global economy, democracy, and civil rights (S. Akbar, 2015). In this context, the challenge is to develop an understanding of the benefits and challenges that come with the recognition for the importance of diverse, complex, and not necessarily commensurable or mutually intelligible, repertoires of language and cultural practice. it is clear that the development of new forms of analytic tools and methodologies must be accompanied by and will in turn inform the design of more effective policies and practices. The aim is to shed light on the complexities of diverse multilingualism and to develop an interdisciplinary, comparative framework that can account for the ways in which the practices and ideologies of new mobilities and media are interacting with longstanding channels and practices of multilingual communication and cultural exchange. It is necessary to approach the topic from a broader perspective, taking into account the profound transformations that available technology and globalization processes are causing in the field of human mobility. At the same time, the study points out how monolingual language ideologies, often implicitly empowered by a focus on cognate language communities or standard language varieties, can bolster forms of social exclusion and political insularity.

2. Historical Perspectives on Multilingualism

The movement of people and ideas across national borders has perhaps never been so far-reaching and rapid as it is today. In English-dominant Western countries, educational systems have responded to this by becoming more rigid and restricted teleologically. This response is characterized by ambiguity about multilingualism in education and a range of moves towards standardization. There is increasing convergence in educational policies internationally with schools being seen as institutions for delivering a range of 'common', standardized, abstractions from a distant, 'meta' knowledge. This standardization has many interconnected drivers and is both general (such as the economic forces shaping global markets and super-diverse demography of contemporary societies) and specific (such as local constructions of race/ethnicity and nation that seek to construct 'difference' in this context as pathological and hence in need of 'fixing'). However, note that the most significant changes in the educational landscape of the past 20 years have been in the language(s) of learning and teaching. Multilingualism of the nature and scale we are currently experiencing changes profoundly the very nature of multilingualism, of language and of language learning, and requires new theoretical, conceptual and methodological understandings of these changes. One

consequence of this rethinking is the realisation that the majority of people across the world are in fact multilinguals in the sense that they routinely and fluidly are able to draw on multiple languages and semiotic systems to make meaning, but this essential aspect of multilingual behavior is typically left 'outside' the language learning space of the classroom. For some, this results from a deterministic take-up of the vision of a monolingual educational system based on the myth of the monolingual speaker and a graphic distinction made between the two poles outlined by Fishman in 1967 of 'monoglot monoglossia' and 'polyglot polyglossia'. There are implications of denying within the structure of classroom and curricula that engage with the diversity of languages and the diversity of semiotic modes that learners currently bring into the classroom require a re-conceptualisation of what counts as language in language education (Scarino, 2013). There may also be new understandings of language and the multilingual repertoires that young people actually use and need for their future that arise from poststructuralist perspectives such as note that the shifting nature of learner personae and their subjectivities ('who' they are and 'what' they can be in the world with particular language resources) necessitates new understandings of the teaching/learning process. Just as the need for more sophisticated understandings of the social, cultural and semiotic practices of young linguistic minority students increases, so too does the need to take into account the macro features of the ecology of languages that are in use in any particular educational community. That is, in different contexts the issues related to providing appropriate and effective language support will be different and relate to quite different linguistic configurations. For example, and despite all being with the same policy guidelines, English language learning across the region will be very different for learners in Indonesia who will be dealing with their third language in the classroom, to learners in Singapore, Hong Kong, or Australia.

3. Cognitive and Academic Benefits of Multilingualism

Cognitive benefits of multilingualism have received much attention in recent years. Earlier research has shown that bilingual individuals, compared to monolinguals, enjoy certain advantages in various areas, such as problem-solving skills. However, some recent studies found mixed results, which is related to the controversy on whether or not bilingualism is beneficial. More importantly, cognitive benefits for bilinguals are mostly associated with executive functions. Executive functions are high-level cognitive control processes that regulate and manage other cognitive processes, helping individuals to fully develop their capabilities. The question is whether the cognitive benefits of multilingualism are equally present in all types of multilinguals or it depends on other factors. There is evidence that bilingual cognitive advantages depend on the sociolinguistic context. The central claim of the study is that prosodic L2 intonation has its own place in memory storage and retrieval strategies even in multilinguals having language combinations like the participants in the study. Language-mediated disadvantage for multilinguals receives more emphasis in educational and societal contexts. It is argued that reading and vocabulary learning difficulties of multilinguals result from their non-dominant language abilities, while neurocognitive theories suggest that the processing system of bilinguals fundamentally differs from monolinguals. Specifically, the model posits that as long as a lexical item is activated in a language of a multilingual individual, it automatically becomes

lexically active in other languages, leading to language competition between words of the same category and, ultimately, poorer lexical processing efficiency as opposed to monolinguals.

3.1. Enhanced Cognitive Functions

Some of general nuisances an individual might find bothersome or challenging (surrounding noise, public services provided in more than one language) with regard to multilingualism, but that are, nevertheless, difficult to perceive as being met in an informed, responsible manner. Multilingualism has a number of potential advantages that could compensate society for the financial and other resources required for a greater diffusion of multilingual practices. Two of the most compelling arguments in favor of multilingualism today are related to the enhanced cognitive functions found in bi-/multilinguals and the cultural relations such practices may promote.

Numerous studies have indicated a range of cognitive advantages in bilinguals, ranging from improvements in executive function and general mental abilities, to a later onset of age-related cognitive losses (N Boudros, 2017). Children who grow up in bilingual households are also thought to have an edge, because they are better able to take other people's perspectives when interpreting information. While many of the cognitive advantages of bilingualism reported in the literature do not affect everybody equally, proficiency in an additional language has been positively correlated with general cognitive advantages even outside the realm of language processes. Although bi- and multilingual people face many disadvantages in a socio-economical context differentiated in favor of monolingualism, there are also many and often underused advantages that could be used for a more efficient, more fair, and benignly ravenous multilingual strategy. Moreover, by facilitating cultural relations, multilingualism not only allows for a better understanding of different cultural practices, but can also provide new ideas when enriching cultural practices for common benefit (Farisiyah, 2018).

3.2. Academic Achievement and Performance

The current study also explores the Cronbach's α coefficients. Regarding the spelling tests, all T1 and T2 tests show high reliability ($\alpha \geq .89$). In comparison to a previous knowledge test, one of the reading comprehension tests is composed, along with a letter writing test for spelling, to determine possible effects of monolingual writing experience. The intent is to explore two main research questions: First, are there differences between mono- and multilinguals in their BURT homespun sentence test performance and spelling test performance?; Second, are there correlations between parents' judgement of the importance of writing skills and the BURT homespun sentence test performance and spelling test performance of their children? The rapidly increasing numbers of schools which establish high-level education (havo/vwo-level) have become bilingual schools. Therefore, it is important to investigate differences in reading and writing in Dutch mono- and multilingual children (Festman & W. Schwieter, 2019).

4. Socio-Cultural Benefits of Multilingualism

Multilingualism in interactions with out-group members As a phenomenon that often emerges in multicultural environments, multilingualism has numerous socio-cultural benefits. There is also evidence showing that multilingualism could facilitate social integration and improve employment outcomes for

individuals in multilingual areas. However, the interaction between multilingual individuals and members of different ethnic groups is still under-investigated. Being multilingual could imply an increased inclination and also ability to interact with out-group members. Cognitive flexibility is the ability to adapt cognitively to an ever-changing environment. Such an advantage could help multilingual individuals to navigate complex interactional situations with out-group members more successfully. A number of further socio-psychological mediating mechanisms connect bilingualism to acceptance of outgroup members. Intervening actions that impact bilingualism and out-group acceptance were found to be a greater sense of deprovincialization and an enhanced memory for other groups' traits. The present study undertakes a novel, comprehensive approach in examining the relationship between multilingualism and general acceptance of out-groups (Douglas Mepham & Martinovic, 2017). Most previous studies have focused on language learning as a tool for fostering awareness and intercultural understanding. The present research thus probes how simply the number of languages spoken by individuals is linked to how accepting they are of members of other language groups who live in their country.

4.1. Cultural Understanding and Appreciation

Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, etc. Multiculturalism is the existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a society. The cultural elements are to be their languages, customs, religious beliefs, traditions, arts, etc. Cultural diversity is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture. This process in which old and new cultural elements combined together through peaceful relations is called cultural synthesis. On the other hand, multicultural societies may have conflicts, pressure or stress based on their cultural differences. The most negative point is the give rise of racism, intolerance, or xenophobia. The mutual understanding between numerous cultural elements through cultural awareness can play a vital role to help to solve these conflicts. This is possible when cultural alignment and adjustment are needed between groups of different cultural elements (Torricelli, 2014). Cultural understanding is the ability of considering, accepting or appreciating the cultural differences. This is nigh impossible a process, because it contains too many cultural components. The most common ways of cultural understanding are education, travel, marriage, or employment. When it takes a long time, after a while, cultural assimilations take place. But for immediate cultural understanding between different cultural elements, kind of educational tools or materials might be needed. However, unfamiliar cultural elements are generally resisted by people because of the idea of fear. This maladaptive act is called as xenophobia. Despite this fact, some event or environment might be worked to understand or appreciate these unusual, uncommon, or unfamiliar cultural components (Yalcin, 2013).

4.2. Enhanced Communication Skills

Multilingualism is an increasingly important aspect of today's society due to the establishment of major corporations, the growth of the Internet which has created a global marketplace and the support for other languages in increasingly digitized countries (Aziz Mohammadi & Samadi, 2016). The objective of a bilingual person is to improve proficiency in two languages, thereby certainly developing insight into the

nature of language itself. The ability to function in more than one language helps a person comprehend information and speak with more than one group of people normally labelled as speakers of different dialects or languages. Thus, serious and extensive research is vital in order to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of being bilingual in today's society. Moreover, the populations of bilinguals in Canada or South Africa possess two separate first languages. Consequently, one of the objectives of the ongoing research is to scrutinize multilinguals who have more than one language up to a near-native speaker's level. It is the claim of this paper that due to the beneficial effects of multilingualism, monolinguals who learn a given language as their second language and then learn another (A) may be faster than monolinguals who learn the same language as their second language and then learn another (B) on some measures involving language A than people who are monolingual and acquire the same language (A) as L3, in addition to having collected self-reported data as well.

5. Economic and Professional Advantages of Multilingualism

The industrial sectors have become international as enterprises are conducting their productions and sales all over the globe. This has been one reason for erasing the 30 plus industrial domains and replacing them as the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification's (SITC) nine 'sectors'. The new economy is encapsulated into two wider sectors, ranging from simple capitalism, trade, and services on one end to high tech, finances, and similar on the other (Garrouste, 2008). Both tendencies brought about the necessity to strengthen the European unity at all levels, expanding the transnational linguistic policies of the European Economic Community forefathers to boost the 'free market' and 'political' multilingualism into the 'Communication Europe' as the linguistic technologies (LTs) encompassing the language processing technologies as natural language processing, machine oriented MTs, and the related telecommunication technologies, concurrently. With the development of the electronics and the cybernetics parallel elaborations of the necuno and lango type LTs as machine processing languages were conducted, too. The findings of the study focus mostly on marketing strategies of these languages as components of the broader 'medilinguistics' as instruments for mediating the communication of business entities on the international markets. In brief, the goal is to identify what would be the benefits from having and using skills as user, developer, facilitator or network/communication manager of any of the four languages (Catalan, English, French, Spanish) as it investigates both the expected and unexpected results of the involvement into the marketing strategies (Clingingsmith, 2017).

6. Challenges and Barriers to Multilingualism

Research into the benefits of multilingualism suggests that, cognitively and culturally, multilingualism is of great advantage to individuals and society. However, fostering and maintaining multilingualism is complex and despite policy initiatives a significant decline has been witnessed in the number of the world's languages, especially in the past 500 years. Consequently, only a minority of the world's 6,000 or so languages are being passed on to subsequent generations of speakers. A full discussion of the benefits and challenges of multilingualism would be too large to do justice to in this article,

particularly because discussions of benefits in other articles in this special issue are also relevant. Instead, this article provides recommendations on promoting multilingualism in a manner that respects the views, needs, and rights of those who speak minority languages. Due to greater mobility in general and of multinational companies in particular, many of the world's population resettles in places other than where their mother tongue is spoken. Political will and policy preferences, historical events, and personal circumstances are also the reason for a significant number of mixed marriages, and families that have to raise their children in a language that is different from the languages of the new geographical surroundings.

6.1. Linguistic Inequality and Discrimination

There, discrimination on an indigenous mother-tongue by the dominant language speakers can be symbolized by stigmatizing the indigenous mother-tongue as a difficulty to communication, strength of the majority language group to disallow its use. This is engaged in facilitated meeting and verbal expression to plot what speeches should best be engaged to eliminate the target indigenous language. Thus, the denial of freedom to explore all cultural instruments of an indigenous society affects her language, communication codes, diction, oral tradition, certain festive occasions. Matters on language discrimination revolve round these pedagogical concepts. Public conception of the language is that which is fostered in schools, while all other varieties hence, belong under. Due to the prevalence of this notion, coupling with its hierarchy-scale to other token varieties pertaining in different sociocultural groups, majority of the speakers envy this style and wish to model it in all verbal communication events. It is ordered then, that language discourse, in what means speech style, structure and vocabulary, detracts widely from prototypic conventions of academic style essays, which alongside with distinctions does not form part of common discourse, is assessed as ungrammatical and high rate of dialectal interference. Thus, the referent disparities between public and vernacular language concepts can be measured in terms of education and other social public services. These transit from fundamental human rights, hence guarded of the laws, to observed social conventions whose violation is attended by obligatory penalties, like the frowns of righteous anger or the refusal to associate.

6.2. Educational and Policy Challenges

Introduction of compulsory education for all children has faced teachers (and educational authorities) with a diverse population. How can the linguistic and cultural diversity of children be addressed? What ethical and educational models are available? What do children and their parents really want? Considering these, a political and social struggle to define the meaning of multilingualism and to address its challenges is taking place (Slembrouck et al., 2018). Policy context is crucial in trying to develop multilingualism incrementally. First, a distinction should be made between multilingualism as policy and language policies. The challenge of preserving existing varieties and fostering new ones is seen in Europe as a prerequisite for a pan-European identity. Language policies as support schemes aim at supporting community and regional efforts destined to the protection and development of these languages in the school system, in the town, and in the place of work (McKelvey, 2017). In the era of re-Britannicisation of the UK and pre-Brexit strategies of shirking from the ECtHR, but also in the trend of declining support for European social democracy in the EC/Brussels and the ECJ, where formerly implicitly accepted/monist trends of the recognition of the Rule of

Law inside the UK and en réciproque are both challenged and challenged. Broadly understood multilingualism amongst West European populations is a largely unmet and underestimated challenge, the perception of which at times borders on a problematization.

Strategies embracing multilingualism and inter-language communication over monolingualism and inter-ethnic governmental negotiations and co-operation are simply not considered as advantageous within Westminster & Co. So on the one hand increased sovereignty/populist national fundamentalism draws from a soil that has been kept rugged and contentious. Necessary human and minority rights-based social, cultural and civic diplomacy towards mutual respect and citizen understanding are excluded by the silt built by monolingual socio-political discourses. Often educational strategies don't want to know about politically sensitive language issues, which under other policy frameworks would be understood as smack of institutional racism.

7. Conclusion and Future Directions

There is a higher level of multilingualism than is often realized. People typically think of multilingualism as at least some sort of less than full crippleness in a second language. In this minimal dictionary definition, someone could be multilingual if having taken 2 years of Spanish in high school. Looking around wide expanses of the globe, from Northern Scandinavia to Sri Lanka, there are areas where social harmony depends on the neighbourly use of multiple languages. And most of the world grows up in several. There are studies of profound levels of proficiency in more than 8 languages; and even prodigiously multilingual informants will sometimes encounter an unfamiliar or forgotten word, a cognitive gap which many experiences of multilingualism shows does not tend not to carry over between languages. Yet despite this folk categorization of truly monolingual people as a group barely large enough to be of interest to sociolinguists, most research on multilingualism considers the other end of the spectrum altogether. So in reckoning the benefits and challenges of multilingual encounter, the full expanse of interest must be taken into account. In the recent global concerns to re-align economic strategies, security, and power structures in the wake of the collapse of the old Communist order, multilingualism has become a growing concern. Various nations, particular in Central and Eastern Europe, are faced with the new competitive reality of Western markets and labour movements, and have come to view multilingualism as a commodity that is currently in need of dramatic market expansion. However, many states do not start with an even playing field; as Western consumer ideology spreads throughout the world, those already rich in key cultural capital enhance their edge.

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