

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309256520>

Introduction. From second language pedagogy to the pedagogy of 'plurilingualism': a possible paradigm shift?/De la didactique des langues à la didactique du plurilinguisme: un chan...

Article · November 2015

DOI: 10.31138/cmlr.71.4.324

CITATION

1

READS

171

2 authors:



Enrica Piccardo

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

98 PUBLICATIONS 285 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Isabelle Capron Puozzo

Haute Ecole Pédagogique Lausanne

61 PUBLICATIONS 57 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Developing illustrative descriptors of mediation for the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) [View project](#)



Innovation [View project](#)

Introduction

Enrica Piccardo and Isabelle Capron Puozzo

For nearly two decades, *plurilingualism*, which has recently become a buzzword in the specialized literature of language teaching, has grounded its progressive stance in the way we conceptualize language education. The term is per se an interesting one, not only inasmuch as it has taken an unusual path in moving from French into English, but above all, as it has transformed the existence of two different but supposedly synonymous prefixes – “pluri-” and “multi-” – into a lever for a crucial conceptual distinction.

In fact, according to the theoretical model of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) and related studies (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 1997),

[m]ultilingualism keeps languages distinct both at the societal level and at the individual level. It also tends to stress the separate, advanced mastery of each language a person speaks. Plurilingualism, on the contrary, is focused on the fact that languages interrelate and interconnect particularly, but not exclusively, at the level of the individual. It stresses the dynamic process of language acquisition and use, in contrast with coexistence and balanced mastery of languages (Piccardo, 2013a, p. 601).

On the “old continent,” there has been more permeability among the different pedagogical traditions, partly as a result of the impact of the CEFR, and the term *plurilingualism*, in consequence, has been more widely accepted, even in the English-speaking areas. On the other side of the ocean, there has been – and there still is – greater resistance to the adoption of this term. Significantly, the contributions to the literature embracing the term *plurilingualism* have been those of scholars acting as go-betweens, either by linking the European tradition to the North American or by drawing inspiration from contexts that do not belong to the so-called “inner circle” (Kachru, 1985) English-speaking countries.

In spite of various hesitations over terminological choices, though, there are important signs that a movement toward plurality and flexibility is gaining ground on the North American continent and is

generating intriguing conceptualizations, particularly those of *translanguaging* and *code-meshing*.

Anthropological observation of the daytoday communication practices between different language communities has helped to identify speakers' methods and strategies and to group them under the concept of *translanguaging*, which García (2012) defines as a natural communication process within a heterolingual family or community. Baker (2008) defines the concept of *translanguaging*, borrowed from Cen Williams who first used it during his research conducted in Wales, as a dynamic, structured use of two languages to support the cognitive processes of comprehension.

Canagarajah (2011), for his part, describes *translanguaging* as the communicative competence of a plurilingual speaker; he differentiates it from *code-meshing*, which is the integration of *translanguaging* into writing. *Code-meshing* would encompass the languages in a single system, while being open to other symbol systems, even beyond natural language itself. Thus, there are other symbol systems that could be used in writing, such as drawing, or musical or mathematical notation. The decision to use another symbol or another language is not arbitrary but involves focusing on the audience's need to be able to improve its understanding of the text. Thus, the term *code-meshing* brings out the linguistic, artistic, symbolic, and emotional creativity of learners, who come up with new solutions through neologizing and creating hybrid texts.

These terms *translanguaging* and *code-meshing*, together with several others, and the concepts they express are valuable in helping us capture the complexity of the present sociological and cultural landscape and the dynamic, ever-changing relationship that individuals maintain with one or more languages across the course of their life trajectories, as each of these terms captures a single dimension of a complex phenomenon – *plurilingualism*.

The time really seems to be right for a “possible paradigm shift,” as the title of this issue tentatively suggests. There are three kinds of consideration that justify a scholarly journal issue on *plurilingualism*: societal, epistemological, and linguistic.

First, increased mobility and diversity at the societal level is a global phenomenon that requires that we make a crucial political choice between, on the one hand, the recognition and enhancement of cultural, linguistic – and potentially economic – capital, and on the other, a lack of knowledge, together with the neglect and inevitable loss of this same capital.

Second, we are at a turning point epistemologically, where the limits of a linear vision that sees phenomena as discrete and independent

are increasingly apparent and room is being made for a new perspective that aims to overcome barriers and values complexity, 'métissage', cross-fertilization, inter- and transdisciplinarity, and symbolic spaces.

Finally, from a strict linguistic point of view, growing attention is being given to notions such as language families, metalinguistic awareness, and inter-comprehension of languages, which also contribute to reconceptualizing languages as dynamic and interdependent entities/phenomena.

Furthermore, *plurilingualism* is also a political program, and one of the pillars of the Council of Europe language policy, as it proposes a new vision of societies where citizens are expected to function in more than one language, building upon all their linguistic competences, even the most partial ones. The introduction of two foreign languages in school curricula in nearly all European countries is a major sign of this political dimension.

We do not insist on the term *plurilingualism* for partisan reasons: as Shakespeare reminds us "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (*Rom.* 2.2). *Plurilingualism* is a unique, overarching notion, implying a subtle but profound shift in perspective, both horizontally, toward the use of multiple languages, and vertically, toward valuing even the most partial knowledge of a language (and other para- and extralinguistic resources) as tools for facilitating communication.

The concept of *plurilingualism* can be considered from the perspective of continuity with, or a break from, the development of language teaching. There is continuity in that it would have been impossible to come up with the theory of *plurilingualism* without there having first been a revolution worthy of Copernicus: the transition from seeing language as an object of study to seeing language as a tool for communication, meaning (co)construction and socialization in communities of practice. There is discontinuity because *plurilingualism* leads to the idea of shared space, a space that becomes more complex and spreads over time, increasingly encompassing the symbolic dimension. This concept enables us to abandon the linear view of progress in a language and move toward an ecology of languages and cultures that are seen as aspects of a tapestry where the patterns are constantly being (re)woven.

The concept of *plurilingualism* is proposed as holistic and all-encompassing in that it seeks to provide a framework for thinking about the pluralistic and dynamic nature of any language learning (Coste, 2014). It enables a comprehensive view, capable of factoring in the positioning of the individual as a social agent who, on the strength of her/his

experience and her/his linguistic and cultural background, operates in and is affected by a multilingual space that is constantly changing.

In Europe and beyond, the *CEFR* (2001) played the role of founding text, paving the way for the implementation of a *plurilingual* education and pedagogy, a 'didactics of *plurilingualism*,' not just by laying the foundation for common, uniform, language proficiency assessment, but especially by setting out the characteristics of plurilingual competence in terms of an unbalanced, progressive, and decompartmentalized competence (Piccardo & Puozzo Capron, 2013). As early as 2008, the *Précis du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme* (Zarate, Lévy, & Kramersch) discussed several educational, instructional, and institutional initiatives for implementing *plurilingualism* in the European arena.

At the same time, the *CEFR* operated as both a catalyst for theoretical thinking and a bridge between theory and practice. This is especially seen in the design and gradual development of an action-oriented approach to language teaching rooted in complex tasks (Bourguignon, 2011). From the point of view of pedagogy, addressing the need for complexity through action-oriented tasks makes it possible to put into practice the innovation called for by the concept of *plurilingualism*. This involves a considerable paradigm shift, where a logic of learning through complexity is constructed through the use of the student's language repertoire, considered from a systemic perspective, and the cumulative logic of knowledge production is abandoned.

Plurilingual education and pedagogy promote, consider, and encourage taking the learner into account, from a perspective that is broad and holistic rather than narrow, compartmentalized, and limited. The *plurilingual* learner is welcomed, together with her/his autobiographical path (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2007), her/his pluralistic language and cultural background (*CEFR*, 2001, Moore, 2006), her/his emotional experience – (Pavlenko, 2007; Piccardo, 2013b; Puozzo Capron, 2013), and her/his body and subjectivity (Aden, 2013; Kramersch, 2009).

We have, therefore, a rich conceptual framework, which enables us to think about *plurilingualism* and a set of concepts that help us describe the world of ordinary *plurilingualism* – sometimes ignored or undervalued, of course, yet still very present. Several questions come to mind: To what extent do new concepts like *translanguaging* and *code-meshing* enable teachers to take action in their teaching/learning and evaluation practices? How can they change language teaching so as to move toward a paradigm of *plurilingualism* at school? What impacts do these new concepts have on the pedagogical aspect of *plurilingualism*? What teaching could help reproduce, elicit, or establish these spontaneous strategies outside the school setting? How can this *plurilingual* repertoire be instrumental in fostering learning?

This special issue's contributions offer both reflection and concrete courses of action for teaching and research to further the development of the concept of *plurilingualism*. The heterogeneity of contexts (Saudi Arabia, Mexico, China, Europe, Australia) helps by providing a broad panel and a multifaceted view of *plurilingualism*.

In the Australian context, Julia Rothwell's article "Laying Down Pale Memories: Learners Reflecting on Language, Self and Other in the Middle School Drama-Languages Classroom" addresses questions of how pluricultural competence is expressed, built, and changed in L2 learning through cognitive and emotional experiences that, over the long term, can only encourage commitment and motivation to learn a foreign language.

Colette Despaigne's article, "Autonomous Pluralistic Learning Strategies among Mexican Indigenous and Minority University Students Learning English," is an ethnographic study of the subtle, complex adjustments that these students face in the course of their learning. The factors that come into play as they position themselves in relation to a language (English) with a colonial heritage are analyzed, along with those that support their agency and encourage them to speak with their own voices and draw on their own cultures within a pluralistic framework of *plurilingual* and pluricultural learning strategy creation.

In her article, "A Comparison of L2 and L3 Learners' Strategy Use in School Settings," Åsta Haukås studies the context of Norwegian high-school students who are learning English (L2) and German (L3). The author presents the two results of her study, which seem to contradict the prevailing view that L3 learners use learning strategies more frequently and more effectively than L2 learners. While remaining cautious, she puts forth a set of hypotheses to explain those results – especially, the possibility that students' lack of awareness of the potential benefits of *plurilingualism* may affect their deploying of these strategies.

The distinctiveness of the research context in the article by Manale Aref and Mohamed Aref, "Un code-switching inédit en classe de langue: la déromanisation graphique et morphosyntaxique de la L2," helps open up a research area that is still relatively unknown. The authors study codeswitching with and without delatinization and its impact on learning, in the context of WhatsApp exchanges among students learning French in a Saudi Arabian university.

Christoph Hafner, Lindsay Miller, and David Chor Shing Li, in "Language Choice between Peers in Project-Based Learning: A Hong Kong Case Study of English Language Learners' Plurilingual Practices in Out-of-Class Computer-Mediated Communication," analyze the interactions among students in social groups (Facebook, WhatsApp)

and find, in light of a body of data, that Chinese is essentially used for group cohesion and English for project implementation.

The article by Laurent Gajo and Gabriela Steffen, "Didactique du plurilinguisme et alternance de codes: le cas de l'enseignement bilingue précoce," revisits the concept of codeswitching from the perspective of a pedagogy of *plurilingualism*. The authors compare two bilingual teaching situations: one where each teacher uses her/his own language and the other where the same teacher interacts in both languages. The comparative analysis of the data shows the effectiveness of a *plurilingual* space for language learning.

This promising research provides concrete examples for incorporating, thinking about, and working with *plurilingual* education and pedagogy.

References

- Aden, J. (2013). Apprendre les langues par corps. In Y. Abdelkader, S. Bazile, & O. Fertat (Eds.), *Pour un ThéâtreMonde. Plurilinguisme, interculturalité et transmission* (pp. 109–123). Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux.
- Baker, C. (2008). *Foundations of bilingualism education and bilingualism* (4th ed.). New York: Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C., Jones, B., & Lewis, G. (2012). Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 18*(7), 655–670.
- Bourguignon, C. (2010). *Pour enseigner les langues avec le CECRL. Clé et conseils*. Paris: Delagrave.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *Modern Language Journal, 95*(3), 401–417. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01207.x>
- Coste, D. (2014). Plurilingualism and the challenges of education. In P. da Grommes & A. Hu, *Plurilingual Education* (pp. 15–32). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Coste, D., Moore, D., & Zarate, G. (1997). *Compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle. Vers un Cadre Européen Commun de référence pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues vivantes. Études préparatoires*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Paris: Didier.
- García, O. (2012). Theorizing translanguaging for educators. In C. Celic & K. Seltzer (Eds.), *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators* (pp. 1–6). New York: CUNY-NYSIEB.
- Gohard-Radenkovic, A. (2007). Les expériences de mobilité des étudiants garantissent-elles l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie? Les conditions requises. *Synergies Europe, 2*, 37–49.
- Kachru, B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk & H. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the*

World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures (pp. 11–30).

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kramersch, C. (2009). *The Multilingual Subject. What language learners say about their experience and why it matters.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moore, D. (2006). *Plurilinguismes et école,* Paris: Editions Didier, collection LAL.

Pavlenko, A. (2005). *Emotions and multilingualism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511584305>.

Piccardo, E. (2013a). Plurilingualism and curriculum design: Towards a synergic vision. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 600–614. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tesq.110>

Piccardo, E. (2013b). Évolution épistémologique de la didactique des langues: la face cachée des émotions. *Lidil*, 48, 17–36.

Piccardo, E., & Puozzo Capron, I. (2013). La créativité pour développer la compétence plurilingue déséquilibrée. In G. Alao, M. Derivry, E. Suzuki, S. Yun-Roger (Eds.), *Didactique plurilingue et pluriculturelle l'acteur en contexte mondialisé* (pp. 23–36). Paris: Edition des Archives contemporaines.

Puozzo Capron, I. (2013). Pédagogie de la créativité. De l'émotion à l'apprentissage. *Education et socialisation – Les Cahiers du Cerfee*, 33, 1–14.

Zarate, G., Lévy, D., & Kramersch, C. (Eds.) (2008). *Précis du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme.* Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines.