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Superdiversity, Multilingualism, and Awareness

Ingrid Gogolin and Joana Duarte

Abstract

Paradoxically, individual and societal multilingualism are officially accepted and celebrated at a European level, the aim being that every European citizen becomes at least trilingual. Closer analyses of the discourse on multilingualism shows, however, that what are celebrated are the languages of European nation-states and officially acknowledged linguistic minorities (such as Frisian in the Netherlands, Welsh or Gaelic in the United Kingdom, Sorbian in Germany) but by no means all languages of the people who actually live in European countries. Embedded in this paradox, the present chapter will first provide an overview on the historical development of the term and concept of “superdiversity.” In the second part, we present current research on linguistic superdiversity and awareness from sociological/anthropological, sociolinguistic, education, and psycholinguistic perspectives. Methodological aspects and challenges will then be identified, followed by an outline of future directions in the field.

Keywords

Assimilation • Colonial migration • Ethnic residual • Ethnologue • Language awareness • Migrants’ heritage languages • Multilingual habitus • Plurilingual competences • Superdiversity approach • Translanguaging • Transmigration • Validiv project

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Early Developments

The history of mankind is constantly based on migration. The motives and forms of movement have changed radically over time, but the drive to passage from one place to another is still a central feature of people all around the world. Also the European geographic area has always been marked by large migratory movements, both to and from other areas of the world (Hobsbawm 1990). However, the globalization phenomena of the late twentieth century brought new dynamics to the field. We face rapidly shifting migration patterns, leading to swiftly changing population configurations especially in urban areas, the traditional centers of attraction for migrants. The worldwide diversification of migration flows results in shifts of the social, cultural, and linguistic texture of the sending regions as well as those that receive new populations. According to the United Nations, 231 million international migrants were estimated worldwide in 2013 – with an ongoing upward trend predicted (United Nations 2013).

Whereas migration as such is a constant feature, migration patterns differ across European countries. One marker of difference is colonial migration: Some countries, e.g., the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, or Portugal, faced considerable in-migration from former colonies, whereas in others (such as Germany) this was hardly the case. For all European countries, the end of World War II marked a considerable change of migration patterns. The first wave of migrants were refugees and repatriates, moving away from countries to which the war had thrown them or back to their historical areas of residence. In the early 1950s, another pattern of migration occurred: movers from Southern Europe to North-Western European countries for whom temporary work contracts had been politically arranged in order to support the development of the receiving countries' industries and economies. From the 1950s to the 1970s, large numbers of – mostly single – migrants left their home to work in the more industrialized regions of Europe. Typical countries of origin were Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, or what was then known as Yugoslavia, i.e., the Mediterranean area. Typical receiving areas were Germany, the Benelux countries, France, Denmark and Sweden, and England. Due to economic declines, namely the “energy crisis” in the early 1970s, most European receiving countries enacted a ban on recruitment of workers – which had an unexpected effect: whereas relatively small numbers of contract workers left,

considerably larger numbers of family members migrated to join those who had stayed, simply because family reunification was almost the only legal and tolerated way to get access to the receiving countries. This led to considerable societal changes across European countries. The migrant populations increasingly consisted of whole families – not only the persons with working contracts but moreover their spouses and children (Bade 2003). Consequently, public systems such as education, health, and welfare were increasingly challenged by the diversity of their clientele.

In the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, another pattern of migration that can be characterized by the metaphor of “diversification of diversity” (Martiniello 2004) arose. The number of countries or areas of origin of migrants coming to Europe enlarged considerably. Although emigrants still tend to settle down in regions that are close to their former *lebensraum*, a growing number of them take the burden of overcoming long distances to receiving areas. Moreover, the backgrounds, motives, aims, and channels of migration diversified. Migrants today are socially more stratified, generally more mobile, possess a greater variety of legal statuses and of religious orientations, and stay more deeply connected with their areas of origin than three decades ago.

In traditional views on migration-led diversity we can distinguish two main approaches: In the German speaking countries and others that are influenced by their philosophical tradition, it was presumed that the heterogeneity of migrants could effectively be seized by categorizing them by their “nation” and “culture” of origin; the two terms were broadly used as synonyms. In this perspective, migrants were considered to be “carriers” of the national/cultural inheritance of their country of origin and thus “alien” to “the culture” of their new environment. In the United Kingdom and other Northwestern European countries such as the Scandinavian, the notion of culture was complemented by considering ethnic, racial, and social features. Here it was stressed that differences between autochthonous and migrant populations were mainly due to dissimilarities deriving from ethnic or racial characteristics in connection with social class effects (Donald and Rattans 1992). In both perspectives, however, the consequences of migration were conceptualized as related to differences between those who had long been settled in the receiving countries and those who were newcomers.

The two mentioned mainstream positions, however, were accompanied by criticism that was especially directed towards the dichotomy of classification – old-established vs. newcomers in a society. It was argued that migration is not necessarily projected as a unidirectional process but rather as dynamic and undisclosed. The concept of “transmigration” was developed in order to allude to the fact that the historical view of leaving one place and settling down at another, connected to the notion of assimilation to the receiving area, was no longer appropriate for capturing the diversity of migration processes (Bade et al. 2011). One example: It is a general feature of contemporary migration that the connections with the region of origin or people deriving from there but living anywhere in the world are not cut but retained. Technical and economical advances such as electronic communication and cheap possibilities to travel support the development and

stability of transnational contacts and networks. Consequently, concepts of “assimilation” or “integration” no longer connote the unmitigated dismissal of links with the cultural and social heritage but rather a functional adaptation to the living conditions in the country of residence (“selective acculturation”, see Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In this perspective, growing diversity rather than homogeneity constitutes the future sociocultural reality.

On the basis of in-depth observations of migration patterns and effects on societal development in London, Steven Vertovec offered the term and concept of “super-diversity” in order to capture the complex constitution of contemporary migration flows and the societal diversity which is triggered by them (Vertovec 2007). The work drew on a range of data sources showing how diverse the UK’s and London’s population is with reference to net inflows, countries of origin, languages, religions, migration channels and immigration statuses, gender, age, space/place, and practices of transnationalism. Super-diversity is proposed as a “‘summary’ term to encapsulate a range of such changing variables surrounding migration patterns – and, significantly, their inter-linkages – which amount to a recognition of complexities that supersede previous patterns and perceptions of migration-driven diversity” (Meissner and Vertovec 2015, 542). The theoretical and empirical formation of the super-diversity concept is still on-going. Anyhow, it is useful as a heuristic metaphor, highlighting the dynamic changes in population configurations particularly arising from migration flows. With respect to research methodology, the super-diversity approach requires us to “re-tool our theories and methods, not least in order to move beyond what some call the ‘ethno-focal lens’ of most approaches within conventional migration studies” (ibid).

Major Contributions

The term and concept of super-diversity has been adopted by a variety of social science disciplines, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and education research among others (for an overview of recent research see Arnaut et al. 2016). Most investigations based on the concept are carried out in or about urban areas. In his first descriptions, Vertovec (2007) created the image of “the world in one city” by the example of London’s diverse population, representing a plenitude of origins and heritages, living conditions, and lifestyle. In the meantime, the term was applied to other urban areas around the world, not only in order to understand contemporary features of migration-induced diversity but also for historical analysis (see for example De Bock 2015).

Irrespective of the great attention paid to the term, however, research on the educational and linguistic developments arising from super-diverse constellations is as yet very sparse. This may not least be an effect of the traditional understanding that linguistic and cultural diversity is hardly to be found within a nation-state, as the “classical” European notion of nation is associated with the concept of a “homogenous” society, composed of people who share a common history, culture, and language (Gogolin 2002). This understanding is still deeply rooted in conventional

ways of looking at the composition of populations and languages (May 2012). An illustration of this is the notorious underestimation of the number of languages spoken in European countries as well as the attempts to quantify them as separate entities. Different from some other countries of the world that consider themselves as “traditional” immigration regions, such as Australia or Canada, there is little reliable or valid statistical information about the languages that are spoken by people living in Europe. Despite being only one possible step in understanding how migration movements leading to super-diversity actually affect the linguistic composition of European nations, an attempt to detect the languages in Europe can lead to a variety of answers.

From a political point of view, Europe represents 24 languages. These are the languages functioning as official and working languages in the European Union. Another roughly 60 languages are considered as “indigenous regional and minority languages” (Council of Europe 1992). These languages are officially respected, and their speakers may profit from support measures that are laid down in the “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.” In both perspectives, the languages that are spoken by migrants in Europe are not included in the picture.

When a more scientific point of view is applied, immigrant languages are taken into account, but the available data is nonetheless weak and based on traditional ways of counting languages. This can be illustrated by a comparison of information given by (a) “Ethnologue,” a comprehensive database “that catalogues all the known living languages in the world today” (www.ethnologue.com; see also Lewiset al. 2014) and (b) different regional surveys on the languages spoken at home by school children, conducted in some European cities (Table 1).

In this traditional perspective, languages are conceptualized as separate coexisting entities that influence each other in the case of contact. Language diversity in this perspective is seen as a constellation in which different languages coexist, each in its assigned space. The case of “linguistic minority” occurs if the space devoted to one language is at the same time used (or claimed) by (an)other language (s). The super-diversity perspective shows that this is a brittle perception as a lot of

Table 1 Number of languages spoken in five European nations according to different sources.

Country	Number of languages (Ethnologue 2015)	City	“Languages spoken at home” according to regional surveys
Germany	70	Hamburg	120 ^a
Portugal	10	Lisbon	80 ^b
United Kingdom	59	London	233 ^c
The Netherlands	55	The Hague	88 ^d
Sweden	38	Gothenburg	75 ^d

^aFreie and Hansestadt Hamburg (2011)

^bMateus et al. (2008)

^cEversley et al. (2010)

^dExtra and Yağmur (2004)

coexisting languages, jargons, vernaculars claim the same time and space. Moreover, the linguistic composition of regions is most probably object to rapid and permanent change, as can be shown by “linguistic landscaping” (Gorter 2006). In a globalized world, speakers may have to change their language behavior and practice according to new constellations in their immediate environment or to other imperatives, e.g., traveling abroad. This observation calls for a re-orientation of fundamental concepts in research on language, be it with regards to socio- or psycholinguistic issues or be it from an educational linguistics point of view. The concept of languages as separate, bounded entities has become questionable, and new approaches to capture the dynamics, instability, and unpredictability of the particular social and linguistic conditions in a globalized world are necessary.

An attempt to shed light on the concrete manifestation of language in super-diverse constellations derives from sociolinguistic research that identifies “new repertoires” of speakers. This line of research is based on a paradigm shift with respect to essential ideas about (a) languages themselves, (b) language groups and their speakers, and (c) actual communication practices. The researchers observe “mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding” (Blommaert and Rampton 2011, 4) as relevant for the study of these three aspects. The conceptualization of languages as “bounded systems linked to bounded communities” (ibid, 5) and areas is depicted as an ideological artifact.

Concerning language groups and their speakers, the super-diversity framework calls for a shift towards the observation of “communities of practice” (ibid). Traditional research on language groups and speakers is grounded on binary categorizations. Typical concepts are the “native speaker” (vs. the “nonnative”), “mother tongue,” “heritage language,” or “first language” (vs. “foreign” or “second language”). These concepts are based on the notion of monolingualism as “normality” and all other manifestations of language constellations or practices as exceptions. By contrast, the super-diversity approach is focused on linguistic diversity as the “normal” constellation. Within this, the individual speaker possesses of “plurilingual repertoires” which are composed of a varying skills pertaining to different “languages,” dialects, or registers, that may be mastered to distinctive degrees and fulfill different communicative functions. The speakers’ repertoires are of a fluid and partly fragmentary nature. In order to detect their functionalities and appropriateness, standard concepts such as “correct,” “native” miss the target as they exclude the nuances that actually occur in super-diverse constellations. In this perception, the term “multilingual” is used in order to refer to the linguistic composition of groups of plurilingual individuals.

The methodological requirements of research in the super-diversity framework call for the integration of traditional concepts and methods from social science research with new approaches that allow for “highlighting the importance of mutual relations, interactions and influences among residents of different origins and backgrounds, including the experience of both immigrants and autochthonous populations” (Padilla et al. 2014, 621). It is thus not focused on “the migrant population” but on the constellations of interaction that build “communities of practice” (sensu Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Previous definitions of repertoires,

based on the triad of language resources, knowledge of language (“competence”), and community, are revised in light of the complexity of strategies and channels through which language is acquired and used. A new typology of language learning trajectories proposes to include a variety of factors such as length of socialization, contexts of acquisition, purposes of acquisition, types of languages learned, and levels of performance in order to analyze “superdiverse repertoires” (Blommaert and Backus 2011, 22). Some attempts to identify the respective fluid communicative abilities and practices have been published already, in conjunction with the coinage of new terms for characterizing language usage. Examples of such neologisms are “crossing” (Rampton 1995), “polylingualism” (Jørgensen 2008), and “translanguaging” (García 2009) among others.

Education research has dealt with the issue of linguistic diversity primarily within the scope of intercultural education, second language pedagogies, and educational linguistics. Similar to the superdiversity approach, a main motive of research addresses the question how the significant educational disadvantages found for plurilingual pupils in most receiving countries can be reduced. Large-scale international studies on educational success such as PISA or TIMSS recurrently reveal disadvantages of migrant children (OECD 2014; Martin and Mullis 2013). The analysis of their approaches and results shows, yet, that they cannot be sufficiently explained by the traditional and well-tried concepts which are applied, such as sociocultural strata, cultural capital, or educational aspirations. Although these concepts explain a considerable part of the divergent success rates, another substantial residual remains unexplained. In current research this is often referred to as the “ethnic residual” which can as yet not be clarified by the concepts that have been applied. The term derives from research on the effects of resource-based differences in intergenerational status transmission in migrant families and educational outcomes of migrant children. It can be shown that after control of parental resources (namely economic, cultural, and social capital) differences in educational success rates of different migrant groups still exist. This finding is interpreted as “ethnic residual,” which remains unexplained in the framework of traditional explanation models of educational disparities (Nauck and Lotter 2015).

The lack of explanations is especially evident with respect to the role and significance of linguistic diversity as the cause of educational disparities. In mainstream research as the above mentioned, it is claimed that linguistic assimilation to the majority language is key to the successful integration of migrants in the host communities and their schools (Esser 2009). Living in a multilingual constellation is identified as a “risk factor” for educational attainment (Müller and Stanat 2006). On the other hand, a number of studies unveil the individual and educational advantages that are bound to growing up and living in a multilingual environment. On the individual level, namely, cognitive advantages have been identified that can serve as a positive potential for the learning of languages as well as for learning in general (Bialystok and Poarch 2014). On the level of classroom practice it could be shown that bi- or multilingual approaches bear the chance of advantage both for students who live a plurilingual life and for those who come from monolingual families (August and Shanahan 2006). It has also been shown that language related

explanations for school success can be attributed less to the question of which language is used in family and outside school. More relevant seems to be the “mode” of language socialization and usage. Positive effects on educational attainment can be assigned to the literacy practices in families, regardless of the languages in which they are practiced (Scheele et al. 2010).

The number of research projects taking up these results and combining them with a superdiversity perspective is growing in education research. Recent studies attempt to reveal evidence for the potential of explicitly using linguistic diversity in classrooms as a tool for raising academic achievement (Duarte 2011). Especially experimental projects on the question how to make multilingualism a resource for learning in mainstream classrooms have tentatively shown positive results (Bourne 2013; Sierens and Avermaet 2014). The “secret” of such models seems to arise from their flexibility (Anderson 2008), specifically allowing for language comparison and cross-language transfer (Cummins 2005), and the acknowledgment of language mixing as tools for learning, not only of multilingual pupils.

The practical development of teaching approaches in the spirit of taking advantage of plurilingual competences is much more advanced than empirical research on the potential and efficacy of respective models. Nevertheless, some of the teaching concepts that are actually discussed seem to point in the right direction. García’s concept of “translanguaging” is probably the most disseminated of these approaches (García and Wei 2014). The concept refers to the dynamic and flexible use of linguistic resources that are typical of plurilingual speakers. Empirical research so far has focussed on analyzing classroom interaction by zooming in on the ways the translanguaging phenomena are used for constructing meaning, acquiring knowledge, and negotiating in diverse classrooms. Criticism of this approach stresses its lack of empirical verification in terms of the effects on educational outcomes. Further skepticism identifies it as being suitable for multilinguals only. A general skepticism is uttered towards the inclusion of migrant languages in mainstream classroom interaction. Some studies, however, do suggest that their integration in classroom discourse opens up better chances of educational success for all pupils (Moodley 2007).

A specific approach for teaching language to all pupils is centered on the concept of “language awareness.” This term is used in a variety of ways but in any case related to the findings that emphasize the cognitive advantages of bi- or plurilingualism (Hélot and Young 2006). Generally speaking, language awareness approaches aim at raising four dimensions of language competence: (1) revealing awareness of the individual’s dispositions and motivations for language learning and use (socio-affective dimension); (2) controlling of the linguistic and communicative biography in new interaction situations (management of linguistic and communicative repertoires dimension); (3) coping with acquisition processes (management of learning repertoires dimension); and (4) reflecting upon the interactive processes which characterize language contact situations (management of interaction dimension) (Andrade et al. 2003, 489). The classroom activities aim at establishing associations between different languages (minority, immigrant, language of instruction, and foreign languages) at fostering intercomprehension and at a pedagogy that attempts to break with the segmentation and isolation of language teaching methods

at schools (Candelier 2004, also in this volume). Such a pedagogical approach holds the potential to raise the achievement of all pupils.

The rise of such alternative approaches to the still widely spread monolingual self-concept in mainstream education, second language, and bilingual education has been termed “the multilingual turn” in languages education (Conteh and Meier 2014; May 2014) and consists of a growing body of theories, pedagogies, and practices. Basic notions deriving from the monolingual bias, such as that of the idealized native speaker, are criticized under this new perspective of language education. Instead, advocates of the “turn” stress out the potentials and complexity of multiple competencies of multilingual learners as necessities for successful language instruction.

Work in Progress

With the exception of the above-mentioned recent development (Conteh and Meier 2014; May 2014), the application of a superdiversity framework to research on language and language learning is as yet scarce. Nonetheless, we can observe a growing attention to this theoretical perspective, not least due to the fact that a high number of phenomena that occur as concomitant features of recent migration patterns can neither be explained nor handled by the application of traditional linguistic, social, and education science concepts, methodologies, or practical approaches. The following examples of work in progress can show the range of activities that strive for better understanding and explaining of linguistic superdiversity or for the development of activities that support practitioners or policy makers to deal with superdiversity.

The area to be mentioned here is concerned with the re-tooling of *conceptual knowledge* about language development and language practice. Two approaches can be observed in this field: (a) the attempt to a holistic understanding of language development under the conditions of linguistic superdiversity and (b) the “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of linguistically diverse interaction and ways of meaning making.

Research projects which are carried out in the first sense can be based on the observation that in many European countries students are likely to develop multilingual abilities in the course of their school career. Two types of students can be distinguished: first, students who develop plurilingualism in a *lebensweltlich* (Habermas 1973) manner, i.e., by living and acquiring languages in a context in which more than one language is used for the management of everyday life and second, students who live their everyday life preferably in one language but get acquainted with other languages by foreign language teaching at school. In a growing number of European countries the first “foreign language” is offered to students in primary education. Many of the students, at least those who are learning in academic tracks, receive instruction in a second or third foreign language during their school career. Both types of students have foreign language instruction in common. Moreover, both have personal encounter with languages in everyday life in common, be it the languages of the *lebensweltlich* multilingual peers, be it

linguistic diversity in the public space, be it through media or while traveling. In a traditional perspective, all the nuances of constellations of language acquisition and learning were subsumed in a binary perspective as “mono-” or “bilingual” development, bilingualism rated as the prototype of any kind of diversity. Consequently, the terms “bi-” and “multilingualism” were often used as synonyms.

In innovative research projects, this perspective on language development will be questioned in order to provide fundamental insights into the individual development of plurilingual competencies that are acquired under different conditions. In longitudinal studies, the factors (both linguistic and nonlinguistic) that positively or negatively influence plurilingual development have to be identified as well as the effects these factors have on educational attainment. Key questions are: Which linguistic, personal, and contextual conditions influence plurilingual development positively or negatively? How do these conditions change over time? And how do the different languages interact in the individual and influence each other?

Respective research projects will aim to contribute not only to language development in a narrow sense but also to pinpointing the circumstances that would be required for sustainable safeguarding of societal coherence in a linguistically and culturally superdiverse population. The assumption is that strengthening young plurilinguals’ resources and potentials, including their *lebensweltlich* abilities, can contribute significantly to this goal. The answers to the research questions should allow for the identification of innovative courses of pedagogical action that highlight the positive effects of linguistic diversity, thereby improving the educational opportunities not least for young migrants.¹

Recent projects aiming at the description and understanding of linguistically diverse interaction and ways of meaning making can be found with respect to school contexts as well as extra curricular activities. In their analysis of interactions within Chinese and Gujarati community schools in the UK, Creese and Blackledge (2010) describe flexible translanguaging practices within such bilingual language teaching ecologies and propose the use of instructional approaches based on the use of two or more languages alongside each other as a means of fostering knowledge across languages. Their approach focuses on identifying knowledge and skills that participants use while translanguaging and which could thus be the basis for a flexible multilingual pedagogy. These include, among others, the use of translation across languages, the practice of translanguaging to explore identities and negotiate meanings, or the endorsement of simultaneous literacies.

Translanguaging practices in mainstream classes have so far been less investigated. A video-study analyzing multilingual peer interaction in subject-matter classes (Bührig and Duarte 2013) described how plurilingual adolescents translanguague in order to negotiate and acquire subject content. While the language of instruction is used in terms of identifying and exploring technical concepts, the other languages (in this case Russian, Turkish, Twi, Bosnian, and Dari, among others) mostly serve

¹A research project investigating this type of questions started in 2015 in Germany, see www.mez.uni-hamburg.de (July 2015).

to paraphrase and summarize the content and to negotiate meanings as well as linguistic aspects related to fulfilling the task in the language of instruction. Similar to Creese and Blackledge's analysis, the study shows how a flexible pedagogical approach towards the use of several languages for learning can bring about a valorization of pupils' linguistic resources.

Problems and Difficulties

Investigation under the superdiversity lens bears with it several challenges. A first set of problems is related to the complex methodological issues attached to investigating repertoires and their speakers in ways that can explore the full manifestations of their linguistic resources and their impact in several societal contexts. The framework has indeed shed some light on the shortcomings of language assessment in relation to plurilingual speakers. One manifestation of this can be seen in a realization of the limitations of classical self-ratings of language proficiencies for capturing superdiverse repertoires. Such self-ratings will most likely be embedded in traditional notions of language and language competences, which do not include the complexity on the one hand, the fluidity and "incompleteness" of plurilingual repertoires on the other hand. The need to complement self-rating scales by assessing productive and/or receptive language skills of plurilingual speakers is a current challenge for language assessment in multilingual constellations. This raises several hurdles concerning both (a) the languages that are actually selected for testing and (b) the norms used as criteria in their evaluation. Regarding (a), the tendency is to choose the major immigrant languages of a given region to include in the testing process along with the host community languages (Berendes et al. 2013). This approach stems from the association between nations and dominant languages, but anyhow it opens up new possibilities of analyzing diverging repertoires of different languages in a more holistic approach. Concerning (b), a challenge arises from the use of monolingual "native-like" norms to comparatively assess proficiency of plurilinguals. Shohamy claims that "[o]verlooking the construct of multilingualism is likely to result in language tests of limited evidence of validity" (2011, 419), thus not measuring what they set out to assess. One consequence of this discussion is increased efforts to explicitly take the language learners' developmental stages into consideration in the design of language tests and in the interpretation of their scores. The development of such tests is, however, a complex and expensive endeavor; as yet, there is no valid, i.e., psychometrically tested instrument available – to the best of our knowledge.

Associated with the need to trace the trajectories of plurilingual language development, and the manifold factors influencing it, is the claim for longitudinal designs enabling the identification of causal inferences around the patterns of change. Due to their longevity and complexity, large-scale longitudinal designs are hard to fund and require oversized starting cohorts in order to cater for phenomena such as panel attrition (i.e., the loss of individuals from a cohort that is being studied). They would, however, shed light on the intricacies of language interdependency over time.

Moreover, they would overcome the actual state of speculation with respect to language development that is based on cross-sectional research with different age groups. The results could serve as basis for designing flexible curricula and pedagogical approaches that react on validated knowledge about language development in superdiverse constellations.

With respect to pedagogical practice, yet another challenge arises from the lack of experimental studies with controlled samples in order to learn more about the adequacy and concrete effects of teaching and learning approaches focussing on the active use of plurilingual practices for teaching and learning. Most research conducted so far is of a small-scale qualitative nature, thus there are merely a few results that can only very cautiously be communicated to teacher training programs and pedagogical practice in general at this point.

Future Directions

A strong future direction within the investigation of superdiversity, pluri-, and multilingualism is related to the investigation of the role of migrants' heritage languages for the development of academic language proficiency and for enhancing the school outcomes of all pupils. These studies focus on an analysis of language-overarching features that may facilitate the mutual support between heritage languages, school languages, and all further languages that have to be learned. The emphasis on language features that are interdependent and interwoven can bring with it a renewed valorization of migrants' heritage languages as rightful parts of complex repertoires, contributing to elevating proficiencies as a whole (Duursma et al. 2007). Among others, these can be related to pragmatic features, such as elaborated narrating skills, but also to meta-linguistic knowledge on the formal and linguistic requirements of different school genres across the range of school subjects.

A second issue towards to which recent efforts are being directed relates to the investigation of the manifold factors affecting plurilingual language development in its relation to school outcomes. Traditionally, background variables such as migration, socioeconomic status, cultural and social capital, and generation were taken into account in empirical studies with a social science background aiming at explaining performance disparities or growth patterns. In light of the superdiversity framework, the further diversification of such aspects has to be taken into account, and alternative or additional aspects may have greater influence than is known yet. One example refers to the diversity of language practices at home and its relation to school requirements and outcomes. A particular emphasis has been put on the literacy practices of multilingual families and their potential to enhance the academic language skills of their children (Leseman et al. 2007). Available studies indicate that multilingual practices constitute the "normal" behavior of migrant families and their offspring, but the languages serve different purposes. While heritage languages are used in the interaction with parents and relatives, often on migration-specific and family issues, the host community languages are used with siblings, and they serve for literacy activities and literacy-oriented subjects (Ilić 2012).

In terms of transfer, the trend towards designing interventions to influence pedagogical practice will most certainly be reinforced. One current example is the Validiv project in Flanders that aims at valorizing the linguistic repertoires of pupils within primary education (e.g., English, French, immigrant languages). The project includes 30 experimental and 30 control schools. Preliminary results show the power of translanguaging practices for learning in multilingual primary schools and how this can be systematically supported by adequate pedagogical models (Sierens and Ramaut 2013). Such methodologically sound designs, using both social sciences approaches and qualitative methods to highlight processes and effects of pedagogical activities, will constitute a future trend in the field.

Research using the superdiversity framework can contribute to the creation and valorization of a “multilingual habitus,” explicitly fostering the active use of the whole linguistic repertoires of pupils in both language and subject-matter classes throughout schooling. In light of demographic trends and predictions of future migration patterns, a multilingual habitus, i.e., the self-concept that linguistic diversity is “normal” in a society and can be mastered by all their members, will be a key to social coherence. While many criticize it as being just a trendy new concept to look at the same old phenomena, super-diversity has the potential to become a key concept for applied linguistics in terms of a paradigm shift on the way languages, language skills, and plurilingual speakers are perceived within education and societies.

Cross-References

- ▶ [English as a Lingua Franca and Multilingualism](#)
- ▶ [Immigration/Flow, Hybridity, and Language Awareness](#)
- ▶ [Linguistic Landscape and Multilingualism](#)

Related Articles in the Encyclopedia of Language and Education

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