



AN ADVANCED GUIDE TO MULTILINGUALISM

Larissa Aronin

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EDINBURGH
University Press

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Cover image: David Wittig

Cover design: Stuart Dalziel

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
The Tun – Holyrood Road
12(2f) Jackson's Entry
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ

Typeset in 10.5/12pt Janson MT
by Cheshire Typesetting Ltd, Cuddington, Cheshire, and
printed and bound in Great Britain

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 3563 4 (hardback)
ISBN 978 0 7486 3564 1 (paperback)
ISBN 978 0 7486 3565 8 (webready PDF)
ISBN 978 1 3995 0114 9 (epub)

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	x
<i>Foreword</i> —Muiris Ó Laoire	xi
Introduction: How do we approach multilingualism?	1
Part I: The field of multilingualism	
1 What is multilingualism?	11
1.1 What is multilingualism about?	11
1.1.1 Definitions of multilingualism	12
1.1.2 Are bilingualism and multilingualism the same or different?	13
1.2 Individual multilingualism and societal multilingualism	14
1.2.1 Individual multilingualism	14
1.2.2 Societal multilingualism	15
1.3 Historical multilingualism and current multilingualism	16
1.4 How many languages and speakers are there in the world?	18
1.5 The purview of multilingualism	20
Summary	23
Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	24
2 Multilingualism as an exceptional resource	27
2.1 Resources of multilingualism	27
2.2 How unique are human language and the ability for multilingualism?	28
2.2.1 Pavlov's second and first signal systems	28
2.2.2 Animal communication: can animals be multilingual?	29
<i>Is using more than one communicative system humans' exclusive characteristic?</i>	30
2.3 Human language	30
2.3.1 Language universals	31
2.3.2 Language features in different languages	35
<i>Writing systems and scripts</i>	35
<i>Numerals</i>	36
<i>Basic colour terms</i>	36
<i>Time and space terms</i>	37
2.3.3 Linguistic relativity/linguistic determinism hypothesis	38

Summary	39
Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	39
3 Multilingualism as modern reality and field of knowledge	42
3.1 Social awareness in languages	42
3.1.1 Paradigms and stages	42
3.1.2 The monolingual stage	43
3.1.3 The bilingual stage	44
3.1.4 The multilingual stage	47
3.2 The New Linguistic Dispensation	49
Summary	50
Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions, exercises	51

Part II: Languages

4 Languages of the world	57
4.1 Languages and dialects	57
4.1.1 What is a language?	57
4.1.2 What is a dialect?	60
4.1.3 Dialect continuum	61
4.2 Language standardisation	61
4.2.1 Standardisation and codification	61
4.2.2 Pluricentric languages	62
4.3 Linguistic distance	62
4.4 Kachru's Circles and the World Englishes	63
4.4.1 Performance varieties	66
4.5 Language varieties resulting from language contact	67
4.5.1 Pidgins and creoles	67
4.5.2 Bilingual mixed languages	71
Summary	71
Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	72
5 Classifications of languages	75
5.1 Linguistic classifications of languages	75
5.1.1 Word order typology	75
5.1.2 Linguistic structural typology	76
5.1.3 Genetic classification of languages	78
5.2 Sociolinguistic classifications of languages	79
5.2.1 The galactic model (de Swaan)	80
5.2.2 Economic-related hierarchies	80
5.3 Distinct categories of languages	82
5.3.1 Lingua franca	82
<i>English as a lingua franca (ELF)</i>	83
5.3.2 Sign languages	84
5.3.3 Artificial (constructed) languages	88
Summary	89

Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	89
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Part III: Multilingualism in society

6 Multilingualism at the societal level: basic concepts	95
6.1 Language contact	95
6.1.1 Borrowing	96
6.1.2 <i>Sprachbund</i>	98
6.2 Speech community	98
6.3 Diglossia	101
6.4 Domain	102
Summary	103
Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	103
7 Societal multilingualism: multilingual countries and regions	106
7.1 How do countries become multilingual?	106
7.2 Roles and status of languages in multilingual countries and organisations	107
7.3 Diversity of multilingualism	110
7.3.1 Measures of linguistic diversity	110
7.3.2 How multilingual countries differ from each other	111
<i>Correlation of individual and societal multilingualism in multilingual countries</i>	111
<i>Proximate and integrative multilingualism</i>	112
<i>Challenges and issues</i>	112
7.3.3 Multilingual regions and countries: Africa and India	113
<i>Africa</i>	113
<i>India</i>	116
Summary	119
Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	119

Part IV: Individual multilingualism

8 Individual multilingualism: psycholinguistic and cognitive dimensions	125
8.1 Who are the multilinguals?	125
8.2 Special features and language behaviour of multilinguals	125
8.2.1 Complexity and emergent qualities	126
8.2.2 Features of linguistic and learning behaviour	126
8.2.3 Extent of language skills used by multilinguals	127
8.2.4 Cross-linguistic interactions	128
8.2.5 Multilingual brains	130
8.3 Multilinguals in conditions of health and decline	132
8.3.1 Multilinguals throughout their lifespan	132
<i>Early and late multilinguals</i>	132
<i>Age and additional language acquisition</i>	133

	<i>The impact of multilingualism in situations of healthy ageing and disease</i>	133
	<i>Cognitive reserve</i>	134
	Summary	135
	Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	136
9	Individual multilingualism: social dimensions	138
9.1	Multilinguality – the identity of a multilingual	138
9.1.1	Expansion of the identity concept	138
	<i>Technological impact on multilingual identity</i>	139
	<i>Multimodal dimensions of multilingual identity</i>	140
9.1.2	Multilinguality	141
9.2	Trajectories of becoming multilingual	142
9.2.1	Simultaneous and successive patterns of acquisition	142
9.2.2	Hoffmann's typology of trilinguals	143
9.2.3	Becoming or not becoming multilingual: challenges and choices of multilingual families	144
9.3	Various categories of multilinguals	145
9.3.1	Polyglots	145
9.3.2	Other exceptional multilinguals	148
	<i>'Savants'</i>	148
	<i>Deaf and hard-of-hearing language users</i>	149
	Summary	149
	Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	150

Part V: How we experience and study multilingualism

10	The ways we experience, treat and use languages	155
10.1	The way we treat languages – language nominations	155
10.1.1	What are language nominations?	156
10.1.2	How do language nominations emerge?	156
10.1.3	How expedient are language nominations?	157
10.2	The way we use multiple languages: language repertoire and Dominant Language Constellations	159
10.2.1	Language repertoires	159
10.2.2	Dominant Language Constellations	160
	<i>DLC is a unit</i>	160
	<i>DLC maps</i>	160
	<i>DLC is adaptable and dynamic</i>	160
	<i>Languages of a DLC are not arranged in any built-in hierarchy</i>	161
	<i>DLC is multimodal</i>	163
10.3	The way we experience languages	163
10.3.1	Translanguaging and code-switching	163
	<i>What is translanguaging?</i>	164
	<i>What is code-switching?</i>	165
	<i>Code-switching or translanguaging?</i>	166

10.3.2	Intercomprehension/receptive multilingualism	167
10.3.3	The material culture of multilingualism	169
	Summary	170
	Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	171
11	Methods of studying multilingualism	174
11.1	Features of multilingualism research	174
11.1.1	Characteristics of research in multilingualism	174
11.1.2	Challenges	175
11.2	Research methodologies and types of research	176
11.2.1	Philosophies, methodologies and types of research in multilingualism	176
11.2.2	Quantitative research	179
	<i>Language demography</i>	180
11.2.3	Qualitative research	182
	<i>Ethnographic research</i>	182
11.2.4	Holistic and complexity research	183
	<i>Complexity approach</i>	183
	<i>Complex interactions</i>	184
	<i>Sensitivity to initial conditions</i>	185
	<i>Emergence</i>	185
11.2.5	Triangulation	186
	Summary	187
	Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	187
12	Models of multilingualism	190
12.1	What are theories and what are models?	190
12.1.1	Theories	190
12.1.2	Models	192
12.2	Models specific to multilingualism	192
12.2.1	Factor Model by Hufeisen	192
12.2.2	Dynamic Model by Herdina and Jessner	194
12.2.3	Biotic Model by Aronin and Ó Laoire	197
12.2.4	Role–Function Model by Williams and Hammarberg	197
12.2.5	Multilingual Processing Model by Meißner	198
12.3	Modelling in multilingualism	199
12.3.1	DLC modelling	199
	Summary	202
	Further reading, chapter review, reflective questions and exercises	203
	Conclusion: Reflecting on multilingualism	206
	<i>Bibliography</i>	208
	<i>Languages index</i>	227
	<i>Subject index</i>	231

List of Figures

3.1	The New Linguistic Dispensation embraces multi-, bi- and monolingual arrangements.	50
4.1	The three Circles of World Englishes (after Kachru 1985: 12).	64
4.2	Graddol's modification of Kachru's Circles (Graddol 1997: 10, © British Council, reproduced with permission).	65
5.1	The world language hierarchy (Graddol 1997: 13, © British Council, reproduced with permission).	81
5.2	A language hierarchy for India (Graddol 1997: 12, © British Council, reproduced with permission).	81
9.1	Multilinguality as an ecosystem (Gabryś-Barker 2005: 35, reproduced with permission).	143
10.1	The Russian-speaking community in Israel: language repertoire and Dominant Language Constellation.	161
10.2	Selected Dominant Language Constellation maps (after Kannangara 2020, reproduced with permission). (a) Nursery and preschool. (b) Secondary and upper school. (c) University education – Bachelor's. (d) Current Dynamic Language Constellation.	162
11.1	Types of quantitative research.	180
11.2	Types of research used in multilingualism studies.	186
12.1	(a and b) Previous views of language acquisition development in time (after Herdina and Jessner 2002, reproduced with permission).	195
12.2	Learner multilingualism: overall development (Herdina and Jessner 2002: 124, reproduced with permission).	196
12.3	Plasticine® DLC models comparing Russian/Ukrainian/English and English/Russian/Hebrew.	200
12.4	(a and b) Creating one's own DLC.	201
12.5	Computer-generated 3D Dominant Language Constellations.	201

Foreword

Multilingualism matters in a world characterised by widespread linguistic and cultural diversity. Indeed, multilingualism is the norm and not the exception (Aronin and Singleton 2008). It is not surprising, therefore, that much has been written about multilingualism, especially since around 1990. Before the new century began, the tendency in research was to separate theories of bilingualism and trilingualism. The boundaries were clear and unobscured. Trilingualism was relatively under-researched compared to the volumes of international research on bilingualism that emerged from the 1970s. It was in 2003, at Munster Technological University in Tralee, Ireland, where I now write this Foreword, that the third international conference on trilingualism was held, and here that the fact that research studies on bilingualism and trilingualism had started to morph into studies of multilingualism began to be heralded. The International Association of Multilingualism was founded at this conference and the *International Journal of Multilingualism* thereafter became the arena for a research focus on multilingualism, as distinct from trilingualism. The research agenda appeared to have shifted from trilingualism to multilingualism and this trend continues. While many authors, like De Houwer and Ortega (2018) and Baker and Wright (2017), for example, acknowledge the existence of trilingualism, the discipline now falls more and more under the umbrella of bilingualism or multilingualism, meaning the acquisition of more than two languages or language varieties. There was a growing realisation that multilingualism was not exceptional but rather ‘a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority in the world’ (Edwards 1994: 1).

Since the conference, many research studies have renewed our understanding of multilingualism but there is still a need for further work. More and more theories of language are needed to explain and account for the day-to-day and real-world practices of multilinguals, including borrowing, transfer, mixing and translanguaging. More research is needed, particularly on the challenges posed by multilingual education, and especially in the design of curricula, curricular materials and pedagogical strategies. Nonetheless, since the turn of the millennium, research theories and approaches have become more dynamic and fast-changing. The concept and practice of translanguaging among bilinguals and multilinguals, in particular, is receiving increased attention in research, although its meaning is still developing. There has also been a growing number of studies on the extent to which language policies support or hinder societal and individual, bilingual and multilingual development. Different perspectives of academics and practitioners

working in indigenous languages in different sociolinguistic contexts have also emerged, although the medium, for the most part, has been and continues to be English. More theoretically and empirically based insights are required that respond to the increasingly complex demands of multilingual societies in a globalised world.

Further research is also needed in the domain of plurilingualism, which was embraced by the Council of Europe at the end of the last century and now defines its approach to language policy. Plurilingualism focuses on the individual's ability to use two or more languages in different contexts, with varying levels of competence in each language. Not all individuals living in a multilingual region, country or city will use more than one language or language variety. People possess differing language competences. Each language learner's individual linguistic repertoire develops and changes over time as more languages are encountered. What was significant about the development of the concept of plurilingualism was the fact that it challenged the pre-existing idea of keeping languages separate at all times. The theoretical foundations of plurilingualism and its correlation to multilingualism have not been fully addressed; nor has sufficient attention been paid to how plurilingualism and multilingualism are being dealt with in the classroom, particularly in early education settings where languages other than the language of the school are often discouraged.

With the rapid shift in thinking and emerging theoretical insights in the discipline, the need is apparent for a textbook on multilingualism, in which important terms and key concepts are introduced and discussions about theories and different methodological approaches are presented. For research students and seasoned researchers alike, there is a need always to return sensibly to the beginnings and foundational concepts that precede and influence discussions and research procedures.

This textbook by Larissa Aronin offers both the research community and future research students access to and information about past and current foci of international research interest on multilingualism, as well as signposting new trends in and possibilities for research in the area. The twelve assembled chapters, each written by a leading researcher in the area, elucidate some of the most recent research findings and their theoretical underpinnings. All aspects and dimensions of multilingualism are covered and treated comprehensively, including definitions, multilingualism as resource and science, the classification and hierarchy of languages, societal and individual aspects, nominations and constellations, methodology and models. Each chapter is underpinned by a comprehensive and scholarly review of relevant research that, more often than not, reveals fresh perspectives, offers discerning insights and proposes challenging possibilities for future research.

An Advanced Guide to Multilingualism is intended for use and study by graduate students; as such, the content appears to be appropriate for expanding their understanding of a range of concepts inherent in the interdisciplinarity that underpins multilingualism. All the topics that one would expect to be covered in such a textbook are discussed in relation to multilingualism in its complex guises and historical and contemporary contexts. There are important insights in the closing chapters regarding the contextual factors and the constantly evolving dominant discourses that challenge contemporary thinking on multilingualism. The growing body of

work that helps us understand and research multilingualism is treated comprehensively, with the help of examples and illustrations. The author has presented a text that offers empirical and conceptual insights focusing on the different dimensions of individual and societal multilingualism.

The book lends itself well to face-to face delivery in the lecture hall and to use in private study. Each of the twelve chapters deals separately with the key concepts that underpin multilingualism and correspond with a module semester of twelve lectures or workshops. Knowledge is built incrementally, moving from definitions to a graded introduction of theoretical discussions. The judicious use, here and there, of questions that form the section headings, particularly in Chapter 1, signposts the content and, interestingly, invites reflective participation. There is clear signposting of content in the chapter introductions, and the summary at the end of each chapter provides a helpful barometer of the learning outcomes achieved. The questions and tasks that follow the summary afford a useful opportunity for students to engage with and review the content and to apply it to their own individual context. These questions are suitable for use both during tutorial group work and during private study. The author's approach is pedagogically sound, moving, as it does, from definitions to historical evolutions, methodological considerations and theoretical models. In each chapter, content is presented incrementally in sections that follow on naturally from each other, culminating in a clear, concise summary, a structure and an approach that are consonant with the way the topic would be taught, with discussion questions to engage students in meaningful discussions and further research.

An Advanced Guide to Multilingualism is a very welcome and timely addition to the growing volume of research studies in multilingualism. It spans an impressive range of theoretical lenses, methods and historical and contemporary insights that expand our understanding of the concepts and theories that underpin the discipline. In particular, the author has presented a textbook that offers empirical and conceptual understandings, focusing on the different dimensions of individual and societal multilingualism.

Importantly, as well as adopting a very global and comprehensive perspective on research studies in bilingualism and multilingualism over the years, it provides a useful and timely 'one-stop shop' for new and practised researchers in the field. It is full of valuable references and enlightening insights that will be an asset to tutorial work as well as to private study. This is undoubtedly a useful scholarly resource.

Professor Muiris Ó Laoire
Munster Technological University
Tralee, Ireland
April 2021

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Introduction:

How do we approach multilingualism?

This textbook is dedicated to *multilingualism*, the social and individual language practice that has come to the fore in today's human society, and which is the focus of this textbook. The various aspects of multilingualism relate to spheres as diverse as human physiology, cognition, communities and their traditions and material objects, and, of course, languages. Multilingualism concerns education, engineering and commerce, policy-making, family life and entertainment, to name only some of its dimensions, but it cannot be reduced or equated to discrete disciplines of sociology, psychology, cultural studies or linguistics. Despite such a diversity of facets, everything in the realm of multilingualism invariably boils down to one of its three basic constituents – language, user and environment – or, rather, to their interaction. The result of this unique and complex interplay is manifested in the *practices of multilingualism*, so exciting and so enticing to understand.

The field of multilingualism is not entirely new; numerous books and articles treat it from a variety of angles, some representing it geographically and politically, others focusing on educational and social aspects, or exploring the identity of multilinguals in depth (see, for example, Pattanayak 1990; Todeva and Cenoz 2009; Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter 2012; Phipps 2019; Banda 2020). In addition, there are not that many books to date that provide a general and systematic understanding of the entire field of multilingualism. This textbook is intended to fill this gap and to demonstrate how the multiple dimensions of multilingualism work in concert, constituting the complex reality that we encounter today.

Usually, students of various specialisations such as linguistics, sociology or pedagogy are taught only selected issues inherent in multilingualism, closely linked to the specific interests of each discipline. For example, out of all possible multilingualism content, students of sociology and political science are offered topics related to minority and language rights, identities in post-colonial societies, and indigenous languages. These students are less likely to be exposed to the issues of teaching second and third languages, unlike those studying education and pedagogy. To balance and complete the expertise, this textbook offers a panoramic perspective on multilingualism and provides students in various fields of learning with a basic introduction to both classic and current issues of using and learning multiple languages.

The purview of multilingualism is so wide that it is impossible to deal with all the concepts, theories and findings that have been accumulated to date. Therefore, several prominent topics perceived as urgent, and those intensely discussed in current academic discourse, were selected for treatment in this textbook. Among

them are the similarities and differences between bilingualism and multilingualism, models of multilingualism, individual multilingualism and special characteristics of multilinguals, the diversity of multilingual countries and communities, the roles and status of languages in them, translanguaging, Dominant Language Constellations, and methods of studying multilingualism. Many of these areas are interdisciplinary and therefore each chapter of the textbook draws upon a number of disciplines. For instance, Chapter 2 brings in material from linguistics (such as word order typology, linguistic structural typology, genetic classification of languages, borrowing, dialects), sociolinguistics (diglossia, speech community, indigenous and post-colonial languages), philosophy (language universals, holistic and complexity research perspectives), anthropology (the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, perception of colours and numbers in various human societies) and biology (such as animal communication). Other issues, also interwoven into the fabric of multilingualism – issues that were raised years ago, as well as those enthusiastically debated in the 2010s – are touched upon (code-switching, domain, the material culture of multilingualism, receptive multilingualism, Kachru's circles and World Englishes, sign languages). Others are only mentioned, rather than discussed as a separate topic.

An Advanced Guide to Multilingualism will enable students to develop a deeper understanding of their discipline and engage in independent thinking on the issues and current discussions in multilingualism. They will be able to respond to the challenges of multilingualism and approach the constantly arriving streams of new information on multilingualism in an informed manner.

About this textbook

Purview and scope

This textbook is a general introduction to the subject area of multilingualism for university and college graduate students before they take more specialised courses in their disciplines. It examines current multilingualism: that is, the way various languages are acquired, used, treated and researched today.

While making multilingualism the focal point around which all the discussions in this textbook revolve, we will, of course, speak about bilingualism, which is sometimes equated with multilingualism – not only by non-specialists, but also by some scholars. Bilingualism is the use and acquisition of two languages or dialects. Multilingualism, in very general terms, can be defined as the use and acquisition of three or more languages. Bilingualism and multilingualism are obviously similar and much of the knowledge on multilingualism originated from bilingualism studies. Having said that, and as will be seen from this textbook, we must acknowledge that these two kinds of language practices are seen today not only as similar but also as differing in many significant aspects. It follows that while topics related to bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) will necessarily be discussed in this textbook, these are not exhaustively presented here and will be included to the extent that they have relevance to multilingualism.

Taking into consideration the fact that students specialising in various disciplines (such as linguistics, language teaching, sociology or political science) might have

different prior knowledge related to multilingualism, the textbook conveniently provides information on the topics without which an understanding of current multilingualism would be impossible. Experience shows that students of multilingualism may need to complete, expand or update their knowledge on some important subjects. To this end, the book contains information on human language, dialects and languages, and language distance, which some but not all students may know from their previous studies. Facts and issues that students of multilingualism frequently ask about in order to form a comprehensive understanding (such as animal communication) are included too.

This is an elementary textbook in the sense that it provides a basic coverage of the fundamentals and central issues of multilingualism for professionals who, by virtue of their professional tasks, are involved in one way or another with multilingual individuals, groups, spaces and communities. The book will be instrumental for those who specialise in education, linguistics, translation, language teaching and language policy. In fact, everyone who faces multilingualism daily as a multilingual speaker and is concerned with the languages used by their children and grandchildren will find here answers to many of their questions, free of common misunderstandings and myths. For these people, this textbook can be used occasionally as a reference book.

Structure of the textbook

The structure is designed with an average twelve-week module semester programme in mind. The content is organised into five parts. Part I introduces the field of multilingualism. The three middle parts of the textbook are ordered in succession, according to the three constituents of multilingualism – languages, environment and users. The last, Part V, deals with the ways we experience and study multilingualism. Here is a more detailed overview.

Part I, ‘The field of multilingualism’, contains three chapters devoted to a broad general description of the field, the scope of multilingualism as a domain of knowledge, and its key terms and concepts. Chapter 1, ‘What is multilingualism?’, discusses current multilingualism in broad terms, explains what multilingualism is, and how unique and, at the same time, how common this phenomenon is, and introduces the basic terms used in the field. Chapter 2, ‘Multilingualism as an exceptional resource’, offers a discussion of multilingualism in light of the resources – linguistic, human, technological and others – that it affords to individuals and to society. Chapter 3, ‘Multilingualism as modern reality and field of knowledge’, postulates the distinction between bilingualism and multilingualism, traces the three stages of societal awareness of languages and introduces the notion of the New Linguistic Dispensation.

Part II is devoted to ‘Languages’ and includes two chapters that provide an overview of ‘Languages of the world’ (Chapter 4) and ‘Classifications of languages’ (Chapter 5).

Part III is about ‘Multilingualism in society’. Its chapters describe social settings that accommodate and adapt to language speakers with their languages and cultures. It examines the interconnected linguistic, geographical and social processes that

lead to various language arrangements. Chapter 6 introduces the basic concepts of societal multilingualism, such as diglossia, language contact and language community, and Chapter 7 gives an overview of multilingual countries and regions.

Part IV is dedicated to ‘Individual multilingualism’ and its two chapters concentrate on how a multilingual person lives with their languages across ages, affordances and settings. Chapter 8 looks into the psycholinguistic and cognitive dimensions of individual multilingualism, and Chapter 9 examines the social dimensions that influence the life of a multilingual.

Finally, Part V is concerned with ‘How we experience and study multilingualism.’ Its three chapters consider the way we now experience, treat and use languages (Chapter 10), the methods of studying multilingualism (Chapter 11), and the theories and models within it (Chapter 12) which are increasingly diverging from the methodology and theories of bilingualism.

The topics explored in this textbook are briefly summarised in a concluding précis. The volume is complemented by a bibliography and languages and subject indexes. In addition, a glossary is easily available for the use of readers (see below).

How to use this textbook

An Advanced Guide to Multilingualism is suitable for use in various institutional frameworks and modalities of study – face-to-face, distant or mixed. It is intended primarily for use in twelve-week module semester programme, but it is also well suited to a more comprehensive year-long course. Whether you are a teacher or student involved in a university or college course or an independent reader, a *glossary* containing the most important and up-to-date entries is immediately available for you on the complementary EUP website (edinburghuniversitypress.com/multilingualism) for your convenience. It can stimulate and accompany themed discussions and workshops, and may result in international discussions and collaborations on the topic of multilingualism as well.

The logical order of the chapters and the design features of the textbook are organised towards the pedagogical goals of enhancing learning and providing students with the tools for further development of knowledge, as well as for making informed decisions in situations associated with multilingualism. You will see that the content is presented in stages and moves from definitions to historical evolutions and then to methodological considerations and theoretical models. In this way, knowledge is built step-by-step by means of a measured supply of information and a graded introduction of theoretical discussions.

The detailed *contents list* helps with quick orientation and makes the book a user-friendly reference source, suitable for complementing, refreshing or updating your knowledge of multilingualism. You can simply search through the contents list for the topics you wish to read about, or look for a particular term or language in the *subject index* and *languages index*, respectively.

Each chapter consists of the *text* and a *learning/teaching unit*. This formatting is uniform across the book to ensure consistency and convenience in your studies. The subject matter is indicated in the *introductions to the chapters*, thus preparing students before they embark on their reading and thinking activities.

The text of each chapter is divided by subheadings into clearly discerned sections. Although, together, they constitute a logical whole, each section is a complete and independent segment of information on a particular topic. Therefore, if necessary, you can use each section as a reference source or teach it separately.

You are invited to *make good use of the questions that form the section headings*, such as ‘What is multilingualism about?’ in Chapter 1; ‘How unique are human language and the ability for multilingualism?’ and ‘Animal communication: can animals be multilingual?’ in Chapter 2; and ‘What is translanguaging?’ and ‘How expedient are language nominations?’ in Chapter 10. These can serve as pre-teaching reflective questions for your class, or topics for discussion before reading the chapter.

A concise *summary* at the end of each chapter features the key words and issues discussed there.

Although a full *bibliography* is provided at the end of the book, each chapter also suggests a few pieces under the rubric *further reading*. The items recommended for students’ reading both support and supplement the content of the chapter. The carefully selected journal articles and book chapters were preferred over others, and also chosen for their accessibility and moderate length. Among them, you will find chapters and articles that are already considered classics and intensively discussed in the field, along with ones that supply basic information that students specialising in adjacent disciplines might have missed. The reading items may serve as a basis for a dedicated classroom discussion if you are particularly interested in a topic.

Along with the information on its particular topic, each chapter is equipped with a *teaching/learning unit*. This is a block of didactic instruments that contains a *chapter review*, *reflective questions* and *exercises*. The didactic block opens with a *learning table*, specially devised to help in processing and remembering the material. Filling in the table requires the student to recycle the material in a chapter in various ways by defining and describing important terms, concepts and ideas, and prompts comparison, classification and other cognitive operations. To stimulate thorough and personalised processing of the material, a special column in the table is assigned for the student’s comments and thoughts. In this way, working on a learning table takes students through the processes of learning towards a better understanding of the material. At this stage, additional internet materials may be employed to expand the purview beyond basic reading, if and when teacher and students find it appropriate. Web resources are plentiful today but they quickly become outdated. Specific web addresses are not provided in this textbook simply because of their volatility; it also seems sensible for students and teachers to conduct their own searches for additional internet resources according to the needs of the moment.

The next rubric contains *reflective questions*. Their order and formulation follow the logic of the chapter and check for understanding of the main issues and terms. You may find some of the answers to these questions, usually the first ones in the list, within the chapter. These are posed in a straightforward way and the answers are easily located when you review the content of the chapter. Others are more open-ended and involve comparing, summarising, going beyond the facts provided in the chapter, and applying the knowledge to a student’s individual context. Different types of questions provide a useful opportunity for students with different learning styles to engage with the material in the way they prefer.

The *chapter review* includes interactive and multimodal activities and offers topics for discussion. The tasks, exercises and questions are suitable for use during tutorial group work and hands-on explorative sessions, such as creating handmade plasticine models of one's Dominant Language Constellation (see Chapter 10), as well as for online activities.

The last rubric in the learning block is aimed at developing students' presentation skills, as well as providing necessary practice in academic communication, including delivering presentations, preparing posters and participating in discussions, in addition to question-answer sessions. The rubric is labelled *exercises* and relates to both face-to-face (classroom and conference hall) and previously recorded and real-time internet presentations. The exercises in presentation skills involve various modalities and increase in difficulty from the first chapters of the book onwards, progressing from ones that are easier, both in a technical sense (from a poster to an e-poster, using figures and tables, creating interactive pictures, producing a short video) and organisationally (from preparing a presentation to organising a student conference or an exhibition), to those requiring more skills. The initial presentation tasks are based on the material already provided in the chapter, and then expand to those requiring students to collect additional information on the topic, or to provide information about themselves and the environment. Further along in the course, the tasks change to more complicated ones, requiring thorough examination of a topic and involving the skills of collecting and summarising data and providing arguments to support the presenter's point. Not all the exercises are compulsory; rather, teachers are invited to select their preferred ones in accordance with their personal teaching goals.

This textbook supports distance learning, as well as a hybrid (face-to-face and distance) course design. You can use it in a lecture hall but also online, for teaching via communication platforms such as Zoom or MS Teams. In the case of distance learning, reading of chapters and sources should be completed before or after the online sessions, according to the teacher's plan, so that the online meetings can be dedicated to discussions, watching videos, posing new questions and sharing ideas with classmates. For distance teaching and learning, a glossary is available via the EUP website (edinburghuniversitypress.com/multilingualism).

The content and teaching bloc can serve as a basis and inspiration for *themed workshops* that focus on certain topics in multilingualism. To this end, you, as the organiser, may select various parts or chapters dedicated to particular issues, such as 'languages of the world', 'multilingualism in society', 'individual multilingualism' or a workshop focusing on 'how we experience and study multilingualism'.

Depending on the students, goals and allotted time, the parts of the textbook (I to V) are individually suitable for *short online courses*. These became especially popular in the time of COVID-19 and seem to have stayed with us as a convenient way of learning. For each such mini-course dedicated to a particular topic in multilingualism, you can choose the corresponding parts of the book to accompany and support your teaching.

The student-friendly design and the structure of the textbook guide the reader through its content and make it expedient for personal individual study and enrichment. An individual learner is invited to follow its logic and be particularly respon-

sive to the instructions in a learning/teaching unit. To make the most of your individual study of multilingualism, you can do the following:

- Read the title of the chapter, its introduction and section subheadings. Ponder the topics proposed for this chapter, formulate questions that arise when you read, and then try to answer these questions, based on your previous knowledge of the topic. Consult the EUP online glossary (edinburghuniversitypress.com/multilingualism) when needed. Write down what you think it is important to know in order to answer your questions.
- Read the chapter section by section. Check whether you obtained the information 'promised' by the subheading. If not, or if it is not fully clear, read the section one more time. As you read, jot down the main ideas, important statements and questions or comments that arise, but also point out things that are new to you or that contradict your previous knowledge. Highlight the information that is important for your professional or personal growth.
- Write your own summary of the chapter. Make sure you mentioned all the important themes and described the crucial concepts. Compare your summary with the one in the book.
- Fill in the learning table. Start with the things that you can enter immediately. Return to the chapter if you forgot something. If you encounter difficulties, you can partially fill in the learning table and proceed to the next rubric. You can resume the work on the chapter review later.
- Answer the questions. The definitions and explanations are easily located in the text. Remember that answers to the open-ended questions that require consideration and involve your personal experience cannot be right or wrong. You may wish to discuss your answer with other individual learners, whether through face-to-face communication or online via social media.
- Work on the learning tasks. First carry out those that you can do individually. Think of how and with whom you can discuss the task.
- To develop and enhance your understanding of the material in a chapter further, write an essay on the topics discussed in it. You may use the chapter subheadings as the titles of your essays. When you feel more confident, formulate your own essay titles.
- Expressing your knowledge and understanding in a visual form is also a good way to enhance your grasp of multilingualism. Draw figures and mental maps as you progress through the theories and figure out complex multilingual situations.

I wish readers the very best of success in using and teaching their languages in an informed and conscious way. I hope that this book will stimulate further interest and the reading of other works that are specific to the particular areas of multilingualism that readers choose to pursue.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the EUP editorial team, and especially Laura Williamson, for their infinite patience and generous support of this project over many long years. I wish to

thank the reviewers, whose valuable comments were constructive and improved the book. I must acknowledge the contribution of Muiris Ó Laoire, well-known scholar, Irish language enthusiast and cherished co-author of many years. My thanks go to Professor Kary Smith of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, who translated the excerpt from Russenorsk into modern Norwegian.

Part I

The field of multilingualism

