Cecilia Varcasia (ed.)

# Becoming Multilingual

**Language Learning and Language Policy**
**between Attitudes and Identities**

# li 136

Research into the complex phenomenon of multilingualism is rapidly increasing. This book looks at multilingualism through its interfaces with language policies, language attitudes and issues of language awareness and identity. The aim is to examine the dynamic processes that lead or hinder the development of such phenomena. One of the scopes of the volume is to represent the complexity of the multilingual speaker by shedding light on different multilingual settings in the world. The chapters of this volume tackle the topic from a sociolinguistic perspective by showing how multilingualism is dynamically constructed. They provide empirical research on language learning in different multilingual environments in the world as well as practical suggestions for the investigation of multilingualism and the improvement of its education.

**Cecilia Varcasia** holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics. She is a Research Fellow at the Language Study Unit of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy. Her research focuses on multilingual communication, discourse and conversation analysis, cross-cultural pragmatics and corpus linguistics. She has co-edited *Corpora, Discorso e Stile. Corpora, Discourse & Style.*

# Becoming Multilingual

# Linguistic Insights

**Studies in Language and Communication**

Edited by Maurizio Gotti,
University of Bergamo

Volume 136

Cecilia Varcasia (ed.)

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**Language Learning and Language Policy between Attitudes and Identities**

# Contents

CECILIA VARCASIA

# Introduction

This volume presents research that fits in with a range of studies over the past decade that respond to the widespread phenomenon of multilingualism[1]. Multilingualism has become an increasingly common phenomenon around the world due to many factors, including issues concerning the maintenance and promotion of regional and minority languages, and the ever emergent need for people to know other languages than their own so as to be competitive internationally in the globalized business world. In 2004 Clyne claimed that multilingualism, rather than bilingualism, would become the desirable cooperative goal of all nations. Multilingualism maintenance, development and spread, according to him, would be "related to other issues in language policy, including school language choice, university language offerings, and the linguistic effects of the internationalization of universities" (Clyne 2004: 19). If one looks at the current world's linguistic situation, there are around 7,000 languages and about 200 independent countries altogether, as reported in Ethnologue (Lewis 2009). The number of speakers of the different languages is unevenly distributed, and 40% of the world's population has one of the most common eight languages as a first language: Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, English, Bengali, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian (Gordon 2005). More than 4,000 of the world's languages are spoken by less than 2% of the world's population and 516 of these languages are nearly extinct. The most multilingual continents are Asia and Africa (see also Cenoz 2009: 1). Such a situation in a time of globalization calls for multilingual competences and multilingual speakers. Multilingual si-

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[1] As editor of the volume I would like to express my deep gratitude to Laurie Anderson, Camilla Bettoni, Silvia Dal Negro, Rita Franceschini, Laura Gavioli, Ulrike Jessner, Gabriele Pallotti, Maria Pavesi, Daniela Veronesi and Alessandro Vietti for their precious reviewing of the papers in the volume.

tuations are now becoming more and more common, and the contexts taken into consideration by the authors of the chapters in this volume contribute to research in this field.

Multilingualism is characterized by the nature of its multilingual participants' use of the languages involved, which usually takes place in environments of both linguistic and cultural diversity (see Cenoz 2000; Herdina/Jessner 2002; Hoffman/Ytsma, 2004; Pavlenko/Blackledge, 2004; Aronin/Singleton, 2008; Aronin/Hufeisen, 2009).

> Multilinguals may use a number of languages on account of many different social, cultural, and economic reasons. They may live in a multilingual community, or overlapping bilingual communities, or be in contact with several monolingual communities. Their proficiency in each of their languages is likely to differ, and may fluctuate over time (Herdina/Jessner, 2002). Their languages may have different roles and functions, they may use them separately or code-switch, and they are still described as multilingual whether they know three or seven languages (Kemp, 2009:12-13).

McArthur (1992) defines the multilingual speaker as a person who has "the ability to use three or more languages, either separately or in various degrees of code-mixing. Different languages are used for different purposes, competence in each varying according to such factors as register, occupation and education" (McArthur, 1992: 673; see also Edwards, 1994 and Vildomec, 1963).

Multilingual communication is therefore not only the use of language as a medium of communication; it is also a system which enters into a relationship with other languages and imprints its own dynamics upon other human beings involved in communication by activating different links. "Participants in multilingual interactions can be said to activate links between language and actions, mental activities, perception, thought patterns, knowledge systems etc. – which are active both universally and in each individual language" (House/Rehbein, 2004: 2). In such a situation of contact between different languages as different communication systems, languages mutually influence one another and their interaction creates, as a result, multilingual communication systems.

The relationships between different languages in multilingual communication involve complex constellations of linguistic features,

rather than just individual utterances, texts, participant statuses, and types of social relationships, discourse, and media. The interplay that constitutes multilingual communication can therefore be observed from various perspectives including psycholinguistics, language acquisition, phonetics (Gallardo 2007), grammar (Leung 2007, 2009), pragmatics (Safont 2005), multilingual language processing (Gibson/Hufeisen 2006; Jessner 2006; De Angelis 2007), attitudes (Lasagabaster/Huguet 2006), emotions (Aronin 2004; Pavlenko/Dewaele 2004; Pavlenko 2005), and education (Sagasta 2003; Hoffmann/Ytsma 2004; García/Skutnabb-Kangas/Torres-Guzman 2006; Cenoz 2009).

Within such a rich array of publications, the present volume focuses attention on different multilingual situations. *Becoming multilingual* is its title, as it wants to represent the complexity of the multilingual speaker by shedding light on different multilingual settings in the world and focus on the issue of multilingualism from different perspectives. *Becoming multilingual* also means looking at multilingualism through its interfaces with language policies, attitudes to language, and issues of language awareness and identity; that is, at the dynamic processes that facilitate (or hinder) the development of multilingualism.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) also highlight the role of language ideologies in the process of negotiation of identities, and show that in different historical and social contexts different identities may be negotiable or non-negotiable. Contributors to their book address various ways in which individuals may be positioned, or position themselves, in a variety of contexts. They take account of localised linguistic behaviours, attitudes and beliefs and locate them in wider social contexts which include class, race, ethnicity, generation, gender and sexuality. Similarly, contributors to the present book also tackle issues of attitudes and identities, focusing on better understanding multilingualism as a dynamic process.

The papers collected here are a selection of contributions presented at the Sixth International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism held in Bolzano, Italy, in September 2009. They aim to contribute to the research on multilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective by showing, through the study of language policies and attitudes and detailed analysis of empirical data, how multilingualism is dynamically constructed. They provide empirical research on

language learning in different multilingual environments around the world as well as practical suggestions for the investigation of multilingualism and the improvement of multilingual education.

# 1. Contents

This volume contains eight chapters. These start with those giving more accent to language policies, as the first chapter by Renate Kärchner-Ober, and go on to those focusing more on attitudes in different multilingual environments, such as those by Sandro Caruana and David Lasagabaster and Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn and Ros Mitchell, and those that look more deeply into language use and practices in multilingual contexts, such as those by Enrica Cortinovis, Andreas Braun, Silvia Melo-Pfeifer, Kerstin Kazzazi, Callie Mady and Wendy Carr.

In the first chapter, *Effects of national language policies and linguistic reorganization – Long-term issues in a society, cultures and languages*, Renate Kärchner-Ober deals with the complex issues of language policy, multilingualism and educational reform processes in multiethnic and multilingual Malaysia. By providing an overview of the Malaysian sociolinguistic scenery the author describes its geographical and historical background, ethno-linguistic terrain, educational challenges and tensions and language and educational policy. The picture that is outlined is quite a complex and peculiar one, with a rigid language policy that regulates the use of the national language Bahasa Malay. At the same time the author suggests a possible new consideration of the multilingual capital of the country within its language policy, given the fact that Malaysian citizens "already possess the command of Chinese, and Indian languages and English beside the national language" (Kärchner-Ober, this volume: 33).

Sandro Caruana and David Lasagabaster, in their chapter, *Using a holistic approach to explore language attitudes in two multilingual contexts: the Basque Country and Malta*, investigate language attitudes in two multilingual university contexts through the use of a ho-

listic questionnaire. Their approach to language attitudes focuses on multilingual contexts and not on minority or majority languages. Moreover, their use of a holistic questionnaire allows them to study attitudes to languages by considering a wider linguistic repertoire rather than individually as would happen by using a monolingual-biased approach and questionnaire. The authors compare these two approaches, and show how they do not contrast with one another, but are rather complementary. Each questionnaire type helps to unfold different aspects of the issue of language attitudes. Their study aims at confuting two hypotheses: attitudes towards multilingualism in the two contexts would be very positive, and the use of a holistic questionnaire would diminish the effect of the L1 on language attitudes. The results of their analysis in the two countries in fact, show differences from those obtained by the use of traditional questionnaires.

Language attitudes among multilingual migrant students and teachers in England are also the object of the research presented by Amanda Hilmarsson-Dunn and Ros Mitchell, *Multilingual migrants in England: factors affecting their language use*. Their qualitative interviewing, classroom observations and focus group work in two educational institutions are combined with questionnaires on teacher and student attitudes towards multilingualism. Attitudes towards, and use of, languages are also explained by referring to social network theory and educational policies. Network ties provide a picture of what roles language use and attitudes towards host and home languages play and how different family or friendship ties influence language shift or maintenance. Of course language policies also have an impact on both language attitudes and use, as this chapter shows. Its findings show that network theory is useful in the explanation of language maintenance and attitudes, even though further factors may come into play and be more powerful when one looks at migrant communities, such as language hierarchies and the varying strengths of friendship groups.

In *Eliciting multilingualism: investigating linguistic diversity in schools*, Enrica Cortinovis presents two written elicitation tasks designed to investigate societal multilingualism in Europe, especially in educational environments. Her chapter discusses whether and how societal multilingualism can be observed and elicited in communities where a high proportion of the population is characterized by indivi-

dual multilingualism. The author addresses this through the employment of a questionnaire, an apparently unusual instrument, but one that can provide naturally occurring data to enlighten qualitative sociolinguistic research. In particular Cortinovis discusses the results of her analysis of two specific tasks in the questionnaire distributed in a secondary school in Bolzano, Italy. The questionnaire elicits and records language contact phenomena that are usually observable only in interaction, such as code-switching, language alternation strategies and transfer.

Andreas Braun, in *The role of education in the language practices of trilingual families*, shifts the attention to the family context, and examines the role of education in the language practices of parents with their children in potentially trilingual families. Braun's chapter addresses the question of how the linguistic milieu in nurseries, schools and other communal establishments affects parents' language use with their children. Such a question was addressed through the analysis of a corpus of family interviews in England and Germany. Results of the analysis show that the correlation between trilingual families' language background variations and their educational choices is rather complex, and the analysis demonstrates this complexity. However, the results show that the acquisition of English appears to be important for both the German and the English families interviewed, although the opportunities to enroll their children into multilingual schools that use English as the language of instruction are much higher in Germany than in England.

In *Researchers' multilingual awareness in an international research team*, Silvia Melo-Pfeifer presents a preliminary study on the emergence of multilingual awareness in chat conversations in six different Romance languages. The chapter is an attempt to fill a gap in research on linguistic awareness, focusing attention on a team of linguistics researchers, social actors engaged in promoting multilingualism who are often called upon to counsel others on issues such as educational policies involving this topic. The author explores the relationships between multilingual awareness and the multilingual interactional context and, at the same time, how the researchers involved in the multilingual interaction actually cope with the use of French as a *lingua franca*. As a result of the analysis proposed, multilingual

awareness in multilingual interaction is seen as a dynamic and dialectical process put into practice in the collective, as well as the individual, sphere. Multilingual awareness then depends on the ability to understand the conditions that determine the communicative process and the production of multilingual discourses. According to Melo-Pfeifer, multilingual awareness encompasses knowledge and consciousness both of Self and Other and of the situation, and is discursively mediated and influenced by participants' attitudes and representations.

Kerstin Kazzazi, in *Three languages, two people, one conversation*, draws on data from an observational case study of a child growing up with three languages, i.e. English, Farsi and German, to focus on child speech and how such trilingualism is exploited in child-parent conversation. From these observations, the author shows that the third language may appear in the form of a name mention, a representative lexical item, a quote, or creative use. The occurrence of such language alternation and its functions in discourse reveal a complex picture of the child's perceived linguistic identity as well as her performance.

*Immigrant perspectives on French language learning in English-dominant Canadian communities* by Callie Mady and Wendy Carr, lastly, reports on the findings of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions from two different studies with immigrant students and parents conducted in order to explore their perceptions of learning their second official language, French, in a Canadian English dominant community. The chapter develops three lines of research: language as investment in community, language as economic advancement, and language as identity. Results show how the desire of immigrant learners and their parents to learn French as a second official language in Canada is to be evaluated positively not only for their own increase of their linguistic repertoires but also positive is its impact in the Canadian's linguistic preparation for the future.

## 2. Conclusion

The various chapters of this volume then, with their presentation and discussion of emergent contexts of multilingualism in the world, lead us to alter the classical perspective of bilingualism and language acquisition, which aimed at reaching competence in the target language, in favor of more holistic approaches where the different languages in play find their peculiar spaces both in repertoires and uses.

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Renate Kärchner-Ober

# Effects of National Language Policies and Linguistic Reorganization – Long-term Issues in a Society, Cultures and Languages

## 1.   Introduction

This chapter addresses the relationships between multilingualism, national language policy, educational reform processes and related issues necessary for understanding the fundamental linguistic challenges multiethnic and multilingual Malaysia has faced in the first decade of the 21st century. Despite successful attempts to profoundly change language policy and language education, controversies and problems with regard to languages still exist, as language policy reforms are perceived as disappointing for the respective affected population segments. Sociological and socio-economic factors affect the use and learning of languages, as well as multilingual education in particular, as an egalitarian multilingual educational policy is not really advocated by any of the ethnic groups. The majority of Malaysians have two or more languages and dialects at their disposal and make use of all their available languages, dialects, registers, and codes, depending on social context, social purposes, and given communicative situation. Language education in Malaysia has undergone drastic changes since colonial times. A major reason for this was to foster unity among the country's diverse racial groups. The realization of policymakers' attempts to promote multilingualism is marred by political issues. Symbolic political power, not always in favour of a heterogeneous society, very often overshadows ambitions to project the country as a melting pot of cultures and languages. As Lo Bianco (2003: 22) puts it, "Asian multilingualism is more than a demographic reality". Malaysia's language policy appears as an ongoing balancing act between ideology, lin-

guistic pragmatism and emotional relationships towards languages. Therefore, the roles of English and Bahasa Malaysia will be highlighted in this chapter, as "present developments of these two languages are intertwined and decisions made on one affect the other" (Gill 2002: 1).

       Based on the aforementioned, this chapter is an attempt to update the reader about some key issues of Malaysia's national language policies and debates concerning language issues within the context of nation-building and internationalization.

## 2.      Geographical-historical background

To understand Malaysia's sociolinguistic scenery, it is imperative to have a closer look at the ethnic and sociocultural diversity of this nation. The influx of diverse ethnic groups since the third century has created a multilingual mosaic and shaped socio-cultural diversity.
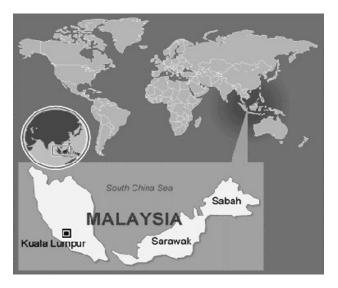


Figure 1: Malaysia's geography.
Source: http://www.hook-line-sinker.net/malaysia_glance.html.

Malaysia is divided into two geographical parts, namely West Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia) and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). State-formation and nation-building in Malaysia started in 1946 when various states formed the Malayan Union, which was still very much under British influence. Two years later (1948), the Union became the Federation of Malaya. In 1957, Malaysia gained its independence from British rule. In 1963, present day Malaysia came into existence when the Federation was joined by the two states of East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) and Singapore. Singapore left the alliance in 1965. Before British colonization, Malaya had been colonized by the Portuguese (1511) and Dutch (1641). From a historical perspective, the "template for the nation was being offered by the British […] The British too were torn between their obligations as the protecting power of the Malay States and the requirements of governing a multiracial society" (Harper 1999: 6).

At present, the population consists of 58% Malays, 24% Chinese, 8% Indians, and 10% other ethnic groups. We find the typical scenario of a country which has undergone early settlements from various ethnic groups, colonization, and migration. In the *Information Malaysia 1998 Yearbook*, Malaysia's population is classified into two major categories: *Bumiputra* (lit.: sons of the earth), indigenous to the region, and those whose cultural identity lies outside the cultural and religious values of the *Bumiputra.* The term *Malaysian* refers to all citizens without specifying ethnicity. The major ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese, and Indians) have their own traditions and values, and their linguistic backgrounds vary greatly.

## 3. Ethno-linguistic scenery

Malaysia's complex ethno-linguistic scenery helps us understand how its sociolinguistic, political and economic issues embed its linguistic diversity in a complex system of relationships and interactions. The country's linguistic situation represents current trends of sociolinguistic

phenomena on a macro level which can be found increasingly in many parts of the world due to globalization processes, migration, rapid developments in information technology, political and socio-economic issues, multilingualism, changing power relationships, neo-capitalism, and neo-liberalism. Thus, Spolsky's (2004: 176) argument, referring to India, that "[m]ultilingualism obviously produces pragmatic problems for central political control" could also apply here.

The Malay language became a lingua franca of the Malay Archipelago during the time of the Srivijaya Empire in the 7th century. Thus, "Malay has always been the lingua franca in intergroup communication" (Omar 1987: 58, cf. also Appel/Muysken 1990: 56). Efforts to standardize the language have been undertaken, in order to consolidate it so it can fulfill its role better in public administration and education. Other main languages spoken in Malaysia are Mandarin and other Chinese dialects (Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew) and Tamil. According to Lewis (2009), more than 100 languages are actively spoken; some of these have yet to be codified. The major languages are Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil, Chinese dialects and English. Currently, no census of the distribution of languages is available, as "Malaysia's census stopped asking language questions from 1990. Perhaps it would show an increasing trend in the usage of English – a trend the Malaysian government does not want to acknowledge" (Tan 2004: 176).

The majority of Malaysia's population is bi- or multilingual. Language crossing – code-switching varieties of one language (e.g. Standard English-Malaysian English) – is a common phenomenon in interethnic communication, depending on domains and interlocutors.

Malaysia's linguistic terrain is characterized by its rich linguistic ecology, a term introduced by Haugen (1972), describing "its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers" and "its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication" (Haugen 1972: 325). Researchers are using the term to describe multilingualism in relationship to societal multilingualism, sociolinguistic understanding of language use inside and outside the classroom, language maintenance, language shift, language policy and language planning (Mühlhäusler 2002, García/Peltz/Schiffman 2006). Aronin (2005: 9) states that "a constellation of languages rather than a single one fulfils its fundamental role for the individual

and the global community". Languages and society are interrelated (Romaine 2000), and a "specific arrangement [of language patterns] is achieved through political processes relating to education and language use" (Aronin 2005: 9).

Sociocultural parameters and concepts of identity determine choice of language and use to a great extent (Pillai 2006). Rajendran (2000) points out:

> Being Malay means being bumiputera or prince of the soil and thus entitled to certain privileges of affirmative action. Speaking Malay means being nationalistic especially if one is not ethnically Malay. Being Chinese means being part of a so-called migrant community although some families have been in Malaysia for more than 400 years and others have inter-married so extensively to become a very mixed ethnicity […]. Speaking Tamil means being communal and appealing to only a small sector of society.

Situations as illustrated by Tan (cited in Omar 1987: 17) are reality in present day Malaysia: two Malaysian Chinese with different Chinese dialects would rather communicate in English or even break off any contact rather than conversing in Bahasa Malaysia.

## 4.  Tensions

Tickoo (2006: 168) describes language educational matters within the South Asian region as 'shortsighted' as they show "disregard for the sociocultural contexts of the languages in use and also for the forces that contributed to language maintenance and shift". I would like to describe the linguistic situation with the term '5-C-situation', namely one manifesting contact, competition, cooperation, conflict and coexistence between languages.

Bahasa Malaysia (the Malay language) was established as sole official and national language after independence and proclaimed as medium of instruction at all stages of schooling. English became the second, still important, language. The position of English, Bahasa Ma-