Introduction

Introduction: Yet another journal on multilingualism?

Britta Hufeisen

Here comes the first issue of yet another journal on multilingualism and multiple language acquisition. Do we need it? Is it one too many? I do not think so. There are so many topics out there that need to be thought about and written about, so many existing research questions to be studied in order to find convincing results, so many questions that will arise over the next few years that we do not even know about yet.

Research on multilingualism and multiple language acquisition is still a fairly new topic. Only in the 1990s did it gain more intensive attention when the concept of L3 evolved and the question arose whether L3 is just an additional (and not separate) L2 and can be treated as just another L2 or whether the fact that (at least) three languages are involved makes a difference compared to two involved languages. This question has not yet been fully answered, and it will probably never be answered, because theoretical viewpoints decide whether a researcher considers L3 (or Ln) as just another L2 or whether s/he believes that L2 and L3 and Ln have to be studied in their own respective right.

Why is it nonetheless useful to offer a new publication venue on multilingualism? With current voluntary and involuntary migration, there are many new situations in which people have to act in more than one or two languages. They come to these various new situations with a broad language repertoire, to which they add yet one or two more languages. As they do so, their dominant language constellation (cf. Aronin, 2019) is about to change yet again, in which case the need for a new kind of translanguaging becomes necessary. We need much more research on this to be published.

Affiliation

Technical University in Darmstadt, Germany.
email: britta.hufeisen@tu-darmstadt.de

Societal multilingualism and plurilingualism seem to become more and more complex with these migration movements and need to be studied. With the concepts of DLC and translanguaging in particular, we are able to focus our attention on aspects that were once at our periphery and topics of researchers in other domains. The dominance of English has turned English into a second (rather than a foreign) language in more and more countries, very often at the cost of the traditional language(s) and at the cost of other foreign languages. It looks as though the language maintenance which Jessner and Herdina (2002) introduced into the debate of language acquisition, together with the fact of language attrition, is not just an individual matter but also a matter of society. When English is used among speakers of another common L1 because their L1 no longer lends itself to this specific topic, we might consider this a societal language attrition. We need much more research on this to be published.

Another topic comes up here. Looking at the publication policies of publication companies for their journals and their books, we can see that publications on multilingualism are becoming more and more monolingual, namely English. In the beginning stages of research on multilingualism in the 1990s, we saw references and quotes in many languages and everybody trusted that interested readers would understand, would manage to understand, or could stand not to understand each and every word (this is one of the teaching practices taught to learners—that is, not to concentrate on what they do not understand but rather concentrate on what they do understand!). Now, the publication requirements of more and more journals and books say that not only quotes in LOTE have to be translated, but also references. This cannot really be the target of multilingualism. Here, too, we need much more research on this to be published.

Education policy seems to be influential when it comes to multilingualism, multiple language acquisition, and learning (cf. Hufeisen, 2018). With the decision to make one foreign language obligatory from the very beginning of a learner's school career, a certain path of multilingual development is foreseeable. How many more languages are required to be learned in a learner's school career? Are these additional languages fixed or is there a personal or family choice of certain languages? What about new teaching concepts such as systematic translanguaging within class (cf. Schwarzl and Vetter, 2020)? Again, we need much more research on this to be published.

Individual multilingualism, which was the very beginning of research on multilingualism, is still a prime research subject. With more and more diverse lifelong linguistic developments which accompany migration, such as school education, professional career, personal lifestyle, and family constellations, we will see many more facets of individual multilingualism which we do not even know about at this stage. We need much more research on this to be published.

Most important are questions concerning models and theories on individual language acquisition and learning. There are some very important and convincing ones out there, but it looks as if we need more for the specific situations that we are confronted with in our research.

Just as important are questions concerning research methods. Are the ones we have applied so far sufficient, or do we need to triangulate existing ones more intensively, or do we have to develop very specific ones? We need much more research on this to be published.

Finally, many more researchers than in the 1990s are working on questions concerning multilingualism and multiple language acquisition. Parallel to this increase, we see that the areas of research have become broader and more varied. These researchers all need venues to publish their work, just as journals which need to emphasise and concentrate on specific areas. Therefore, we definitely need yet another journal, and maybe even more than this. The launch of the *Journal of Multilingual Theories and Practices* is highly needed and welcomed by the research community. Through it we all have a broader choice of accessing information on our main research topic and publishing our own research results.

About the author

Britta Hufeisen is a full professor of multilingualism at Technical University in Darmstadt, Germany. Her research areas are multiple language acquisition and learning, text competencies in a foreign language, and plurilingual whole school policies. She engages in research projects all over the world, with an emphasis on the Scandinavian countries and languages. She received her PhD at Kassel University with a thesis on German as an L3 and her habilitation at Technical University in Darmstadt with a thesis on hybrid texts in a foreign language. Before joining Technical University in Darmstadt she was an Assistant Professor of Applied German Linguistics at the University of Alberta, Canada.

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