1 Multilingual Nations: Multilingualism in Context

> *In this chapter we provide an introduction to our research with families and educators on their practices of rearing bi- and multilingual children in the United States and comparatively in other parts of the world. We introduce the myth of monolingualism that pervades some societies as well as perhaps the equally mythic notion that "everywhere else" people acquire two or more languages quite routinely and with ease. We conclude with an overview of the remaining chapters.*

Can you have a conversation in a language besides your mother tongue? Readers may have selected this book because they can indeed converse with others in more than one language and are keen to learn more about how families and educators can work together to create favorable conditions for multilingualism to flourish in children. This question, however, is intended to be more than just a rhetorical one. It is the actual question posed by the European Commission in a 2006 survey of Europe's inhabitants (Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2006). The number of affirmative respondents may surprise readers, and we will return to the result presently. First, we turn to a confluence of issues both professional and personal that define the content and central thesis of the book.

As we write this introduction, the first author has just finished making operational an online forum for a professional learning community (PLC) dedicated to the exchange of ideas by educators working in two-way immersion (TWI) and other forms of dual-language programs in the Southern California region. Nationally, TWI programming is increasing in the United States. The TWI model is a dual-language program in which two languages are partnered. Children who are native-English speakers acquire a second language (e.g., Spanish, Korean, or Mandarin) as they learn academic content alongside the native-speaking children of the second language. These children, in turn, learn English as their second language. The two sets of children in effect serve as models for one another's language learning. The "ticker" in the directory of programs that is maintained by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) puts the number of TWI programs in the United States at 441 in 2014. The largest period of growth since CAL began keeping track in 1962 came in just the

1

past 15 years. There were 280 programs newly registered between 1997 and 2011 alone, the last available year that CAL analyzed the TWI data by year (CAL, 2011). We know this number to be an underestimate: registry is entirely voluntary and none of the dozen or so TWI programs belonging to the new UCLA PLC is in fact registered with CAL. In 2013, the Foundation for Child Development put the estimate of programs closer to 2000 (Espinosa, 2013).

In just the past year or so, National Public Radio (NPR) has given a number of accounts of such programs. Closest to home for us, the annual address to administrators by the superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District was broadcast on NPR. To herald the start of a new school year, Nelson Henriquez, 11, was heard welcoming the school leaders in Spanish, English, and Mandarin. Nelson's multilingualism is the product of the City Terrace Elementary dual-language immersion program teaching not one but two additional languages. Incidentally, also in the past year, Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles was featured on NPR announcing that its baseball games have become trilingual – now televising in English, Spanish, and Korean.

Recently two reports have attempted to debunk the mainly negative myths surrounding multilingualism. The *Society for Research in Child Development's Social Policy Report* places an emphasis on high-quality language input to support the acquisition of each language a child has the opportunity to learn, and provides recommendations for early childhood education policy and practice (McCabe et al., 2013). A reprise of an earlier report from the Foundation for Child Development systemically reviews the common myths that early education program administrators and teachers encounter and counters these with results from the most recent research literature (Espinosa, 2013). While both policy reports also tackled the myths that surround multilingualism, particularly around the early education of multilingual students, this study differs from them in an important way: the myths arise from our conversations with parents and educators directly and reveal many more misconceptions of multilingual development and education than we could have anticipated from previous reviews. We take each of these myths and examine them from the parents' or educators' perspectives and contextualize them with what is known in the research literature.

While the efficacy of TWI programs in particular has been questioned for children speaking the partnered minority language (e.g., Valdés, 1997), such programs have become one of the fastest growing forms of language instruction. One of the concerns has been whether pedagogies used in TWI can effectively teach minority language children and reduce the prejudice and discrimination toward the minority language and its speakers witnessed in society more broadly (Genesee and Gándara, 1999). The increase in popularity has occurred during an era when the bilingual education of language-minority children has been scaled back in the face of state-level initiatives like the ones

in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts that sponsored the almost exclusive development of and education through English (Lindholm-Leary and Howard, 2008). However, these initiatives may have had their day with revisions made to ballot initiative Question 2 in Massachusetts to make TWI more readily available to families, and a ballot initiative now afoot in California to repeal its restrictive language instruction policies that came about with Proposition 227 in 1998 (Ash, 2014).

Ironically, the growth in TWI programming may be attributed to this less-than-auspicious climate for the bilingual education of language-minority students. Despite the best efforts of 27 states that have declared English to be their official language (de Jong, 2011), we have personally seen principals become explicit about the fact that TWI programming provides a mechanism by which to continue to offer non-English language instruction to language-minority students so that they may access academic content in their primary language; all the while acquiring English in order to meet Federal Government English-language progress and proficiency mandates under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (Mayer, 2007).

For the parents of children who are already proficient in English or for whom English is initially their only language, a range of issues may motivate their increased enrollment in TWI programs across the nation. Parents may value the personal benefits of multilingualism for their children (i.e., linguistic and academic advantages) as well as see dual-language immersion as a signal commitment to social justice efforts in the United States with the belief that exposure of their children to more than one language and culture will promote greater cross-cultural understanding. Of course much multilingualism in the United States is achieved by families without a child's enrollment in a TWI program. Children acquire additional languages in other contexts, both through formal instructional settings such as transitional bilingual education programs, one-way immersion programs, heritage language programming, and English language development classes, as well as through informal interactions with siblings (perhaps ones who are already being schooled in an additional language), with peers, and with parents, grandparents, or other adult caregivers.

While the new work that we report in the book was conducted in the United States, findings from studies with multilingual families and educators in others countries are woven throughout the discussion. These include studies conducted in countries with wholly different languages in contact with one another. For example, we examine situations in European countries that have a tradition of playing host to "guest workers" who by now have multiple generations of European-born children. These include Turkish-origin families settled in Germany (Razakowski et al., 2013) and the Netherlands (Prevoo et al., 2013). Studies of European, African, and Asian linguistic contexts are also

4   Multilingual nations: multilingualism in context

included to illuminate cases of trilingual development (e.g., Hoffmann, and Ytsma, 2004).

We also discuss studies conducted in English-speaking countries other than the United States. These studies have examined both indigenous and immigrant languages in contact with English, for example, the attempts to revive the Welsh language against overwhelming odds of language attrition in the face of English-language dominance (Gathercole and Thomas, 2009), the situation of Asian and Eastern European immigrant families in Britain where languages such as Bengali (Pagett, 2006) and Polish (see, e.g., BI-SLI Poland Studies) increasingly come into contact with English.

Two seminal language contact situations that have been extensively researched are those found in Francophone Canada (Genesee, 1998; Wright, 1996) with its special dynamic created by French-English bilingualism in an otherwise English-dominant North America, and Castilian (Spanish)-dominant Spain that has seen the survival – even revival – of Catalan, Galician, and Basque (DePalma and Teasley, 2013; Wright, 1996). Studies of trilingualism in Switzerland (Chevalier, 2013) and Poland (Gabryś-Barker and Otwinowska, 2012) reveal that English is often the "third" language in the linguistic mix, and where countries are joining together in formal trade or political networks they are also choosing English as their lingua franca (e.g., The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Kirkpatrick, 2008).

While the large number of different languages spoken in close proximity to one another in the European context would certainly seem to offer ready opportunities for multilingualism (Ortega, 2013a), the result of the European Commission survey we referenced earlier was surprising. A mere 56% of Europeans reported the ability to converse in a language other than their mother tongue. This certainly calls into question the widely held belief that most people around the world with the exception of North Americans can speak more than one language. Indeed, Erard (2012), writing in *The New York Times*, publicized this reversal of multilingualism's fortune both questioning whether the United States is really as monolingual as people believe it to be and indeed whether the rest of the world is as predominantly multilingual as commonly proclaimed.

Given the ubiquitous dominance of English in so many of these contexts, let us turn briefly to the projected fate of the English language worldwide. Although it will apparently be so for the foreseeable future, English cannot remain dominant. Its maximum spread as a first language has apparently already peaked (Ostler, 2005) and a Chinese language variant may eventually take over the hegemony that British English once held and that the American variety currently enjoys at home and abroad, or else one of the ascending varieties of the world's Englishes, such as an East Indian variant.

Undoubtedly, raising multilingual children can be difficult. Parenting children who will be (and educating children who are) multilingual is not without serious challenges. Parents face many daunting obstacles to their attempts to provide exposure to two or more languages either in the home or through enlisting the support of educators and others in their milieux. Unbeknownst to many families, one of the most potent forces to undermine their best intentions lives right in their midst. Research has found that the presence of an older sibling, the child who first goes out into the wider society, is in actual fact the proverbial Trojan horse of the multilingual aspirations of many families. Their contact with the majority or dominant societal language when they enter school brings the majority language into the home. Their preference for the majority language may overwhelm parental attempts at controlling input of the linguistic minority language – the family's heritage language, in this case the children's first language (L1) – and the majority language, in this case the children's second language (L2).

The erosion caused by older siblings on the younger siblings' L1 is quite astounding such that within one household there may be parents who are monolingual in a language that has the minority status in a community, older children who are bilingual in both the parent's L1 and the majority language, and then subsequent younger children who are almost entirely monolingual in the majority language of the wider society. Gathercole (2014) recently provided commentary on a number of factors that have been found to influence the course and attainment of bilingualism, including the quantity, quality and contexts of exposure. These factors included findings replicated in a number of studies that coming later in birth order predicts a greater degree of development of English and less utterance sophistication and lower vocabulary scores in L1. Gathercole concludes that "The majority language wins out; the minority language is threatened. Because of the dominance of the majority language in the community, children seem to achieve parity in that language regardless of the patterns of exposure, e.g., in the home. This contrasts sharply with the fate of the minority language. We have seen over and over again … that the minority language can suffer in comparison" (p. 364).

But for all the ease by which children with a minority language background may seem to acquire the majority language as their L2, there are still many children who face a major undertaking to become proficient speakers, readers, and writers in that target language (e.g., testing as fluent English proficient [FEP] in U.S. public schools, Slama, 2012). Given that in most cases, proficiency in the majority language is a prerequisite for school achievement, educators face different but equally complex issues when teaching multilingual children. Faced with the challenge, educators must be vigilant not to view students whose L2 is still emergent as any less capable, any less smart, nor any less possessing of the potential to achieve at the very highest levels of

performance in school. Moreover, educators face difficult choices about the kinds of instructional approaches to language and content teaching that will best suit their students' linguistic needs, not just in one language, but taking into account two or even more languages.

In the past five years or so, much has been made in the popular press of the potentially protective neurocognitive effects of bilingualism on aging (along with learning to play a musical instrument – another symbolic representational system like language). This positive influence is believed to be due to the buffer that bilingualism provides during the decline of executive functioning and control (e.g., selective attention, organizational skills, and problem-solving abilities). It seems that the science behind these claims is a lot more nuanced and a lot less conclusive than the simple optimistic portrayal that has made it into the public discourse thus far. Bilingualism may not have the retarding effects on the onset of diseases like dementia that it is currently touted to have. Baum and Titone (2014), in a review of bilingualism and the effects of aging, conclude that science would best be served by a notion of "neuroplasticity" that individuals may have in different degrees rather than simplistically pitting bilingual brains against monolingual brains and making claims about group differences in favor of bilinguals. In fact, Morton (2014) in his commentary on this review takes child language researchers and others to task for painting far too "sunny" a picture of the lifetime effects of bilingualism on executive functioning without properly testing meaningful hypotheses. Rather, he sees "The whole story to be an insufferable mixture of excessive claims and weak evidence" (p. 931). Moreover, claims of enhanced executive functioning amongst healthy bilinguals more generally have been viewed as a publication bias toward accepting and disseminating studies that report positive findings (de Bruin, Treccani, and Della Sala, 2015) and, as a consequence, further call into question the cognitive benefits of bilingualism.

But no matter! Parents and educators are not investing in children's multilingualism solely for the protective effects it may have on the diseases of old age. Nor do too many rationalize their support of multilingualism because of the supposed greater executive control that comes from the mental exercise of constant selection between two or more languages. Rather, parents are rationalizing their support of multilingualism because it can serve as an important conduit to participation in their families' daily lives, knowledge of their histories, extended family, and the linguistic communities they either belong to or aspire to belong to. The languages children acquire are part and parcel of their identity, their self-esteem, and their attitudes toward their own and others' ethnic and cultural ties. Educators support multilingualism in children because they see the opportunities it affords children academically and socially in an increasingly diverse society at home and a globalized world beyond. Many may even see the connections between knowing two or

more languages and the metalinguistic and metacognitive abilities of their students. And, because it is the right thing to do: where is the social justice in replacing a child's language with a different one if maintaining two is well within the pedagogical capabilities of teachers, schools, and states when the will-power is there?

We conclude this section with a little levity; a joke told to us on different occasions by both a parent and an educator who took part in our research. The joke "works" because it relies on that widely held belief that the United States is a monolingual nation. We found a recount of the same joke in an essay by Mary Louise Pratt (2003) and so include it here verbatim but caution that it is our chief intent with this volume to debunk this belief as myth and replace it with arguments for the United States as a thriving multilingual nation:

> What do you call a person who knows three languages?
> Trilingual.
> What do you call a person who knows two languages?
> Bilingual.
> What do you call a person who knows only one language?
> An American. (p.111)

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2 reviews the research showing the importance and impact of multilingualism for children, their parents and teachers, and society at large. We attempt to establish the size of the population with the potential to develop multilingual practices in the United States, especially the elusive under-5-year-old group, whose language abilities and exposures are not accounted for in U.S. Census surveys. We also examine teacher demographics in the areas of reported language knowledge and ethnicity in an even more challenging attempt to ascertain the nation's ability to meet the diverse needs of multilingual students. We highlight findings on the linguistic, cognitive, academic, and social developments of children and then consider the impact of multilingualism from local and global perspectives.

Chapter 3 treats in some depth the wide range of beliefs and understandings of multilingualism that we encountered in the interviews with both the parents and educators. Using extensive quotes from the participants in our research, we first thematically group the different beliefs they hold about how language is acquired and sustained through various types of exposure and instruction. In the case of the parents, we also examine their perceptions of the role multilingualism plays in their families' lives. We then connect these beliefs and understandings to the extant research literature and discuss how they are frequently revealed as myths and misconceptions of the effects of speaking two or more languages.

Chapter 4 introduces the families and educators whose lives and work are the focus of the research reported in this book. The chapter provides details of the methods we used, including the descriptions of the participant families and educators, the research procedures and related analyses. The families were chosen systematically to represent a wide range of different circumstances under which multilingualism can occur, including recent and more established immigrant families, mixed race/ethnicity families, families reviving a heritage or ancestral language, and monolingual families adding a foreign language as enrichment for aesthetic, instrumental, or social justice reasons.

We deliberately included families whose members speak Spanish, numerically the most prevalent language spoken in the United States after English, as well as additional widely spoken languages in the contemporary United States, such as Farsi, Mandarin, Armenian, and Arabic. We also included families who have chosen to raise their children speaking languages that are no longer as commonly heard among minority groups in the United States but play a role in the global context (German, Russian, and French). These families provide us with a representation of children from birth to adulthood (toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, elementary, middle/high school students, young adults). We also included couples who aspire to raise their future children as multilingual members of society.

The educators we studied have all encountered multilingual children in their classrooms. They were chosen to represent a wide variety of teaching settings. Dual-language settings include two-way or dual-immersion programs, one-way immersion programs, developmental (maintenance) bilingual programs, and heritage language programs. English-only settings include English-as-a-second-Language (ESL) and English language development (ELD) programs and general education English-only classrooms that are increasingly the educational environment encountered by many children with languages other than English.

Our research procedures included face-to-face and telephone semi structured interviews with one parent representing a family or, in the case of three couples, with both parents interviewed together. We also conducted semi structured interviews with educators alone, in pairs, or, on one occasion, in a group of three. These procedures are particularly effective for generating personal narrative data. Stories can provide first-hand accounts of daily family routines and activities, as well as the critical or "telling" experiences that can reveal the meaning-making processes, values, and beliefs of participants (e.g., Barth, 2003; Bruner, 1990). Verbatim transcripts of these data were then systematically coded for themes that were identified in the research literature introduced in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as closely read for new themes revealed in the interviews. These new themes were systematically noted and then the data analyzed to see if these additional themes also emerged across other families

or educators. High-contrast cases and "telling" cases among the families and educators are selected to illustrate prominent themes in greater detail, and to bring the educators' personal perspectives to bear on the review of educational programs in later chapters.

Chapter 5 presents the findings from the interviews with families raising children as multilingual speakers. We meet, for example, Linda Harrison-Beltran's family who deploy their "Spanish Channel" – a fun yet effective way to encourage their children to speak Spanish in their home[1], the teenage boys of Monica Perez who are motivated to maintain Spanish through their common love of "música folklórica" with their grandfather who still resides in Mexico, and the various families who speak of "infusing" their children with their L1 by taking them on trips to visit family members who reside round the United States and in their home countries.

The findings of this chapter help to illuminate the beliefs and practices of individual families as well as explore the themes that are common across families raising children in very different contexts. We also discuss the fears of parents as their children move into puberty, start to take on the views and language of their peers, and show a waning interest in maintaining their linguistic heritage. We hear how hard it is to support more than one language and how parents have to strike a balance so that the parent-child and sibling relationships do not suffer even if parents insist on using two or more languages. Parents also talk of making investments in multilingualism, along with trade-offs and sacrifices, both financial and, surprisingly, linguistic. For example, one father consciously knew he was not going to be able to acquire English to the same degree as his children as a result of his efforts to exclusively support Spanish in the home. We conclude this chapter with a discussion of how the findings from the parents' narratives can help the education field understand first-hand their motivations, challenges, and successes.

Chapter 6 surveys the range of formal Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs, Faulkner-Bond et al., 2012) and informal approaches (e.g., parochial schools and church groups, private language schools, play-dates with peers, "Mommy and Me" classes, multilingual caregiving arrangements, daily interactions with siblings) to fostering multilingualism that are available to parents. Interviews with the educators reveal their beliefs about multilingualism in the classroom, in the homes of their students, and in the wider U.S. society. These participants either have experience in teaching in multilingual classrooms or they teach multilingual students in an otherwise English-only environment. We garnered information from them about the rewards and challenges of teaching in their respective programs, and the practices they have adopted that have been successful in fostering positive linguistic, academic, and social outcomes for students. These practices include a wide array of approaches from the simple celebration of children's

cultural holidays and cuisines in their classrooms to the systematic train-ing they need to support language pedagogies, as well as petitioning for the recognition of and support for multilingual students from their school administrations.

In the seventh and final chapter, we draw conclusions from the research, specifically making connections between parent and educator perspectives in order to inform the field about ways in which multilingualism might be more systematically sustained across the home and school contexts than is currently the case. Specifically, we relay the advice parents had for edu-cators and vice versa. We also catalogue the parents' strategies and prac-tices for fostering multilingualism. Moreover, common and complementary experiences reported by parents raising multilingual children in different contexts or for different reasons are identified. Common experiences (e.g., searching for out-of-school activities that support Spanish learning) that unwittingly may unite parents (e.g., the immigrant Spanish-speaking parent with the English-dominant TWI program parent) can provide the impetus toward a collectivist approach to multilingualism in the future – an approach that is part of the systematicity we argue is needed to effectively sustain multilingualism. Requisite further research to build this argument is also highlighted.

A key theoretical lens we explore to make sense of the findings over-all is the notion of "investment" in multilingualism (Norton Pierce, 1995; Potowski, 2001). Attempts to maintain a first, second, or more languages are viewed as multi-year (possibly life-long), often multi-generational com-mitments that include making financial, psychological, sociological, and educational investments. Such investments it turns out can have important implications for children's personal, familial, and public identities, their academic standing, and most definitely for their future position in our global society.

NOTE

[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout the book for the names of the participating par-ents and educators, and for the names of their children, students, friends, and family members.