

# Multilingualism Is Not Bilingualism + 1: An Introduction

Anat Stavans & Ulrike Jessner

Multilingualism in all its possible shapes plays an integral part in human socialization. The existence of multilingualism as a lifestyle has prevailed among most of the world's population from biblical times to today (Stavans & Hoffmann 2015), where people function with multiple languages on a daily basis. Throughout historical and geopolitical events, the spread and need for more than one language has almost translated into a sustainable commodity. Languages become “currencies” that have different and changing “exchange rates” in different spheres of human interaction in the “communication market” at different times, in different places, and for different purposes. Multilingualism today typifies individuals of all backgrounds – educated and less educated, affluent and poor, in rural and urban communities, and in different geographical areas. The spread and roots of multilingualism are grounded in circumstances that have turned monolingual and bilingual societies into multilingual ones. Such circumstances are political, historical, educational, and economic in nature and occur in different times and spaces, consecutively or simultaneously. Certain regions in the world, such as Asia and Africa, have had a long multilingual tradition, whereas Europe had a primarily monolingual, nation-based tradition until the establishment of the European Union (EU). The establishment of the EU, linguistically, became a catalyst and a magnifying glass for the changing linguistic diversity of recent decades. Multilingualism, or rather plurilingualism as defined by the European Council, has become a central and propelling force through the evolving attention it has received in terms of research, implementation, policy, and management. Hence, bilingualism and multilingualism (plurilingualism), as opposed to monolingualism, are spread throughout the world, and are not a novel human capacity.

What has made interest in multilingualism escalate is its centrality and growth worldwide, which has generated a new linguistic reality in recent decades. The advances in technology, the ever-growing need for

international communication, and the readily accessible international mobility and recent waves of migration have all led to the need for people to have command of more than one language and, more pronouncedly of late, more than two languages. The number of languages in the world is in constant flux, as new languages are discovered every day and the ones already known are themselves under constant changes as a result of their dynamic nature and in response to the changes imposed on people's lives and communication needs. Thus, multilingualism should come as no surprise, and in fact mirrors the linguistic reality in which we live. With 7,099 languages used in 204 countries on six continents (Eberhard et al. 2017), multilingualism comes as no surprise, making it a fundamental human characteristic, just like the ability to reason and to feel.

Despite the prevalence of multilingualism in the world, the center of gravity of research remains geographically constrained to North America and Europe, with fewer, albeit growing numbers of studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This research is often based on upper- to middle-class individuals with a Western language and literacy tradition, whose multilingualism involves a limited language combination fostered by social forces in limited contexts (such as schooling) to conform with monolingual expectations. There are, however, regions such as India and some other areas of Asia where the social and cultural conditions have shaped different multilingual outcomes. These regions showcase the multilingualism that constitutes typologically different language repertoires, revealing new types of multilingualism resulting from crosslinguistic interactions that shed a broader light on the understanding of this linguistic phenomenon. It would be fair, though speculative, to say that nowadays bilinguals and multilinguals outnumber monolinguals. This, in turn, calls for a greater impetus in the study of multilingualism as a window to a better understanding of language development, awareness, use, and maintenance, as well as the cognitive, socialization, and educational benefits (or deficits) for the individual (driven by internal forces) and society (driven by and driving external forces).

Much has been studied and published on multilingualism in research disciplines that have hitherto often been fragmented (see seminal work by Gumperz & Hymes 1972; Haugen 1956; Fishman 1967; Genesee 1989; García 2009; Bialystok 2001). Internationally, psycholinguistic approaches to the study of multilingualism, including second language acquisition studies (Cook 1991 on multicompetence; De Bot et al. 2007) and bilingual development studies (Grosjean 1982, 2010; Genesee 1989; Lanza 1992; Pavlenko 2014), have focused on individual and cognitive/mental processes, while sociolinguistic approaches have focused on society, at both individual and group levels (Edwards 2004; Heller 2006; Aronin et al. 2011), all of which has yielded different theoretical approaches to the study of multilingualism. Still, the fundamental shared premise is that a multilingual person is not the sum of many monolinguals in one and the same person

(in line with the seminal ideas regarding bilingualism proposed by Grosjean 2008), nor is a trilingual person the sum total of three monolinguals (Herdina & Jessner 2002) or the sum total of a bilingual plus a monolingual (Hoffmann 2001; Stavans & Hoffmann 2015). Rather, multilingualism is distinct from both monolingualism and bilingualism, for it requires more complex crosslinguistic interactions and the increased multilingual awareness that is imposed by the influence of the different language systems (Montanari & Quay 2019; Jessner & Allgäuer-Hackl 2020), which can facilitate novel language learning in multilinguals (Jessner et al. 2016). Consequently, multilingualism cannot be seen through the same lens as bilingualism; it is inherently more dynamic, complex, heterogenous, and multidimensional when explaining learning, use, processing, and maintenance of more than two languages across modalities, ages, and contexts.

*The Cambridge Handbook of Childhood Multilingualism* provides a state-of-the-art view of intra- and interdisciplinarity in linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education through a kaleidoscope of languages, countries, scholars, and cultures. The purpose of this handbook is to bring together knowledge on multilingualism, not from a lifelong perspective but rather from the inception stages of early multilingualism, that is, *childhood multilingualism*. Numerous studies have included under the term of multilingualism a wide variety of individual and societal processes that have led to the use of more than one language by an individual (simultaneous, sequential, SLA, etc.) and a society (revitalization, endangerment, linguistic landscape, language use, etc.). However, in this volume we focus on what we consider to be the root of multilingualism as an ever-changing phenomenon, starting with but also generating a “new linguistic reality” for many children in the world.

The current linguistic reality in which children develop and their childhood unfolds is the unavoidable result of population mobility, geopolitical contingencies, natural disasters, and other life-threatening situations. Early childhood and initial stages of schooling (from birth to 10 years of age) are paramount to a child’s intensive social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development. The incipient and most significant transitions that children experience from home to the wider social environment (childcare, school, community centers, etc.) are paramount to human development, socialization, and the progress of society, starting from the very early stages of life. These emergent first stages of the development of multilingualism weave the linguistic, cognitive, social, and cultural tapestry of people’s identity and sense of belonging. The perspective taken in this handbook is one that focuses both on the process of *becoming* and the product of *being* a multilingual child, tracing the trajectories and profiles of new forms and varieties of multilingual productions in both spoken and written language(s).

This handbook was conceived over a number of years of conversations, meetings, research, and intervention experiences the editors have accumulated. From the outset, the aim of the volume has been to present state-of-the-art scientific knowledge on individual and societal aspects of childhood

multilingualism from internationally renowned scholars whose work has spearheaded the challenge and potential that multilingualism fosters for the individual in the family, school, and community contexts. This project is evidence and outcome of a common outlook on incipient multilingualism, which has at its center the multilingual child and the worlds that constitute and create this unique type of childhood. The motivation for this volume derived from the need for (1) a clearer understanding that for most children multilingualism is the linguistic reality into which they come and in which they grow; (2) an analysis of the incoming flow of languages from different sources, at different times, and in different forms that affects childhood multilingualism as a human capacity to process language that goes beyond monolingualism and bilingualism; (3) an elucidation of the diversity in which most multilingual children engage and grow through unique socialization events, yielding a multilingual childhood with imprints in their evolution to adulthood; (4) an elaboration of the triangulation of childhood, parenthood, and schooling as natural cultivating conditions motivated by different internal and external forces in developing multilingual children; (5) an integrative approach to looking at multilingual children and their development where the child and childhood are at the center and multilingualism and languages are the contour (in contrast to most studies of multilingualism, which take a linguistic, educational, sociolinguistic, or psycho-neurolinguistic perspective); and (6) a clear and distinguishing focus on multilingualism as a capacity/skill/ability detached from and independent of monolingualism and bilingualism.

Intended to inform scholars and practitioners, linguists, educators, psychologists, anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists, and communication experts, as well as others interested in the language of multilingual children and the environments in which they grow, this volume consists of seven sections, each of which takes a unique perspective on childhood multilingualism. The volume will cover the major domains of contemporary childhood multilingualism research, including the early trajectories of being and becoming a multilingual, the agents and forces affecting childhood multilingualism such as the family, the society, and the school, the evolution of the child's processes and faculties toward the development and awareness of multilingualism, and the cognitive bases for emergent multilingualism in childhood. Scholars who have worked on multilingualism in different language typologies, in different countries, and on different continents have gathered to integrate and tease out that which is universal to childhood multilingualism as an agent of the "new linguistic realities."

The volume begins with a cluster of chapters entitled "Becoming and Being a Multilingual Child." This section is concerned with the multiple ways and realities in which children become multilingual. It sets up the different ways in which scholars report, study, analyze, and understand multilingualism in different contexts, the challenges and needs the child has in acquiring and using the languages in contexts (Deuchar, Chapter 3),

the different routes into different types of early multilingualism (Navracscics, Chapter 1), the multilingual child's understanding of the multilingual individual they become and the multilingual society into which they grow (Mary & Hélot, Chapter 4), and the multilingual child's interpretation of the different language modalities to which they are exposed (Kanto, Chapter 2).

The second cluster of chapters, entitled "Cognition and Faculties in Multilinguals," centers on issues pertaining to the processing of a multilingual repertoire. As the section title states, there are two related main themes – cognition and faculties. Early research on bilingualism and cognition reflects the belief that acquiring more than one language places undue stress on a child's mind and has negative effects on cognitive development. Bilingual children were often judged to be semilingual or a "social or cognitive Frankenstein" (Hakuta & Diaz 1985). Since then, there have been numerous studies to show the opposite, highlighting a positive relationship between bilingualism and intelligence, distinguishing between and separating special language impairment and multilingualism, noting cognitive advantages in multilingual communication and the positive impact of multilingualism on cognition, and establishing that multilinguals perform differently from (bi- and) monolinguals on certain types of nonlinguistic, linguistic, and, particularly, metalinguistic tasks. Three chapters contribute to the framing of multilingual cognition to address three distinct issues: processing language(s), metalinguistic awareness, and language exposure. The cognitive processing of multilinguals concerns the long-standing debates regarding the relations between language and thought (Chung-Fat-Yim & Bialystok, Chapter 5) and, more specifically, which cognitive faculties are affected or affect an individual's cognitive ability. In light of the complexity of the cognitive processes involved, a central aspect of multilingualism is that the individual develops knowledge of and about the languages beyond the mechanics of multilanguage productions as an emergent property of the multilingual mind. The metalinguistic awareness of multilingual individuals develops much earlier than their exposure to formal language input, just as with monolinguals (Gopnik & Meltzoff 1997; Gopnik et al. 1999). Yet, the complexity and dynamic processing that is grounded in a unique metalinguistic awareness stands in unique contrast to that of monolinguals and bilinguals (Hofer & Jessner, Chapter 7). The churning wheels of the processing and metalinguistic awareness of the multilingual machinery are closely related to the exposure to the linguistic repertoire and the compelling forces that eventually lead to multilingual communication (Mishina-Mori, Chapter 6).

The dexterity of multilinguals is best seen in informal and naturalistic contexts where their multilingual faculties are exposed while interacting with other individuals. Three such faculties are discussed in this section to elucidate and foreground a multilingual faculty that is often undervalued, if not deemed deficient by monolingual standards: the faculty to code-

switch between the languages, to describe and explain the place of the languages in the child's actions, and to use the languages in play. The ability to alternate between the language systems (code-switch) or to draw on different items in the multilingual's repertoire (translanguage) for the purposes of efficient and effective communication is one of the most prominent and unique phenomena associated with multilinguals and bilinguals (Stavans & Porat 2019). The different levels of linguistic features conjured to produce a code-switched utterance are discussed (Treffers-Daller, Chapter 8) to elucidate that this unique multilingual phenomenon is not rooted in fallacious language abilities but rather in felicitous and sophisticated ones. Drawing on and combining the different "nuts and bolts" of the languages to build the multilingual utterance is greatly reliant on the ability to perceive the linguistic repertoire in all its grandeur and to assign to it a particular value and functionality (Busch, Chapter 9), not only the unique forms and functions that service multilingual communication but also the *de facto* application of these in real-life contexts where humans are called on to socialize. The multilingual faculty is summoned in natural "online" communication from early childhood onward in the context of one of the most prevalent activities of children – play (Wang, Chapter 10).

Following the theoretical frames and the individual aspects of multilingual issues in early childhood, the third cluster of chapters, entitled "Family Language Policy," assumes that multilingual children are not only the product of their own abilities and personalities but the outcome of the habitat in which they develop. Within this habitat, the first and more immediately incipient circle of language agents are the family that surrounds the child, more specifically the parents (Schalley & Eisenclas, Chapter 12), and the language provisions they make. Multilingual families are characterized by the language capital and currencies they have, by the planning and management of the language practices they establish (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, Chapter 11), adopt, and sustain, by the experiences and realities of their daily lives (da Silva Iddings, Butler, & Flynt, Chapter 13), and by the variety of members who have different roles, relations, and communicative needs in respect of the multilingual child (Macleroy, Chapter 14). These topics are discussed in this section in the context of multilingualism in the child and the construal of the child's multilingual childhood.

From the home/family circle in the lifespan of children, the next socialization contexts in which children engage are (in)formal educational frameworks. In the fourth section, entitled "Language(s) and Literacy of Multilingual Children through Schooling," the chapters contend with the challenges, expectations, and provisions made within the schooling environment for multilingualism and multilingual children. More specifically, multilingual children have to master not only the different languages but possibly also different writing systems that encode them (Reyes, Chapter 16). While monolingual children are busy learning to read and

write in one language, multilingual children must learn to do that in all their different languages (Stavans 2014). The bridge between the spoken and the written language occurs in the schooling years, taking us from being spoken language listeners and speakers to being written language readers and writers (Smith and Murphy, Chapter 17). Beyond the technical and scholastic aspects of crossing the bridge between spoken and written forms of one language, the multilingual child must do this in all the languages, often taking into consideration stylistic, cultural, and conceptual, as well as linguistic means (Young, Chapter 15) that the child may have for “packaging” a thought (Weth & Schroeder, Chapter 18). Of paramount challenge for any child, and exponentially more so for the multilingual child, is the transition into academic literacy, which is highly reliant on the development of reading and writing, a protracted process mediated in the scholastic environment. Success at learning not only the language as valued in achievement and its assessment (Huang & Bailey, Chapter 19) but also the lifelong habits that are fostered by learning to read (Smith & Murphy, Chapter 17) draws on multilingual experiences, languages, and literacy traditions. Such traditions of inquiry, curiosity, and motivation depend to a great extent on the way teachers mediate the languages, their literacies, and the educational contents (Hoskyn & Moore, Chapter 20).

Humans, adults, and children alike have an innate need for socialization that is mediated by language. The need to acquire and develop tools for communication and hence enable our membership and participation in a social group is not only the individual’s need but also the need of the different social groups in which the individual develops. The next context that affects the child’s multilingualism directly and indirectly is often driven by external forces exerted by the society/community. In the fifth cluster of chapters, entitled “Socialization in Childhood Multilingualism,” we discuss different angles and issues that concern how multilingual children perceive languages and their use from a number of perspectives and how, in an indirect way, the social contexts in which they grow shape their multilingual childhood. These issues are grounded in both psycho- and sociolinguistic forces that play a crucial role in the development of multilingualism in the early years. Multilingualism in the family is dependent on the sociopolitical framework in which it is embedded (Coetzee-Van Rooy, Chapter 24) and is subject to change in case of migration or minoritized speech communities (Melzi, Prishker, Kavas, & Huancacuri-Harlow, Chapter 22). Parents and wider family contribute to the building of a child’s identity (Hu, Chapter 21), as does the environment. Whether the heritage language is maintained (Montrul, Chapter 23) also depends on the status of a language and/or its ethnolinguistic vitality, not to forget language rights (Mohanty & Skutnabb-Kangas, Chapter 25).

Last but not least is the sixth section of the volume, entitled “Multilingual Children’s Landscape,” which is the rather new research area of linguistic landscape that offers a number of perspectives in relation to childhood

multilingualism. Most of the work conducted in the first wave of research on linguistic landscape was essentially cartography with a strong focus on distribution analysis of public signs to determine the presence and dominance of languages in the landscape and from there extrapolate to the vitality of languages within a given context. In the course of child development in (mostly) monolinguals, some attention has been given to how spaces and places where the child spends time contribute to and support the child's language and literacy development. These spaces have an important, albeit less quantifiable, role in child development in general and in language and literacy development in particular. With a focus on the linguistic landscape – as it objectively exists or as it is perceived or understood and used by the multilingual child – the spatial landscape that carries language and cultural representations for different purposes is the (informal) input, recognition, acculturation, identity, and belonging traces inherent in the growing multilingual child's environments. By focusing on exposure to multilingualism as mediated by the linguistic landscape (Shohamy & Gorter 2008) and material culture (Aronin & Ó Laoire 2013) of the child's home (Melo-Pfeifer, Chapter 26), the peer-community (Cekaite, Chapter 28), and school (Vetter, Chapter 27), we showcase further insights into both child and childhood multilingualism.

In summary, we have brought together different experts to share their state-of-the-art take on childhood multilingualism through different specifications of what and who is multilingual; how and why the greater understanding of multilingualism elucidates our understanding of linguistic, cognitive, social, cultural, and educational processes of teaching and learning; the formation of multilingualism from incipient stages of development in terms of acquisition and learning; the agency of parents, siblings, peers, spaces, schools, policy makers, and, above all, the child in the construal of multilingualism. The volume presents examples and cases as well as realities from different regions of the world, leaving the reader informed and aware of the similarity between and uniqueness of the different multilingual realities of and for children, all of which contribute to the readiness with which children will embrace the “new” linguistic realities that go beyond languages and geographical borders, and which have become even more present with globalization, mobility, and technology.

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