
BOOK REVIEW

BOOK REVIEW of RØYNELAND, U., & BLACKWOOD, R. (EDS.). (2022).
MULTILINGUALISM ACROSS THE LIFESPAN. ROUTLEDGE.

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1 Introduction

Multilingualism Across the Lifespan is the second of two volumes, festschrifts for Elizabeth Lanza, in the Routledge series on *Critical Studies in Multilingualism in Society Across the Lifespan*, edited by Unn Røyneland (University of Oslo) and Robert Blackwood (University of Liverpool). It explores language trajectories from a largely psycholinguistic perspective, whereas the first volume, *Spaces in Multilingualism*, has a more sociolinguistic focus. Based on the assumption that trajectories of languages ‘are not linear, regular, or without disruption’ (p.2), it engages with ‘issues around the processes of change in and of languages and societies’ (ibid.) including ‘language acquisition, family practices and policies, and the consequences of aphasia and dementia on language use’ (ibid.). Each of its three sections focuses on a different aspect of Lanza’s work and each chapter is deliberately multi-authored as a reflection of her belief in collaboration and the dynamism in research it can engender.

2 Chapter summaries

2.1 Part 1: Bilingual Acquisition – Methodological and Theoretical Advances

Chapter 1: *Child Language Assessment across Different Multilingual Contexts – Insights and Challenges from South and North* (Hanne Gram Simonsen & Frenette Southwood) discusses the use of the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory (CDI) and the Language Impairment Testing in Multilingual Settings (LITMUS) Cross-Linguistic Lexical Tasks for clinical assessment of multilingual children’s language abilities in South Africa and Norway. The authors express the need for multilingual norms, linguistically comparable

tools and knowledge of local language socialization patterns when assessing language impairment. They argue that the role of language socialization practices has been largely overlooked, although some progress has been made in the creation of comparable language versions of tools (usable with both monolingual and multilingual children) and some of these consider the influence of socioeconomic status and language exposure patterns. They make a general call for researchers and clinicians to stop extending data and findings from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) contexts to non-WEIRD environments as the situations are not comparable.

Chapter 2: *Developmental Perspectives on Parents' Use of Discourse Strategies with Bilingual Children* (Annick De Houwer & Janice Nakamura) focusses on strategies used by parents to support their children's use of non-societal languages. De Houwer and Nakamura apply Lanza's 'bilingual family interaction model' – shortened with agreement from Lanza to 'BIFIM' – to the socialization patterns bilingual parents use when conversing with their young, bilingually-raised children. They argue that BIFIM is a highly useful framework for understanding bilingual parent-child interaction and its consequences for bilingual language production, and are puzzled that it has received so little attention from psycholinguists and sociolinguists to date. The model is characterized by five discourse strategies, ranged along a continuum from most monolingual to most bilingual: minimal grasp strategy, expressed guess strategy, adult repetition, move on strategy and language switching. Through a review of studies of children from 1-12 years of age in bilingual homes, the authors detail the child-related factors which can impact their responses and receptiveness to the discourse strategies and argue that monolingual strategies are more successful than bilingual ones in supporting language production. Finally they express the need for more research into the 'dynamic' nature of parent-child exchanges within the bilingual home as well as into the role children's own developing language attitudes play when it comes to using societal and non-societal languages.

Chapter 3: *The Role of the Input in the Acquisition of Code-Switching* (Shannon Phillips & Margaret Deuchar) presents a study of the role of community input in children's acquisition of code-switching, particularly within-utterance switching. Using Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Framework (MLF) (Myers-Scotton, 2002), they suggest that child and adult speakers in a Welsh-English bilingual community used Welsh as the Matrix Language in mixed utterances, with English almost always employed as the Embedded Language. Their results suggest that developing bilinguals combine languages in the same way as adults in their community, and therefore that community input impacts children's language production. The authors recommend that future research compares this finding to other bilingual communities and extends the study to investigate the impact of a monolingual interlocutor's presence.

2.2 Part 2: Language Practices and Policies in the Family

Chapter 4: *Language Development, Discourse, and Politics* (Kendall A. King & Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen) summarises three family language policy (FLP) studies. Using Lanza's discourse strategies approach, the authors first illustrate different levels of consciousness and explicitness among Singaporean parents in bilingual interactions with their children, showing not only the negotiation of language choice, but also the influence of top-down

language policies in this highly multilingual society. The second study presents an analysis of mediated discourse between a Chinese parent and their bilingual child, suggesting a decrease in the child's Chinese skills over time can be attributed to the fact that the family switched to largely English language practices out of fear that their daughter would not be able to communicate effectively. This study highlighted that a FLP can be changed, that such change has consequences for acquisition and that a FLP is ultimately dependent upon parental aspirations for children's language use. The third study investigated the experiences of Spanish-speakers in the USA and how portrayal in the media and negative positioning of minority language speaking groups impacts FLPs. Here the authors discuss how families are, on one hand, proud of their language, their heritage and their right to pass them on to their children, and on the other afraid of risking the discrimination and deportation that may come with being outwardly Hispanic. King and Curdt-Christiansen characterize the situation as a 'no-win,' with the politicization of languages and the prevalence of computer mediated communication in the form of blogs, resources and propaganda having a direct impact on FLPs.

Chapter 5: *Family Time(s): Migrant Temporalities in Family Language Planning in the Urban African South* (Christine Anthonissen & Christopher Stroud) addresses how FLPs are contextually determined, focusing on 'temporality' and 'vulnerability' in the life experiences of African immigrants in South Africa, two features they feel are generally ignored in the literature. They first explore how theories of language planning and policy are actualized in societies with high cultural and linguistic diversity such as South Africa, given that the frameworks originated in 'less complex' situations (p.105). They examine the impact on language planning and policy of 'temporality' due to families' mobility leading to little formal education for children, ever-changing connections with other locals, unstable family income and, most importantly, uncertain futures. They also discuss family vulnerability, including risk of discrimination and homelessness, showing how when families need to meet their children's basic needs they give little thought to their FLP. Careful planning of a FLP is a luxury not all migrants can afford, and researchers should avoid assuming that heritage language transmission is of top priority to everyone. Furthermore, the authors found that multilingualism was not always viewed positively due to, for instance, foreign-sounding accents indexing 'otherness' and therefore preventing full assimilation and participation in the host society. They suggest methods for collecting data from migrant communities in a culturally responsive manner.

Chapter 6: *"Civilising Missions" to Indigenous Language Reclamation: Language Policy, Language Shift, and Maintenance in Australia and Norway* (Pia Lane & Gillian Wigglesworth) reviews the history of colonization in Australia and Norway, and how this has provoked language shift in indigenous communities. The authors review the history, linguistic context, assimilatory processes, education systems, and language policy and practices in the two countries. They discuss how indigenous communities have relinquished their language for the sake of upward social mobility, much like the immigrants who prioritised socioeconomic stability over language maintenance in Anthonissen and Stroud's chapter. The authors conclude that despite the geographical distance between the two countries, they have similar historical backgrounds and processes which result in the need for revitalization efforts directed at indigenous languages. For instance, schools were an important colonization tool in attempts to eliminate the use of indigenous tongues in both

environments. However, education systems have become sites for language revitalization initiatives. Lane and Wigglesworth found this especially true of Norway, with language revitalization in Australia more community-based. The authors emphasise that schools have a unique chance to not only support indigenous language revitalization but also acknowledge indigenous ways of 'knowing, learning and teaching in critical engagement with Western tradition' (p. 138).

2.3 Part 3: Bilingual Aging

Chapter 7: *Where Have All My Languages Gone? Aging and the Changing Multilingual Linguistic Ecology* (Ng Bee Chin & Francesco Cavallaro) analyses a set of semi-structured interviews with doctors, nurses and Linguistically Displaced Older Adults (LDOAs) in Singapore. The dominant language of the Singaporean healthcare system is English, a language which the Chinese speakers in the study did not speak. Whilst the nurses and patients were frustrated by the use of ad hoc interpreters and nurses being pulled from their duties to act as translators, the doctors believed that patients' inability to speak and understand for themselves was not detrimental to the quality of care they received. However, Chin and Cavallaro discovered firstly that the use of ad hoc interpreters does not always ensure intelligibility for LDOAs as the interpreters may only be partially fluent in the target language and may not understand the medical terminology used. Secondly, they concluded that adding the task of interpretation to nurses' duties may overburden and inhibit them from concentrating on overall patient care. Finally, they found that the linguistic barriers between patient and doctor, even when an interpreter is present, increased the risk of 'clinical errors' and negatively impacted the quality of the care received.

Chapter 8: *Fostering Storytelling by Persons with Dementia in Multiparty Conversation* (Jan Svennevig & Heidi Hamilton) presents a study of interactional practices that involve recounting past events or 'storytelling' that are beneficial to a Person With Dementia (PWD). The authors examine two successful but contrasting multi-party interactions: a conversation around the dining table between a PWD, her spouse and friends and an interaction in a support group between a small group of PWDs and trained professionals. They found that well-meaning attempts to ask for more details or clarifications can derail a PWD's story-telling and diminish their ability to contribute to the conversation. In both interactions, PWDs' supporters aided the PWD by inviting them to contribute, reformulating their utterance, asking for clarification or elaboration, offering appropriate lexical items, repeating previous utterances and positively evaluating their contributions. However, the opportunities and challenges are different in conversations with professionals and with family members. For example, the former may have formal training providing them with specific strategies yet family members have shared history with the PWD allowing them to prompt relevant contributions. The authors conclude that supporting PWDs' contribution to a multiparty interaction is to be encouraged because it promotes their social inclusion, which in turn enhances their wellbeing.

Chapter 9: *Assessment Challenges in Acquired Aphasia in Multilingual Individuals* (Monica Norvik & Mira Goral) illustrates practices and challenges regarding the assessment of communication skills in multilinguals with acquired aphasia. Norvik and Goral present two

case studies showing how individual differences including language background, culture and identity impact the response of such individuals to language assessment, and discuss practical and ethical considerations surrounding the administration of such assessments. While it is desirable to have multilingual clinicians and assessors, it is not always possible to find trained professionals with proficiency in all the relevant languages. While the authors recommend the use of professional interpreters, this can come with additional problems such as interpreters not able to facilitate communication with a person suffering from aphasia or being asked to maintain a 'monolingual mode' during the testing even when the patient knows they are bilingual. The authors also explain the need for comparable assessment tools across a patient's languages and that scoring mixed language production, coupled with individual differences present before the aphasia-inducing stroke, makes it difficult to interpret the results of language assessment measures. Norvik and Goral's discussion of the difficulties associated with adapting language assessment tasks for multilingual populations addresses similar issues to those raised by Simonsen and Southwood in Chapter 1. The authors make it clear that there is still much work to be done in developing culturally responsive measures and the assessment of multilinguals' language skills, particularly those with aphasia.

Chapter 10: *Pathological Language-Switching/Mixing and Its Relationship to Domain-General Cognitive Control* (Valantis Fynandis & Minna Lehtonen) explores the issue of recognizing when excessive code-switching in multilinguals with aphasia is pathological, i.e. 'without control by a given speaker' (p.211) as opposed to non-pathological. Based on the idea that executive functioning (EF) is a critical component of language-mixing/switching, individuals who demonstrate pathological switching are predicted to exhibit deficits in non-verbal executive functioning tasks, as well as having different lesions from those who exhibit non-pathological switching. Fynandis and Lehtonen review a number of studies that describe cases where individuals' excessive language-switching was a communicative strategy (i.e. non-pathological), and others where it was beyond their control (pathological). The authors were, however, unable to come to a firm conclusion regarding the link between EF and language-mixing, as they found evidence of pathological switching in individuals who performed within normal limits on non-verbal measures of EF. With respect to lesion differences, they found that in the cases of true pathological switching patients had suffered subcortical damage, particularly in the basal ganglia whereas non-pathologically switching patients demonstrated a wider variety of lesion sites.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

Chapter 11: *Carving New Spaces in the Study of Individual Multilingualism across the Lifespan* (Lourdes Ortega) provides a commentary on the entire volume. Acknowledging Lanza's significant contributions to the field of multilingualism and the inspiring way in which she created the space for collaboration, Ortega then reviews each of the book's three sections, linking each line of inquiry to Lanza's research and providing extra background information around dementia and strokes when discussing the final section.

3 Conclusion

Driven by a desire to secure positive outcomes for the wellbeing of multilingual individuals across all stages of life, the authors in this collection walk the reader through the mind of the bilingual child, parent and older adult, explaining the challenges and opportunities of each phase of life. The volume is a useful resource for anyone studying multilingualism, whether student or more advanced researcher and directs the reader to a wide range of external sources, making it clear who is who in the field, who is saying what, and why it matters. The consistent structure of the papers makes key information salient, allowing the reader to locate important points. There is a good balance between qualitative studies, quantitative research and literature reviews, providing multiple viewpoints with a consistent, critical lens. The emphasis on the immense impact of Lanza's ideas throughout creates a meaningful tribute to this respected scholar.

References

Myers-Scotton, C. (2002). *Contact Linguistics: Bilingual Encounters and Grammatical Outcomes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.