

Multilingualism: Its open and hidden agendas

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Abstract

The author analyses tendencies presented in recently launched EU reports claiming that newly published data reveal a need to rethink approaches to individual and social multilingualism. In the first part of the article approaches to individual as well as to societal multilingualism are discussed from a historical perspective. In the second part meanings ascribed to the promotion of multilingualism are analysed from the language perspective together with the use made of them in the field of social and political activity. Promoting multilingualism is then looked at from the perspectives of the learner and the teacher. Implications are finally sought for teaching, learning and assessment in language education.

Keywords: European language policy, plurilingualism, multilingualism, second language teaching, multilingual teacher, language learning, assessment

The aims of the present article are

- to present those aspects of today's language teaching landscape which are in need of rethinking in light of recently launched European documents and reports,
- to look at the promotion of multilingualism from a new point of view,

- to analyse various approaches to multilingualism in the European language policy,
- to uncover a hidden agenda in the promotion of multilingualism, and
- to reflect on what multilingualism means for the teacher, the learner and the evaluation process.

Stirring the Waves

Both the Council of Europe and the European Union consider not only multilingual regions to be an asset to every member state, but also individual multilingualism (the so called *plurilingualism*) to be an asset to every citizen. Teachers, therefore, are expected to successfully promote multilingualism in various forms and in various ways. The recently launched EU document entitled *First European Survey on Language Competences. Final Report* (2012), often referred to as *SurveyLang*, presenting data on the language proficiency of 15-year-olds in 16 school systems of 13 countries confirms some of our well rooted convictions about efficient ways to promote multilingualism and about factors correlating with success in language learning. *SurveyLang* demonstrates that factors such as an early start, amount of curriculum time for languages, exposure to foreign languages, the use of the target language during lessons, but also learners' perception of the language as useful and not very difficult are all highly correlated with FL test scores. Yet, there are surprises in store for the teaching profession.

The greatest shock comes with computers. New technologies, so far considered crucial, have not been found to correlate with test results. "Whether schools have access to a multimedia lab does not show clear effects on the average school scores on the language tests. This is true for all skills" (*First European Survey*, 2012, p. 83). There is no clear effect of virtual learning environment (VLE) on reading or the communicative aspect of writing. Although the presence of VLE has a positive effect on listening and the language aspect of writing, positive effects are not statistically significant. Moreover, both time spent on preparing for tests and time spent on homework are factors related to a lower score on the language tests (pp. 78-79).

A surprise also comes with data related to the emphasis on similarities between languages: "Teachers' pointing out similarities to students goes with lower scores on the language tests" (p. 87). One more unexpected result tells us that perception of the lesson, the teacher and materials show no correlation with test scores (p. 89). There also comes a statement which might even be considered as a conclusion not quite politically correct, although it should be stressed that it is related to foreign languages and not to the language of schooling: "Whether immigrant students received help in mastering the host language or whether they received formal education in their language(s) of

origin does not show clear effects on immigrant students' scores on the language tests" (p. 86). All these astonishing results show that there is a fundamental need to reconsider our approaches to language education and rethink ways to support language learning in schools.

In view of the growing significance of English which can be seen in another document recently launched by the EURYDICE office of the European Union, that is, *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe* (2012), we also need to reconsider the issue of motivation to learn more than one foreign language. The report states that 73% of primary and more than 90% of secondary school students choose English and, what is more, they consider this language the most useful, sufficient as an instrument of international communication and, furthermore, relatively easy to learn (p. 11). This has been demonstrated not only in verbal declarations, but also in high performance levels: B1 level has been found to be achieved by more than half of the 15-year-olds compared to 20% for French and German and 10% for Spanish (*First European Survey*, 2012, p. 98).

In order to take rational educational decisions, we need, therefore, to rethink the concept of social and individual multilingualism, ways of understanding it, reasons for its promotion, strategies required for the purpose and the role of teachers in this process.

Attitudes Towards Multilingualism

The value of linguistic and cultural diversity is an idea consequently emphasized both by the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU). The Lisbon Strategy and Barcelona Declaration (European Council, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) resulted in launching a promotion campaign for multilingualism in all EU member states. Educational policy is based on the conviction that, although identity has so far been understood in both ethnic-linguistic and civic categories (Smith, 2000, 2006), peaceful coexistence can only be achieved if we look at identity based on civil rights and at the same time develop an understanding of diversity. Yet teenagers, as has been pointed out in *SurveyLang*, seem to be satisfied with the idea of learning just one international language, while frequent instances of their xenophobic behaviour surfacing in many countries of Europe warn us that the value of diversity is far from being widely understood. The question arises whether attitudes of teenagers result from a generation gap or perhaps reflect some overt or covert attitudes in the world of adults. Let us, therefore, look at various approaches to both individual and social multilingualism.

Approaches to Individual Multilingualism

Times when bilingualism, let alone individual multilingualism, was considered a low status symbol or even a harmful phenomenon are gone; not long gone, however, if we take a broader perspective on the development of applied linguistics and language teaching. Almost a hundred years ago Jespersen maintained that bilingualism is an extra burden causing detrimental effects, delayed development and reduced intelligence, therefore should be considered “an advantage purchased too dear” (Jespersen, 1922). MacNamara’s (1966) balance theory, formulated four decades later and claiming that in the learning process one language increases at the expense of another, cannot be considered favourable, either.

The change of perspective came with Canadian research on bilingualism (Cummins, 1976; Peal & Lambert, 1962) and became well consolidated with Ringbom’s (1987) research on bilingual Finnish-Swedish children undertaken no more than 25 years ago. It is practically the 21st century that brought us full understanding of the benefits of second and foreign language learning. Research shows that the learning of more than one language has distinct linguistic advantages as it correlates with linguistic awareness (Jessner, 2006; Wolff, 2006), sociolinguistic sensitivity (Goetz, 2003), verbal intelligence and originality (Kormi-Nouri et al., 2008; Lazaruk, 2007), better reading strategies (Hong & Leavell, 2006), transfer of strategies from L2 to L1 in the process of developing transferable competences (Garfinkel & Tabor, 1991) and contributes to the development of multilingual competence (Gabryś-Barker, 2005; Jessner, 2006). Research also shows nonlinguistic advantages as language learning has a positive effect on concept formation; rule discovery and problem-solving (Grosjean, 2010); critical, divergent and creative thinking (Kharkhurin, 2008); attention, working memory and cognitive control (Bialystok, Craik, Klein, & Viswanathan, 2004); episodic and semantic memory; and higher self-esteem (Dumas, 1999). It has even been found to reduce effects of ADHD (Toppelberg et al., 2002) and to delay the appearance of symptoms of senile dementia (Bialystok, Craik, Klein, & Viswanathan, 2004; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007), although the threshold level hypothesis has to be taken into consideration stating that at least a B1 level needs to be achieved if manifestations of any of those benefits are to be expected (Cummins, 1979, 2000; Lasagabaster, 1998).

Recent data presented in *Europeans and Their Languages Report* (2012), usually referred to as *Eurobarometer 2012*, show that a great majority of adult European citizens understand the significance of languages: 88% consider language learning useful and 98% consider it useful for the future of their children (p. 7). Action aimed at raising the awareness of the value of language learning has, therefore, been successful; attitudes towards individual multilingualism

have definitely changed from strongly negative to extremely positive. There are, however, no clear data which would give insight into the level of parental aspirations measured by the expected number of languages in the educational offer. Teenagers' tendencies to learn one international language do not, therefore, have to run against expectations of their parents.

Approaches to Multilingualism in the Community

Positive attitudes vis-à-vis multilingualism in the community (often referred to as *social multilingualism*) were first found to be manifested much earlier than those towards plurilingualism. As early as at the Council of Constance (1414-1418) the number of languages in the kingdom was presented as a key argument by the English delegation who at that time claimed a status of a *natio*, at that time granted only to France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The English clergy argued that five languages which were mutually incomprehensible functioned in their territories and considered this phenomenon a sufficient reason for their kingdom's promotion (Komorowska, 2014; Mundy & Woody, 1961, p. 344; Smith, 2006, p. 148).

This line of thinking, however, was not at all followed in the centuries to come. Power was often turned in various places of the world against minority languages or languages of occupied territories. The case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the national anthem was sung in many languages, was not at all typical. Power often led to crushing identities and wiping away cultures, but sometimes, also, to bringing in education and technological progress. The two were not mutually exclusive, hence ambivalence which often accompanied the process.

How strongly today's linguistic landscapes are rooted in history tends to be forgotten. *Europeans and Their Languages Report* (2012), for example, lists countries where a relatively high percentage of citizens declare skills in understanding or even speaking another language without commenting on the often dubious roots of multilingualism. Apart from traditionally multilingual regions, such as Luxembourg, parts of Europe where citizens declare higher second or foreign language proficiency are often those where, as in the Baltic republics, language skills are historically linked to foreign dominance and to painful memories of exile, expulsion, dispersion and forced settlement. Language education is a way to achieve, promote and protect multilingualism in a peaceful way, but in order to design appropriate pedagogic approaches and methods we need to fully understand the situation. This is, however, difficult due to confusion springing from the fact that *promoting multilingualism* has become an umbrella term to embrace a huge number of diverse issues. Let us try to disentangle this knot looking at it from three different perspectives:

- the socio-political perspective focusing on language,

- the educational perspective focusing on the learner, and
- the professional perspective focusing on the teacher.

Promoting Multilingualism: Focus on Language

The term *promoting multilingualism* is used and understood today in a number of ways. Below, we will, therefore, try to list and analyse the most common meanings of the term with their implications for social, political and educational activity.

Protecting languages. One of the main meanings of the term *promoting multilingualism* is related to language protection aimed at endangered languages, that is, languages with very few native speakers and codes which are likely to disappear from the surface of our linguistic map. The idea of protection does not seem to evoke controversy, though differences of opinion can be expected when it comes to deciding on the budgetary provision for the purpose. The economic issue is even more complicated if we try to take social, political and economic measures in response to warnings by both David Crystal (2000) and Michael Krauss (1992) that this century will see the death of 90% of the world's languages.

Promoting minority, ethnic and regional languages. The term *promoting multilingualism* is also used to describe activities aiming at the promotion of minority, ethnic and regional languages. In order to successfully promote, or, at least, successfully protect them, we need reliable knowledge of the situation; yet arriving at an objective and reliable picture is often an almost impossible task as statistics coming from a variety of sources prove to be a confusing source of information. In Poland, for instance, the 2012 report by the Central Statistical Office (Census Bureau; GUS is the Polish acronym), estimates the percentage of ethnic minorities in the population to range from 2 to 4%, with the top of the margin doubling its bottom value (GUS, 2012). Striking differences, sometimes reaching even a ratio of 1 to 10, can be noticed between official statistics and informal estimates, especially those offered in the media by representatives of ethnic minorities. On an individual plane such differences can be explained either by fear of stigmatization or by expectations of career benefits coming with majority affiliation. Sometimes, especially in the case of regional languages, multiple identities might also be at play; for example, 52,000 citizens declared themselves as Kashubian speakers, but as many as 220,000 people described themselves as Polish Kashubians or Kashubian-Poles. It can be assumed that on a political plane official sources tend to downplay the numbers of national minori-

ties, often for socio-economic reasons, while minority groups are interested in projecting a heavier presence at home and abroad. In this conflict of interests, arriving at precise statistics and in consequence taking, for example, well-justified financial decisions gets more and more difficult.

Protecting language varieties. One more meaning of the term *promoting multilingualism* has to do with protecting or reviving language varieties, which depends on their status and spread. Certain varieties are considered as more representative or even straightforwardly better than others by insiders, though their perception by outsiders is not always the same. This evaluative approach is sometimes politically forced, and sometimes promoted through education; therefore, it usually leads to social stigmatisation or results in an underground status of a given variety of the language which then enters the field of self-censorship surfacing only in family circles and childhood landscapes. In a less oppressive context, depending on the political or local situation, some of those varieties are revived and gain new impetus, while some have to accept the status of a local attraction. Examples of two different kinds of revival can be seen in Poland today. Silesian, treated as politically suspicious and educationally inadequate half a century ago, has now gained strength as a language with a television channel of its own, dozens of publications, festivals and competitions. The traditional Warsaw dialect, almost lost under the ruins of the city, is now being revived by Świt Żywych Muzyków, a group of university graduates who walk the surviving streets of the right bank of the river singing and giving performances in the yards of forgotten houses, reaching those who still remember having heard or having spoken it. We can describe it as *language variety protection* as well as *language variety revival*. The former is usually the responsibility of official institutions, yet individual attitudes are always crucial for the success of each official campaign. The latter is more often a result of personal motivations and initiatives.

Securing language rights of regional and minority speakers. Another meaning of the term *multilingualism*, although often referred to as *language protection*, is very different in kind from the concept discussed above as in fact it has to do with the speakers and not with the languages. *European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages* (1992), a document worked out by the Council of Europe, offers ways to protect the language rights of the speakers. Yet particular countries and even particular regions show various degrees of readiness to take this responsibility. At the same time national or ethnic minorities show various degrees of readiness to engage in securing those rights for themselves.

According to *Country Report. Poland* (2006) as well as to the reports prepared by regional associations (Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie, 2011) and

the National Audit Office (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2004), in making use of educational benefits in Poland, huge differences can be noticed between national and ethnic minorities, although no demographic differences or administrative regulations can be held accountable for these discrepancies. Huge engagement can be, for instance, noticed on the part of Kashubians, who under communism had been denied the right to schooling through the medium of their language and since the memorable 1989 have managed to build a very large network of educational institutions today boasting 71 primary, 17 lower secondary and 3 upper secondary schools (*Country Report. Poland, 2006; Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie, 2011*). Byelorussians, on the other hand, do not aspire to establish schooling through the medium of their language and consider the teaching of their language at 3 hours per week a satisfactory solution. Moreover, in the period 1990-2004 the number of their schools shrank from 50 to 38 (*Country Report. Poland, 2006; Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2004*). What is more, engagement in promoting bilingual schooling varies depending on the school level, showing that identity factors are at play at lower educational levels, while career prospects determine choices at secondary and post-secondary levels. In consequence, an educational pyramid, narrowing at secondary stages, is formed. National statistics show 601 primary schools for ethnic minorities staffed by 70% of all ethnic minority teachers. Yet the number of lower secondary schools as well as the percentage of teachers there is almost three times smaller (27 schools with 25% of teachers), while the number of upper secondary schools for all minorities and the percentage of teachers employed there is twenty times smaller (27 schools with 5% of all ethnic minority teachers). Numbers of students are even more informative: 8,000, 1,000 and 200 pupils respectively, for all the ethnic minorities.

A question arises here: Should activeness of ethnic minorities be encouraged in a top-down way or should bottom-up processes, however uneven across minorities, be left unchanged? (Komorowska, 2005)

Approaches to defining and analysing multilingualism help to show and explain ways of using this concept in international and national promotion campaigns, as there is no single agenda in the promotion of multilingualism and, what is more, various aims seem to be less openly addressed than others. Let us look at some of these aims.

A hidden agenda to maintain the language status of formerly powerful languages. Quite often, and this is probably a disturbing truth, multilingualism as an idea is used in a hidden agenda to maintain status for the so-called conference languages. When the popularity of languages that had been widely used in Europe and beyond started decreasing, two directions of language policy

emerged: one in relation to the language regime of powerful European institutions, the Council of Europe and the European Union, and another in relation to the number of languages offered in the school systems of their member states. In its interinstitutional policy the Council of Europe decided to use two official languages, English and French, which was an obvious way to boost the status of French. A similar intention, this time including also other conference languages, seems to have been underlying the decision to add one more foreign language to the school curriculum in the famous formula of the mother tongue + 2 (European Council, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) as the fear that one foreign language would eliminate most of the conference languages was not ill-founded. The fact that French, German and Spanish as L1 are spoken by more than half of EU citizens guaranteed that the second foreign language selected by European learners would be one of the three. In fact, according to *Key Data on Teaching Languages* (2012, p. 11), less than 5% of the learners choose a second foreign language from outside this group. This ties up with another way of using the concept of multilingualism to which we will now turn our attention.

A hidden agenda to stop English as a lingua franca. The strategy for maintaining the status of formerly powerful languages, mainly by introducing the Barcelona L1 + 2 formula (European Council, 2002c) is at its core identical with the hidden agenda of stopping English from being a *lingua franca* in Europe or at least slowing down the process of its spread. This hidden strategy has not proved very successful considering the fact which has already been mentioned that 73% of European learners take up English as their first foreign language in the primary school and 90% take it up in the upper-secondary school (*Key Data on Teaching Languages*, 2012, p. 11). These percentages as well as the fact that they are constantly rising speak for themselves, especially when we keep in mind that the students' proficiency in their second foreign language, mostly pre-A1 or A1, leaves a lot to be desired (*First European Survey*, 2012, pp. 43-44).

The problem of a universal language that would not lead to linguistic imperialism arises here again. In 1885 Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof, brought up in the milieu of Polish and Yiddish and educated to become a medical doctor through the medium of Russian in Moscow and German in Vienna, came to the conclusion that languages form barriers difficult for many people to overcome. Working on this assumption he presented a well-designed offer of Esperanto as a universal language, which was relatively easy to master and free from links to any dominant culture or political power. Unfortunately, his idea, although attractive to many, never fully took off the ground with most probably around no more than a million speakers. English has evidently become today's version of a universal language which, as we can see, produces new frustrations and new barriers.

An open agenda to empower less widely spoken languages. The last way of using the concept of multilingualism to be discussed here is an open agenda of certain ethnic minorities, such as for instance Catalan, to gain a higher status for their languages. Action of this type is undertaken in the hope that the minority language belonging to the group of less widely used languages, the so-called LWULs, would then attract attention and gain the recognition it had often been unfairly denied in the past. Endeavours for their languages to be granted EU conference status, although not always successful, are fuelled by the generally accepted policy of multilingualism accompanied by the formerly discussed hidden agenda of changing the ratio of English to other languages (European Commission, 2005, 2007, 2008).

Difficulty here consists in the fact that the two agendas, that is, the hidden one aimed at stopping English and the open one aimed at promoting ethnic minority languages and/or the so-called LWULs, although seemingly sharing the same goal, are in fact mutually exclusive. This happens, because English becomes increasingly used by interpreters as a relay language at conferences where very many languages are spoken, which paradoxically leads to an unexpected effect of "the more languages, the more English" (De Swaan, 2004, 2007). Difficulties also spring from organisational contexts as translation and interpretation services take up a constantly increasing part of the EU personnel as well as an increasing portion of the EU budget and will continue to do so with the accession of new countries and with more successful endeavours of LWULs to gain a conference status (King, 2012).

Promoting Multilingualism: Focus on the Learner

Deciding to promote multilingualism in education with a view to individual learners we immediately fall into the terminology trap again. In the European Union the term *individual multilingualism* is used more often, while the Council of Europe prefers the term *plurilingualism*. Moreover, both terms tend to be used with a variety of meanings. This is also true of the term *bilingualism*: Some authors claim that any degree of proficiency in a language other than the first language of the learner makes the learner plurilingual, some use the term for more than two languages, while some use the criterion of a threshold level of proficiency in two or more languages.

Focus on the learner, unlike focus on the language, attracts considerably less attention of decision-makers in the sociopolitical area and significantly more attention of decision-makers in the field of educational policy. Here are some basic types of agenda.

Broadening the language offer. The main tendency in the promotion of individual multilingualism (plurilingualism) can be described as an aim to increase the number of languages learned by individual learners to two or even three, and at the same time to diversify school language offers, which would lead to more diversified constellations of languages acquired by individual students.

The official agenda here, as presented in most Country Reports prepared jointly by particular member states of the Council of Europe and the Language Policy Unit of the Council, is to promote the learning of less widely learned languages, the so-called LWULs, and among them especially the languages of neighbouring countries. The suggestion related to the promotion of the neighbouring languages is, however, feasible to be implemented only if they happen to function as high status, conference languages. It proves highly unrealistic in the case of LWULs, as again shown across the recent *Key Data on Teaching Languages* (2012). This document, launched in September 2012, shows that the most common language constellation is: the student's mother tongue + the language of schooling (if not the same as the mother tongue) + English + another conference language. A highly informative quote from the document reads: "The percentage of pupils learning languages other than English, French, Spanish, German or Russian was below 5% in most countries and in a significant number the percentage was less than 1%" (p. 11). In school contexts, an ethnic minority language enters a constellation almost only as the student's L1, and, except for bilingual regions, almost never as a foreign language. The Polish context shows that it is more than difficult to convince a Polish student to start learning Slovak or Lithuanian even as their second foreign language in the school system as suggested by the experts from the Language Policy Unit in the *Country Report. Poland* (2006). Adding Slovak or Lithuanian to the individual language constellation takes place extremely rarely, usually in adulthood either for family or for professional mobility reasons.

Empowering the student by giving status to their L1. Another type of agenda in the promotion of multilingualism, in line with that of protecting languages and securing language rights of their speakers, is to boost the self-esteem of learners for whom the language of schooling is not their mother tongue. Valuing languages and cultures can help to raise self-efficacy of immigrant learners, it can at the same time prove educationally useful for other students. The whole class and not only the individual student can develop linguistic and intercultural competence by using L1 as a learning resource, which has been powerfully demonstrated in a number of projects of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) such as for instance the *Valeur Project – Valuing All Languages in Europe* (McPake et al., 2007). The same institution

provides teachers with a vast array of tools and materials that help them to deal with increasing educational mobility and to successfully teach plurilingual and multicultural classrooms (Boeckmann, 2011).

Promoting Multilingualism: Focus on the Teacher

In analyzing the role of the teacher in the promotion of multilingualism no terminological problems arise other than the exchangeable use of the terms *plurilingualism* and *individual multilingualism*, which has already been discussed above.

The main question asked within the educational perspective of promoting multilingualism is: Should teachers who promote multilingualism be themselves multilingual? There is a vast array of opinions available. Some sources do not insist on practical language skills of teachers, but point to the need for their awareness of educational policy lines in this area and to contextual factors, as presented, for example, in the document by the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (2006). Some advocate knowledge and skills to manage multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Penczek-Zapała, 2010). Some go further, following the 2007 Council of Europe recommendations, and expect teachers (a) to be aware of plurilingual and intercultural aims of education, (b) to understand concepts such as *plurilingual competence*, (c) to be able to implement teaching approaches based on individualization, as well as (d) to constantly enrich their own linguistic repertoires (Huber, 2011). Some do not postulate the teacher's multilingual competence, but point to the value of insights springing from the teachers' personal engagement in language learning, presented for example as *structured language learning experience* (SLLE), for their overall understanding of the learning process or, to use the term introduced by Ellis (2012), for their language learning awareness. Some go very far in their expectations vis-à-vis the teaching profession and voice an opinion that in order to promote individual multilingualism, teachers' own multilingual competence is indispensable (*Country Report. Poland*, 2006).

The choice of one of the approaches discussed above depends on the meaning ascribed to multilingualism. Tolerance, the need for conflict prevention and for securing human and language rights of ethnic minorities can be promoted even by monolingual teachers. Promoting individual multilingualism is, however, more likely to prove successful when undertaken by teachers who are themselves multilingual and can, therefore, embody a model to be followed. As research results demonstrate, teachers choose languages they learn according to their utility and importance, and only sometimes because of some emotional bonds (Vetter, 2012). This means that teachers as language learners mainly take

up “big” languages. Though educationally valuable, exemplary behaviour manifesting teachers’ own second or foreign language learning, does not guarantee any enrichment of their didactic repertoires, especially those related to dealing with multilingual and multicultural classes as students’ home languages tend to be other than conference languages the teacher is likely to learn.

Promotion of individual multilingualism among teachers aims predominantly at encouraging them to try out new paths of thinking, to find other ways of approaching facts and ideas and in consequence to develop understanding and tolerance of Otherness. The question arises whether learning many foreign languages is the only way to broaden horizons and open up new perspectives, in other words, whether plurilingualism is the sole path to encouraging new ways of thinking. What actually seems crucial is the ability to decentre and change perspective. This, however, can be done in a number of ways; Alain de Botton (2002) in his philosophical writings, for example, postulates travels which, as he puts it, are “midwives of thought.” Plurilingualism is certainly a wonderful solution, but by no means the only one.

Another question asked within the educational perspective of promoting multilingualism is: Should teachers working in multilingual and/or multicultural classrooms be able to speak all the languages of their students? Considering the diversity of individual language choices and, in consequence, the diversity of language constellations, it is highly unrealistic to expect every teacher to be competent in his or her students’ home languages. The conclusion is clear when we look at the data obtained in the CILT *Valeur Project – Valuing All Languages in Europe* coordinated by Joanna McPake within the frames of the ECML in Graz, where as many as 458 home languages spoken by school students were identified in 22 of the EU member countries in which the project was conducted (McPake et al., 2007). School teachers can understandably be expected to learn the language of their immigrant students only in the case where there is one dominant immigrant or ethnic majority language in the class they teach. Otherwise, teachers can afford to do no more than learn a few phrases of the learners’ languages to show that they respect their students and value their home languages.

Conclusions: Looking into the Future

General aims presented so far in the documents of the Council of Europe (Beacco & Byram, 2002; Council of Europe, 2000, 2001, 2003; Kelly & Grenfell, 2004; Little & Perclová, 2001; Newby et al., 2007), the European Union (cf. European Commission, 2005, 2007, 2008; European Council, 2002a, 2008b, 2008c; Moore & Hagen, 2006) and the OECD (Dumont, Istance, & Benavides,

2010; OECD, 2007a, 2007b, 2008) include postulates of promoting multilingualism through

- a broader language offer in schools,
- encouraging the attainment of higher proficiency levels, and
- a higher quality of teaching.

It therefore seems worthwhile to look at what it practically means for language education.

Let us start with the field of *teaching*. In the affective domain, which is of crucial importance here, we need to

- value languages,
- promote the understanding of benefits springing from learning them, but also
- develop teachers' own intercultural competence and sensitivity when it comes to understanding students and their problems.

In the cognitive domain, what seems to be important is

- getting students acquainted with a range of possibilities in making choices and
- helping them to decide on and construct their own language constellations.

In the domain of didactic skills, teachers need

- the ability to develop transversal and transferable skills through language, for example, reading comprehension or a range of the so-called soft competencies, as well as
- the ability to identify and employ effective methods of coping with multicultural classrooms, remembering that more and more often monolingual classes can in fact prove to be multicultural.

In the area of *supporting learning*, teachers need

- skills to introduce students to autonomous learning by helping them to identify their communicative needs, broad aims, learning styles and strategies;
- skills to develop partial competences in accordance with learners' autonomous choices, such as, for example, intercomprehension;
- skills to enhance learners' concentration and attention often weakened by multitasking.

In the field of assessment, teachers need

- skills to introduce and promote nontest assessment, that is, formative and alternative assessment techniques based on logs, portfolios and project work;

- skills to adjust evaluation to the dual focus teaching in the new context of integrating languages with nonlanguage education within the frames of CLIL.

There are, however, traps and obstacles on the way to promoting multilingualism in language education. They often lead to no more than lip service paid to learner-centredness, autonomy, communicative needs of the speaker and modularization, as true changes in these areas would considerably complicate the life of examination boards, publishers, schools and other educational institutions. The situation is likely to change only if teachers get a real chance to work on tailor-made curricula, cross-curricular topics and whole-school projects as well as to concentrate on individualisation, which is only possible if useless and time-consuming corporate-style school bureaucracy is taken away from the teaching profession.

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