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6 Supporting Multilingual Learning in Educational Contexts: Lessons from Poland, Finland and California

Agnieszka Otwinowska, Mari Bergroth and Eve Zyzik

The chapter addresses how multilingual learning can be supported in educational contexts. We argue that all children need support for their languages and opportunities to become familiar with linguistic diversity. We briefly define multilingualism and highlight selected linguistic and cognitive features of multilingual children. Then we zoom in on educational solutions in three very different contexts, two in the EU (Poland and Finland) and one in the USA (California). With the provided contextual background we discuss some of the challenges that learners might experience at school, depending on how support for multilingual learning is implemented in a given context. Finally, we argue that supporting multilingual learning can be enhanced in everyday practices and discuss solutions for supporting multilingual learning from the perspective of teachers and teacher training.

Introduction

Supporting multilingual learning is increasingly important in a variety of educational contexts since it is essential for promoting students' academic achievement and overall wellbeing. For instance, many countries in the EU emphasize the value of national and local languages, as well as the importance of global languages such as English (Breidbach, 2003). This creates the foundations for the teaching of those languages, leading students towards multilingualism (i.e. the opportunity to learn and the ability to use several languages). The language policy of the EU promotes

multilingualism as the key to personal success (European Commission, 2019), but implementation of the policy differs across countries. In the USA, language policies at the federal level center on equal access to education for all learners, including those who do not understand English. These policies, under the purview of the Office for Civil Rights, establish the legal obligations of schools with respect to English learners (ELs), but they do not have a specific goal of promoting multilingualism. Nevertheless, some US states (e.g. California, New York and Washington) have adopted initiatives such as the Seal of Biliteracy, which is intended to recognize bilingual students by means of an official designation on their high school diplomas (see Heineke & Davin, 2020).

Despite policies that are intended to promote and incentivize multilingualism, monolingual standards are deeply rooted in many educational contexts. In other words, despite good intentions, many teachers and educators are not prepared to support bilingual and multilingual students. In this chapter we present some of the challenges related to multilingual learning that children might experience at school, depending on how educational policies are implemented. To that end, we focus on educational solutions in three contexts – two in the EU (Poland and Finland) and one in the USA (California). All three regions are of comparable size territorially, but have diverse populations, demographics, language policies and teaching traditions. We will show examples of effective policy implementation and pinpoint some problem areas. We will focus on successful support for multilingual learning that all teachers can employ and present some lessons to be learnt from the three contexts. Before showing how multilingualism is supported in those diverse contexts, let us first clarify the concepts of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Characteristics of Multilingual Learners

Increasing numbers of children are growing up in bilingual or multilingual settings (Armon-Lotem *et al.*, 2015). Simultaneous bilingualism occurs when a child acquires two languages (L1 and L2) simultaneously before the age of three in a home where two languages are used. On the other hand, in sequential bilingualism, a child begins to acquire a new language (L2) in kindergarten or at school after having developed some knowledge of the first language (L1) spoken at home (Zurer Pearson, 2009). Thus, within sequential bilingualism, any foreign language learner can also be considered bilingual if they use their languages regularly (Cook, 2007). Contrary to popular belief, bilingualism does not imply an equal and perfect knowledge of two languages, as proposed by Bloomfield (1933) almost 100 years ago. Being bilingual means that a given person uses two languages on a regular basis, regardless of the level of proficiency in these languages (Grosjean, 1992). Bilingualism is now perceived as a special case of multilingualism, defined as the ability to use several

languages by a given person, the mutual interactions of these languages in the user's mind and the entire linguistic and cultural experiences that make up the user's communicative competence (Jessner, 2008). Migrants, members of regional minorities, native speakers of sign languages and spoken languages, as well as people learning foreign languages and using them regularly can all be called multilingual. Those multilinguals whose home language is different from the societal language(s) and the language(s) of schooling are often called heritage speakers, especially in the US context (see also the definition of heritage speakers in Chapter 1 of this book). They acquire the heritage language by exposure to the L1 in their home environment (Benmamoun *et al.*, 2013), generally without the support of formal academic exposure (Zyzik, 2016). In the case of heritage speakers, some misconceptions regarding bilingualism as a hindrance for a child's successful language development and integration within society may lead to abandoning the home language(s) (De Houwer, 2015; Del Valle, 2009).

Childhood bilingualism may, however, show some disadvantages if bilinguals are directly compared to monolinguals in one of their languages (Armon-Lotem *et al.*, 2015; Haman *et al.*, 2017). For example, compared with monolingual children, bilingual children may exhibit a smaller vocabulary range in each of their languages. Bialystok *et al.* (2010) surveyed a total of 1738 English-speaking children aged 3–10 years in Canada, including monolinguals and children of immigrants who spoke English at school. The results of the study showed that monolingual children knew more English words than their bilingual peers, and that effect was sustained in all age groups. Importantly, however, the groups of children did not differ when only the vocabulary related to the school context was compared. This means that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to the specific language material of different domains (e.g. school, home) and smaller vocabulary size among bilinguals is not due to bilingualism *per se*.

The benefits of bilingualism are linguistic and cognitive. Regarding linguistic benefits, languages in the user's repertoire and affective factors provide powerful resources available to L3 learners who already have bilingual experience. These include knowledge and awareness of another foreign/second language, motivation to learn, a wealth of learning strategies and growing confidence and decreased language anxiety in comparison with less experienced learners (Otwinowska, 2016). Bilinguals and multilinguals may also have enhanced metalinguistic awareness or a better understanding of 'how languages work' (Aronin & Singleton, 2012). Cumulative language knowledge affects noticing the existing similarities and differences across languages (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). All factors combined – that is, language knowledge and proficiency, learning experience and metalinguistic awareness – add to strategic reliance on cross-linguistic similarities in language learning. Thus, we can say that bilingualism and multilingualism facilitate the acquisition of additional languages (for discussion, see Jessner, 2008; Otwinowska, 2016).

The most important cognitive benefit of bilingualism is mental flexibility resulting from the use and interaction in several languages and the need to switch between them. The cognitive benefits of bilingualism were initially observed in children aged 4–6 years. For instance, in experiments involving the need to switch to a different type of task (sorting objects by color or shape), bilingual children did much better than their monolingual peers (Bialystok & Martin, 2004). A similar advantage was observed in older children and adults in many other tasks that required ignoring one rule or an irrelevant stimulus and applying a new rule or paying attention to a new stimulus. For example, bilingual children outperformed monolinguals in recognizing ambivalent figures (Bialystok & Shapero, 2005), sorting cards (Bialystok & Martin, 2004), understanding the interlocutor's perspective and responding to a request in an appropriate way (Fan *et al.*, 2015), and understanding a command when disturbed by some noise (Filippi *et al.*, 2015).

These experimental tasks, despite their differences, have an important common denominator. They require adequate cognitive control (i.e. the involvement of certain control functions of the brain). In order to perform these tasks, one needs to stop one type of exercise and start another (flexibility), adopt the perspective of another person (empathy) or inhibit irrelevant noise and focus on understanding the message (functioning in noise). Bilinguals who regularly use their languages also use these cognitive control mechanisms. In order to use two or more languages, a bilingual person has to decide which one to use and effectively inhibit the unnecessary language (inhibition, flexibility). They must also pick out words and sentences in one language between words and sentences in another language (better understanding in noise). Thus, living in a bilingual/multilingual context and juggling languages supports the mechanisms of cognitive control, which results in easier accomplishment of some tasks that require switching. This is shown in Figure 6.1.

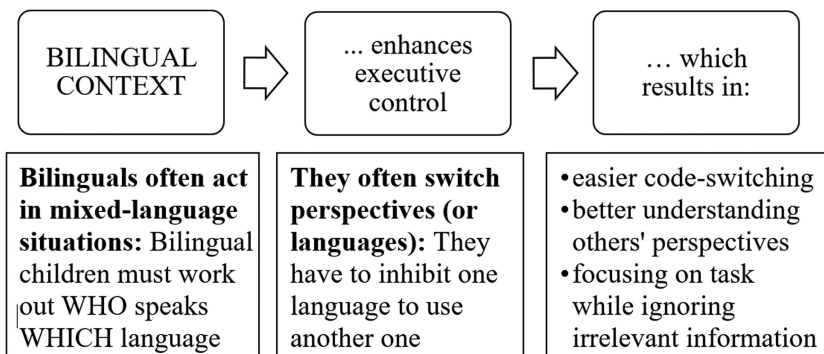


Figure 6.1 The mechanism of developing the cognitive consequences of bilingualism

In the educational realm, it is important to distinguish between subtractive (impoverishing) bilingualism and additive (enriching) bilingualism. Subtractive bilingualism involves acquiring a second language at the expense of not developing or forgetting the first language. Additive (enriching) bilingualism occurs when a child acquires a second language, but also strengthens the first, home language (Li, 2000). It is assumed that additive bilingualism should become the goal of language acquisition and education. If all a child's languages are being developed, they support each other's development and lead to greater academic achievement. According to Cummins' (1979, 2000) interdependence hypothesis, there are areas of shared extra-linguistic knowledge (common underlying proficiency) that develop through the interaction of languages and form the basis for a child's linguistic development. An example of common underlying proficiency is the ability of bilingual preschoolers to narrate in any of their languages. If a child can tell a coherent story in their home language, the child will also be able to narrate coherently in the L2 used at school. Such abilities have been shown for bilinguals with English and Spanish (Zurer Pearson, 2002), Polish and English (Otwinowska *et al.*, 2020), Finnish and Swedish (Kunnari *et al.*, 2016) and many other language pairs, e.g. Russian–German (Gagarina, 2016), Swedish–English (Bohnacker, 2016), English–Hebrew (Iluz-Cohen & Walters, 2012) and Russian–Norwegian (Rodina, 2017). Such coherent storytelling translates into children's later success in writing and reading (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Uccelli & Pérez, 2007).

In sum, a child's languages will support each other only if both languages are used frequently (Bialystok *et al.*, 2010) and their development is supported in the family and at school so that the child receives enough input in each language (De Houwer, 2015; Zurer Pearson, 2002). Adequate input and interaction in both languages leads to additive bilingualism. In educational contexts, additive bilingual programs such as CLIL (content and language integrated learning), where additional languages are used for content teaching, are popular options in many European countries. In the USA, dual-language immersion programs also pave the way for additive bilingualism. Supporting multilingual learning in both mainstream and bilingual education will be discussed in the next section with relation to the three educational contexts of Poland, Finland and California. First, we present the background of the three educational contexts.

Bilingualism Across the Three Contexts: Who and Where?

Poland

Poland is a large central European country with 38.1 million inhabitants. For centuries, Poland was highly multilingual but became monolingual during and after World War II, which forced large-scale migrations,

deportations and territorial changes (Komorowska, 2014). Compared with other European countries, contemporary Poland is very homogeneous in terms of nationality or ethnicity (European Union, 2021). Only around 1% of Poland's population are national minority citizens (Byelorussian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian) or ethnic minority citizens (Karaim, Lemko, Romany and Tatar). In north-western Poland there is a small bilingual community that uses the regional Kashubian language. Polish is spoken by the vast majority of the society and is also the predominant language of schooling. For instance, only 1.1% of Polish 15-year-old students speak a different language at home to the language of schooling (Eurydice, 2017). Childhood bilingualism in Poland is still not a common phenomenon, although Polish teachers are now encountering multilingual students much more often than before joining the EU.

There is, however, elective, elite bilingualism, which involves learning languages considered to be prestigious (e.g. English, Spanish and German). In Poland, more than 90% of students learn English from first grade until school graduation (Eurydice, 2017). English is regarded as a highly prestigious language and an investment in a child's future. Elite multilingualism is the result of foreign language teaching and bilingual education (CLIL), which is widely promoted among the middle class in Poland. Bilingual education in prestigious languages is quite elitist and, in many cases, only affordable for wealthy families (Otwinowska, 2013; Otwinowska & Foryś, 2017) who send their children to classes in which they learn with the children of affluent foreign expats living in Poland. Bilingual education in foreign languages can also be free, mostly at secondary level, but many renowned state schools conduct entrance language exams alongside the compulsory content subject exams. Thus, such education is quite selective and is restricted to those children who have already achieved a certain proficiency level and have passed exams (Eurydice, 2017).

A small population of children from national and ethnic minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian, as well as Lemkos, Karaims and Kashubian) have the right to education in their minority languages, as guaranteed by the Polish constitution (Eurydice, 2017). At parents' request, teaching may be organized in separate groups, classes and schools, or in groups, classes and schools with additional language, history and culture classes. The network of schools teaching in languages of national minorities or offering additional classes in these languages to pupils from national minorities has increased four times since the fall of Communism in 1989 (European Union, 2021). Minority and ethnic languages are mainly taught at the primary level; the number of secondary schools teaching these languages is much smaller. Bilingual children with minority languages are 'absorbed' by Polish-medium schools, using the language of the majority (Komorowska, 2014). To illustrate this, in the school year 2018/2019, before the start of the war

in Ukraine, there were 70,700 pupils in 1065 primary schools learning a mother tongue other than Polish, but only 1900 students in 71 post-primary and upper-secondary schools (Central Statistical Office, 2020).

Within the speakers of minority languages, a distinct group are children with Roma as their L1. Roma–Polish children often come to school with poor knowledge of the Polish language and culture. This, unfortunately, often results in a misdiagnosis of their intellectual abilities if they are tested only in Polish. For instance, a shocking report on the cognitive and linguistic development of Roma–Polish children in Poland (Kołaczek & Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2011) indicated that more than 50% of those diagnosed with intellectual disability and placed in special education schools were, in fact, within the intellectual norm.

Two separate groups that are not included in the official statistics are the children of immigrants to Poland as well as those born abroad to Polish families and returning to Poland (returnees). Immigrants from Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Chechnya, Vietnam and China often know Polish only at a basic level, so they cannot cope with Polish lessons without adequate linguistic support. Unfortunately, there are no education programs for pupils with a limited command of Polish. There are also no official rules on how to assess foreign immigrants, so they are often assessed in the same way as Polish-speaking children, despite the fact that they may not understand the instructions (Szybura, 2016). Much depends on school directors and local administrations, who have to deal with the education of foreigners themselves, for example by organizing additional adaptation lessons. Similar problems are experienced by returnees, whose number is difficult to pinpoint, but is estimated to be several thousand students (Grzymała-Moszczyńska *et al.*, 2015). Like immigrants, returnees often cannot cope with lessons conducted in Polish without linguistic support. In addition to language difficulties, there may be cultural differences that affect the returnees' success in schools. For example, Polish–English children are used to being rewarded for their efforts in British schools; they are also used to expressing their own opinions and engaging in debates with the teacher. Since Polish schools have a completely different educational culture, they have problems with both language and behavior, which are inadequate in the Polish school reality (Grzymała-Moszczyńska *et al.*, 2015).

Another group invisible in the system is children of deaf adults (CODA) (or hearing children of deaf parents). In Poland, sign language is not recognized as a minority language, unlike in many European countries, such as Finland. CODA can struggle with the Polish language or they might act as interpreters and guides for their deaf parents, for example in contacts between their school and their parents. While school boards keep records of deaf students, CODA as a group with special linguistic needs are invisible to the Polish education system (CODA Poland, 2021).

To summarize, there are two contexts in Polish schools in which we can find bilingual and multilingual students. The first is the context of formal language learning and teaching (e.g. CLIL), where languages perceived as prestigious (e.g. English, German, French and Italian) are taught. Such education is socially desirable but often only available to children from wealthy families. Bilingual education is also available for some children in minority languages, but this is not common at all stages of education. In the second context, a student's bilingualism develops naturally through contact with a society that speaks a language other than the child's home/minority language. In this case, bilingualism is not the goal but a side effect, and the home language may have a lower prestige relative to the societal/majority language.

Finland

Finland, a north European country approximately the size of Poland, has only 5.5 million inhabitants, which is no exception to other Nordic countries. Finland is a bilingual country with two official national languages – Finnish and Swedish (see Saarinen & Ihalainen, 2018, for more information on Finland's constitutional bilingualism). The Sami, as an indigenous group, and the Roma, as well as 'other' language groups and users of sign languages are also acknowledged in the Constitution of Finland. According to the most recent official statistics (Statistics Finland, 2021), the two national languages are spoken by 92.1% of the population. Foreign languages are spoken by 7.8% of the population, including Russian (1.5%), Estonian (0.9%), Arabic (0.6%), English (0.4%) and Somali (0.4%).

The focus in this chapter is on Swedish, the lesser spoken national language of Finland. The number of registered Swedish speakers is 5.2% (Statistics Finland, 2021) and this number has been steadily declining during the 100 years of Finnish independence. While the status of Swedish as a school language is undoubtedly strong (Oker-Blom, 2021), its linguistic vitality cannot be taken for granted in the same manner as English in the USA or Polish in Poland. Thus, a focus on Swedish-medium education provides an opportunity to address supporting multilingual learning from the viewpoint of the numerical minority.

Finnish-speakers and Swedish-speakers share a similar ethno-cultural background and have equal linguistic rights in society, including in the education realm. Municipalities are obligated to arrange education in parallel school systems for each language group from early childhood education through to higher education (Williams, 2013). At birth, individuals can, by right, be registered as either a Finnish-speaker or a Swedish-speaker. However, the possibility of a person entering several mother tongues in the Population Information System has recently been investigated to provide a fuller picture of a person's language identity and to

avoid situations where parents who speak different languages have to choose a language to register for their child (Tammenmaa, 2020). The idea of better acknowledging and identifying all languages as resources and harnessing multilingualism as a potential positive resource for both economic growth as well as individual wellbeing has been promoted in recent reports and recommendations (Pyykkö, 2017).

The provision of Swedish-medium education provides an important mechanism to prevent language shift (Kovero, 2011). Children registered as Swedish speakers enroll in Swedish-medium education by default, but pupils with other linguistic backgrounds can also enroll. Mixed language families (Finnish–Swedish) tend to choose Swedish-medium education (Finnäs, 2012) and more than 40% of pupils in primary school now constitute bilingual children in Swedish-medium schools (Hellgren *et al.*, 2019). The identity of Finnish–Swedish bilinguals is often reserved to those with mixed family backgrounds, making it difficult for others to identify themselves as bilinguals in these languages. In many cases, it might be easier to identify oneself as multilingual rather than bilingual (Smith-Christmas *et al.*, 2019). A survey conducted in 2013 showed that pupils with a monolingual Swedish background varied from 29% to 83% between the Swedish-speaking regions of Finland. The number of pupils with a mixed Swedish–Finnish language background varied from 11% to 62% (Hyvönen & Westerholm, 2016). This means that, in some schools, the number of bilinguals exceeds the number of Swedish monolinguals in clear numbers, making this type of bilingualism a very common phenomenon.

However, Swedish-medium schools also have the obligation of catering to the growing diversity within Finnish society. Immigrants are entitled to choose Swedish as their first integration language, but integration in Finnish is promoted, especially in regions where Finnish has a strong majority position (Creutz & Helander, 2012). Despite this, the number of speakers of foreign languages has steadily increased, even in Swedish-medium education, and is now 3–7% depending on the region (Hyvönen & Westerholm, 2016). The issues with integration language pathways add to the complexity of multilingualism in the Swedish-medium educational path. For example, it can be that guardians/parents had Finnish as their integration language, but their children (second-generation immigrants) are now enrolled in Swedish-medium schools and study in Swedish (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020).

The needs of a multilingual society can be seen in the core curriculum. In Finland, 12 syllabi for different languages are described within the school subject Mother Tongue and Literature (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). These languages are Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Roma, sign language, other mother tongue of the pupil, Finnish and Swedish as a second language, Finnish and Swedish for Sami speakers and Finnish and Swedish for sign language users. We can thus conclude that supporting various linguistic groups is very well addressed in Finland on a policy

level (Eurydice, 2019). Furthermore, it is obligatory for all pupils to study at least two additional languages. In Swedish-medium schools almost all pupils (99%) study both Finnish and English as advanced syllabi, while only 20% do this (Swedish and English) in Finnish-medium schools. According to recent statistics, within Finnish-medium education, 79% of pupils study only the two obligatory languages; in Swedish-medium education, 65% do not choose to study additional, voluntary languages. Schools can also receive separate funding to provide extra-curricular instruction in the pupil's mother tongue (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019).

Bilingual education is possible in both educational strands. However, the fear of language shift in the Swedish-speaking population, especially if the target language is Finnish, is frequently brought up in public debates (Bergroth, 2016). In regions with strong societal support for Swedish outside school, bilingual options are generally deemed less problematic and English-medium CLIL education and Finnish-medium language immersion programs are provided. Fear of language shift is not discussed within Finnish-medium education and various languages are offered in bilingual programs (including Spanish, Russian, German, French, Sami), although the most widespread programs are CLIL education in English and early total Swedish language immersion. The programs vary from small scale, with less than 25% in the target language, to large scale, with over 25% in the target language in both educational strands (Bergroth, 2016). Unlike the Polish case presented earlier, almost all children in Finland attend publicly funded schools and bilingual education is provided without any additional cost.

Finally, mediated (online) communication plays an increasingly important role in societal multilingualism. In Finland, home and school have been found to be strong Swedish-medium domains for Swedish-speaking youth and both Swedish and English are used predominantly online; the use of Finnish is almost non-existent online, especially for young people who are not bilinguals (Stenberg-Sirén, 2018).

California

California is the most populous US state, with an estimated population of 39.5 million (US Census, 2020), which is comparable to that of Poland. The population of California represents a wide variety of ethnic, racial, national and linguistic backgrounds. The most recent statistics (for the 2019/2020 school year) indicate a total of 2,555,951 students who speak a language other than English at home – this represents about 41.5% of the state's public-school enrollment. It is important to note that this very large number of bilingual children includes those that are already proficient in English as well as those who are classified as ELs. Any student who speaks a language other than English in the home, as determined by a home

language survey, must take a state-mandated test to determine their level of English proficiency in both oral and written language. Based on the results of this initial test, those classified as ELs have to take a summative test each year until they meet the reclassification criteria (for additional information see Hill *et al.*, 2021).

In the 2019/2020 school year, California public schools enrolled 1.148 million ELs, which is 18.63% of the total enrollment. The majority (68.6%) were elementary school students (kindergarten through Grade 6). Although more than 75 languages are spoken in the homes of California students, 93% speak one of the following: Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Filipino, Russian, Korean, Punjabi or Farsi. Within this group, Spanish speakers constitute the largest group (81.44%) of ELs (California Department of Education, 2022). It is important to recognize the heterogeneity of the ELs in terms of family background, the English language abilities of their parents, and socioeconomic status. It is this confluence of factors, in addition to their developing English proficiency, which undoubtedly impacts the academic achievement of these students.

The question of how best to serve the needs of ELs in Californian schools has generated heated debates over the years, culminating with the approval of Proposition 227 in 1998. This statewide ballot initiative was intended to severely restrict the use of bilingual instruction for ELs. In practice, this law did not completely eliminate bilingual education since parents could still request an ‘alternative course of study’ through a waiver. It did, however, drastically reduce the number of such programs. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) report that, prior to Proposition 227, about 30% of ELs were in bilingual programs, but a decade later this proportion dropped to 5%. This means that the overwhelming majority of ELs were taught in regular classes with some instructional modifications designed to provide access to the core curriculum and accelerate their English language development. This model is known as English immersion or structured English immersion. The orientation that underlies English immersion is that students who spend more time ‘on task’ will make faster gains in English than students who spend some portion of instructional time in their home language.

Proposition 227 was overturned in 2016 with the passage of Proposition 58, which repealed the restrictions on bilingual education. Thus, it seems that public opinion on multilingualism shifted from aversion (with the passage of Proposition 227) to support (with the passage of Proposition 58). Simon-Cerejido (2018) argues that the recent passage of Proposition 58 in California represents not only the public’s embrace of multilingualism, but also the way in which the proposition was presented to the general public. Specifically, proponents of Proposition 58 emphasized parental choice, meaning that everyone would have the chance (but not an obligation) to raise multilingual children. Furthermore, proponents relied on

bilingual research showing the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. In other words, bilingualism was presented as a potential benefit to all children, not just those of ethnic minorities. This is in sharp contrast to the messaging that had been influential in garnering support for Proposition 227. In 1998, the political message focused on the poor educational achievement of immigrant children, especially Latino children. The intended message was that bilingual education was a costly (and detrimental) program for a subset of the California population.

Since the passage of Proposition 58, the creation of new dual-immersion (DI) and bilingual programs in California's public schools no longer faces legal barriers. Thus, schools can now offer various instructional models, including transitional bilingual programs, developmental bilingual programs and DI programs. Some larger school districts offer all these options, in addition to English immersion, allowing parents to rank program preferences. Valentino and Reardon (2015) provide details of these options for Spanish and Chinese in the San Francisco Unified School District. In this context, the transitional bilingual program uses the home language of the student to support access to the core curriculum, but the amount of English increases quickly in the elementary school years. Developmental bilingual programs, in contrast, are intended to develop proficiency in English while maintaining the home language. Accordingly, developmental bilingual programs are longer term, often lasting through to Grade 5. DI programs are unique in that they enroll both native English speakers and ELs in the same classroom. The long-term goal of these programs is to develop bilingualism and biliteracy among both groups. In the DI programs studied by Valentino and Reardon, early elementary classes were more heavily weighted toward the non-English language (e.g. 80–90% of instructional time), with a gradual increase in English as students progressed through the grades.

The demand for DI programs has skyrocketed in California and throughout the USA. Many analysts claim that the popularity of DI programs is being driven by interest from middle-class, English-dominant families who see bilingualism as a type of academic enrichment (Williams, 2017; see also Flores *et al.*, 2021). As the demand for DI education is often greater than the number of seats available, there is concern that ELs may be displaced by native English speakers from more affluent families (Lam & Richards, 2020). Another challenge is staffing these programs, as the shortage of bilingual teachers in California remains particularly acute. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), 14% of 200 California school districts reported a bilingual teacher shortage in 2016 prior to the passage of Proposition 58. Gándara and Mordechay (2017) maintain that the teacher shortage is one of the harmful legacies of Proposition 227, which depleted the number of bilingual teachers by more than two-thirds. The dearth of bilingual teachers in California will inevitably limit the availability of DI programs. Briceño and colleagues argue

that recruiting and developing bilingual teachers ‘has become a matter of social justice’ (Briceño *et al.*, 2018: 213) given the academic promise of DI programs (cf. Collier & Thomas, 2017; Valentino & Reardon, 2015).

What Challenges Can Linguistically Non-Aware Schools Cause for Bilinguals?

In schools where multilingual learning is not actively supported, bilingual children may experience several types of difficulties. First, students with migration experiences may have difficulty learning the content matter in the language of schooling. Second, bilingual children can even experience difficulties in communicating with their peers and school staff. This may result in problems with peer integration, educational difficulties, and socio-affective challenges.

In Poland, the common denominator of these difficulties is problems with the Polish language as a tool for everyday communication, learning and social development (Grzymała-Moszczyńska *et al.*, 2015; Szybura, 2016). Although the official national exams are carried out in the languages of schooling, including the minority languages, the majority of everyday exchanges and learner assessments takes place in Polish. In Finland, the national core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016) explicitly states that assessment needs to account for any shortcomings in pupils’ skills in the language of instruction. Similarly, it is stated that the developing language skills in the instructional language for pupils with an immigrant background or other foreign language speakers are accounted for. This is to be done, for example, by using versatile and flexible assessment methods that are suited to the pupil’s situation. This means that the responsibility for supporting multilingual learning is placed on the pedagogical staff at the schools. In California, ELs run the risk of becoming long-term ELs, a label that designates students who have not been reclassified out of EL status after six years in a US school. Thus, by the time they reach Grade 6 or secondary school, they are struggling academically even though they can function socially in English and have strong oral skills. Moreover, these students often feel stigmatized in their status as ELs and, as noted by Olsen (2010), may have developed habits of non-engagement and low personal expectations. Many researchers contend that the proficiency tests used with ELs are problematic in that they include academic content, thus constituting a barrier for children who are struggling with academic reading and/or writing tasks (cf. Clark-Gareca *et al.*, 2020).

It is worth noting that lack of support for multilingual learning may result in problems both within mainstream education as well as within any type of bilingual education. Children may experience a proficiency gap, understood here as ‘the difference between the level and type of L2 proficiency the students have and the target or “threshold level” they require in

order to be able to engage effectively with the curriculum they are required to study' (Johnson & Swain, 1994: 211). As demonstrated by Otwinowska and Foryś (2017), these difficulties are influenced not only by linguistic factors (weaker knowledge of the language of instruction, experiencing a proficiency gap), but also by affective factors (stress caused by high competition and pressure, aversion to difficult tasks in a foreign language) and cognitive factors (disturbed attention and information processing caused by stress). These factors may form a cause-and-effect sequence, leading some children to experiencing learned intellectual helplessness (see Figure 6.2). The concept of intellectual helplessness (Sędek & McIntosh, 1998) refers to cognitive, motivational and emotional disorders caused by situations in which a student cannot influence the course of events because his/her learning attempts do not bring the expected results. In the case of a bilingual or multilingual child, the mechanism works as follows. The child needs to cope with linguistically difficult material in the language of instruction and experiences a lack of progress despite intense intellectual effort. These experiences may lead to cognitive exhaustion, manifested by worse performance on complex tasks ('blank mind') and loss of creativity and internal motivation. These are exactly opposite results to those assumed by bilingual education and CLIL (Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

In order to find out what is difficult for children at a bilingual school and what can cause intellectual helplessness in CLIL lessons, Otwinowska and Foryś (2017) examined 10-year-olds and 11-year-olds learning science and mathematics in English at a prestigious school in Poland. One of the tools used by the researchers was a set of sentence frames that the children could complete with information about their feelings concerning lessons conducted in the L2, English. In Excerpts 1 and 2, we present two fragments of the 140 answers obtained, where children comment on the

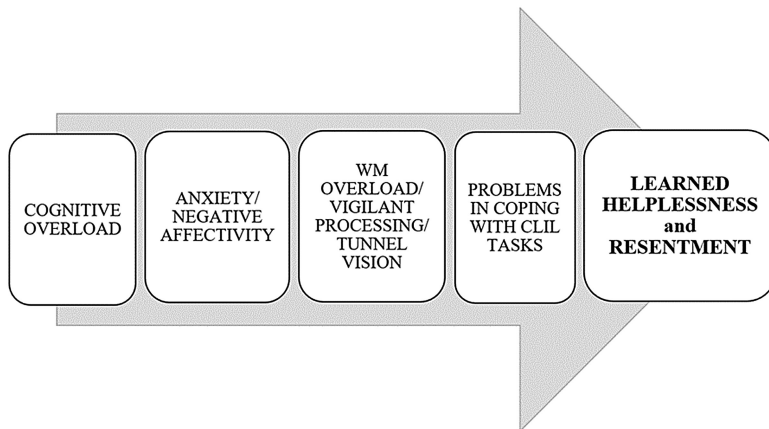


Figure 6.2 Mechanism leading to intellectual helplessness in the case of a child who has problems with the language of instruction (after Otwinowska & Foryś, 2017: 463)

CLIL tasks that were difficult for them both linguistically and intellectually (as cited in Otwinowska & Foryś, 2017: 468).

Excerpt 1.

[difficult in CLIL Science] everything with a few exceptions; [easy in CLIL Maths] few things, I prefer to learn in Polish; [on CLIL Maths I liked] nearly nothing; [it wasn't nice/interesting/cool because] I don't like them, [difficult because] I don't know English well, I didn't understand 90%; [What would you like to add?] I hate English! I want to have such lessons once a year! (Pupil 4a8, compiled from two questionnaires)

Excerpt 2.

[difficult in CLIL Science] to remember some things and to stay focused, to understand some notions; [I'd like to] speak more Polish and to slow down with the pace of the topics; [difficult in CLIL Maths] that we always rush with the next topic [What would you like to add?] I don't like English, so such lessons are BORING for me! (Pupil 4b15, compiled from two questionnaires)

Clearly, due to a proficiency gap and lack of adequate instructional support to scaffold learning, these children showed symptoms of stress and reluctance to perform difficult tasks in a foreign language. Extrapolating from the examples above, we can imagine what children with migration experiences might feel if they do not know the language of instruction and do not get support for their multilingual learning. If, in addition, they do not receive emotional support from teachers and peers, their school experiences can lead to cognitive impairment.

This leads to the following questions:

- Why do some bilingual children find it difficult to learn in the school language if not adequately supported?
- Why do returnees, even when they speak the heritage language relatively well, have problems with using this language in school contexts?

Cummins (1979, 2000) notes that there is a difference between the use of language in casual conversation and the use of language for academic learning purposes. Specifically, we use basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in everyday conversations that are strongly context-dependent and that use gestures and body language. In contrast, in school lessons, we use language for learning purposes (i.e. cognitive academic language proficiency, CALP). CALP has more difficult vocabulary (specific to the discipline) and more complex syntax than everyday language (e.g. passive voice, conditionals). Furthermore, it is often about abstract concepts and is not contextualized. Since Cummins' influential proposal more than 40 years ago, the BICS/CALP distinction has been much debated (see Cummins, 2021 for an extensive discussion). It has been criticized on the grounds that BICS/CALP might oversimplify conversational interactions and the notion of academic language (e.g. Bailey, 2007), or

that the general construct of academic language and different proficiency types should be rejected (e.g. García & Solorza, 2021). Still, researchers have worked to identify the specific language skills that are encompassed by academic language (cf. Schleppegrell, 2004; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). Recently, Barr *et al.* (2019) presented the construct of core academic language skills (CALP) and the development of an assessment (in English) for Grades 4–8 that measures the various domains of this construct. Included in CALP are skills such as ‘unpacking dense information’ (2019: 987), which involves understanding morphologically complex words (e.g. relating ‘invasion’ to ‘invade’), and ‘connecting ideas logically’ (2019: 987), which refers to how ideas are related to one another and the language that signals these connections (e.g. consequently, as a result).

Awareness of the linguistic dimensions of academic language is needed by all teachers in order to adequately support multilingual learning. As CALP/CALP is not necessarily acquired ‘along the way’, it needs to gain explicit focus in instruction (Cammarata & Haley, 2017; Morton, 2017). This topic needs to be addressed in the initial training of teachers as well, because it is precisely the use of CALP/CALP that causes the greatest difficulties for students. The development of CALP/CALP, or language for academic purposes, should be ensured by all teachers (Otwinowska & Foryś, 2017). A major obstacle in both mainstream and bilingual education is the lack of attention devoted to CALP/CALP, throwing children (and teachers) in at the deep end and assuming they will ‘manage somehow’. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and lack of linguistic support in the education system may cause frustration in children and even symptoms of intellectual helplessness.

Supporting Multilingualism in Schools

What should a teacher be aware of when supporting multilingual learning? A well-established model by Lucas and Villegas (2013) includes two distinct parts – teacher orientations and pedagogical knowledge and skills. The former emphasizes that the teacher is oriented towards values and beliefs of seeing multilingualism as a resource. Furthermore, multilingualism is not seen as affecting individual learners and their learning processes only, but rather as a wider phenomenon connected to social cohesion. Supporting multilingualism means giving all students opportunities to learn and participate in society, with teachers inclined to advocate for L2 learner needs.

Lucas and Villegas (2013) point out that, without these orientations, teachers will not be able to utilize the pedagogical knowledge and skills needed for supporting multilingualism. The essential starting point for all teachers is therefore to challenge beliefs and attitudes, especially regarding the deficit view of multilingualism (cf. Armon-Lotem *et al.*, 2015; De Houwer, 2015; Jessner, 2008). When teachers are oriented towards

multilingualism, they understand the importance of the linguistic and academic backgrounds of their students and how to support their learning. This includes both noticing the language skills required for completing learning tasks and supporting learning by applying key language learning principles (Otwinowska, 2017). The orientation also challenges teachers to notice which specific parts of instruction are challenging so that they can provide sufficient scaffolding techniques to support learning.

Similarly, Meier's (2018) approach to multilingual socialization is a critique of monolingual norms in education. Her framework, which combines views from multilingual education, sociolinguistics and language socialization, consists of practical suggestions that can be reflected upon in a variety of sociopolitical and linguistic contexts. For example, Meier (2018) discusses affective factors such as encouraging positive self-evaluation and normalizing multilingualism. Likewise, this framework advocates developing student awareness of linguistic differences and similarities, as well as explicitly talking about multilingual learning goals. In short, the aim of this approach is not only supporting school language learning for all, but also supporting multilingualism more broadly.

Although linguistic diversity is increasing and has gained more attention in society, the provision of solutions for multilingual classrooms is still fragmented in initial teacher education (European Commission, 2017; Vetter, 2012). It is a common misconception that supporting multilingualism in a classroom requires the teacher to know all the languages present in the classroom (see Chapter 4 of this book). It is also a common fear that allowing other languages in the classroom opens possibilities of bullying if the teacher does not understand all the languages that are used. These kinds of fears might be related to uncertainty in classroom management, which highlights the need to discuss multilingual classroom practices. If a teacher feels uncertain about multilingual practices, a good starting point may be to map the languages present in the classroom, but also to bring in foreign languages that the teacher is familiar with. It might feel easier for the teacher to bring in languages they know themselves, thus showing all students that multilingualism is accepted and valued in the classroom (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020). This means that a teacher working in linguistically diverse classrooms does not have to start from the big issues, such as speaking multiple languages fluently. Even including some multilingual aspects in instruction may have a positive effect on the classroom atmosphere and make room for educational innovations (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020).

Finally, we include some previously unpublished voices from student teachers, in-service teachers and teacher educators in the Swedish-medium context in Finland reflecting on supporting multilingual learning within the European project Listiac (Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms) (see Bergroth *et al.*, 2022). In Excerpts 3 and 4, teacher

educators are reflecting upon the importance of building good relationships, in this case with parents or other guardians.

Excerpt 3.

I am afraid to make a mistake, [...] because I don't know that culture, because of my lack of knowledge. [...] (Teacher educator 1)

Excerpt 4.

That relationship, if you manage to create it, there will be an understanding that you cannot know everything. [...] [We] cannot handle all cultures knowledge-wise but [we have] to build on the idea about 'the will to create a relationship'. (Teacher educator 2)

The teacher educators share their fear of accidentally causing cultural clashes, because they may lack the knowledge base for different cultures present in their classrooms. They conclude that it would not be realistic for teachers to know everything about different cultures from the start. However, they underline the will to build relationships, meaning that the teacher must be open to discussing and negotiating expectations about languages and multilingualism with parents/guardians (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2016).

In other reflections, student teachers discussed the importance of being responsive to a pupil's own wishes on how to approach linguistic and cultural diversity in classrooms.

Excerpt 5.

[...] I have also thought a lot about that it can be uncomfortable for some if you bring up the fact that 'you have a different home language' too often. (Student teacher 1)

Excerpt 6.

Yes, because not everyone likes that attention, if you're somehow made into an example, representing that entire culture somehow. (Student teacher 2)

These examples show that it is important for teachers to be empathetic and understanding of the needs of the pupils in the classroom, so that well-intentioned messages of acknowledging linguistic diversity do not result in accidental othering (emphasizing differences) (cf. Dervin, 2016). For these reasons, it may be good to normalize the approach to multilingualism: the responsibility of catering to linguistic diversity is not to be placed on the shoulders of individual pupils but becomes the responsibility of the school. This also means that it is not obligatory to have multiple languages in classrooms to use a multilingual approach to teaching.

The benefits of supporting multilingual learning become apparent in Excerpts 7 and 8, in which an experienced primary school teacher and a teacher educator reflect on pre-service teacher education and the role of multilingual language awareness as a way to support learning for all students. The teacher is concerned that monolingual teachers may lack a

certain sensitivity to the multilingual repertoires of their students and thus lack an understanding of some concepts.

Excerpt 7.

I had some American students [...], they have come and done their teacher practicum here. [M]ost exchange students are very monolingual. They cannot draw parallels in that way and benefit from another language, so to speak. I think they are very weak at reinforcing any language these exchange students, because they are not used to multilingualism in that way. (In-service teacher/teacher educator)

This reflects Meier's (2018) call for multilingual socialization and Otwinowska's (2017) plea for training teachers in the use of several languages to help them get a better grasp of cross-linguistic issues. The teacher quoted above concludes that the foundation for this type of understanding should be established in pre-service teacher education. The teacher sees it as a solution for better language learning, which can enhance the learning of content-specific concepts across the curriculum. The teacher says:

Excerpt 8.

A lot of effort has to be put into teacher education. [...] I see some parallels, I think of mathematics which has also decreased very much, it is also about a certain language awareness in mathematics as well. A little parallel there in that way, to become more aware of the concepts, the use of them and get them reinforced a little more than just showing that 'this is a square', and that's it. 'Why is it square, quadra, quatro, what is it, so it's four, Audi Quattro, it's a four-wheel-driven car' and like keep going all the time to get those connections. And that is very much lacking today. (In-service teacher/teacher educator)

This type of awareness helps teachers to draw parallels between languages and different kinds of associations. Learning to group words that go together and making connections between languages and associating concepts with different languages will generally help students build vocabulary. This is also a part of normalizing multilingualism in classroom practices, which supports multilingual learning (Little & Kirwan, 2019). This way of working is useful to all pupils and thus does not take time away from content teaching. For some teachers this type of approach may come naturally, but others can acquire the skills in connection to some key concepts of the lessons. If the teacher does not know where to start, language teachers can be consulted. Subject teachers and language teachers working together in professional teams or even opting for co-teaching (Mård-Miettinen *et al.*, 2018) can be highly efficient in noticing and highlighting opportunities to support multilingual learning. However, support from language teachers should not be understood as the language teacher stepping in to teach the language or subject-specific vocabulary while the subject teacher proceeds to teach the content. Co-teaching and partnerships in teaching should naturally be equally rewarding for both teachers.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined multilingual learning from various angles. As a point of departure, we argued that both monolingual and multilingual children need support in the development of their languages and opportunities to become familiar with linguistic diversity for their growth to balanced citizens in modern societies. Although the need for support and opportunities to become familiar with linguistic diversity may sound somewhat self-evident, we also argued that there is still a long way to go in supporting multilingual learning in everyday practices in educational contexts across the globe so that all learners obtain both acceptance and support from their families, peers and teachers.

In the theoretical framework for the chapter, we showed how childhood bilingualism can bring educational benefits, but we also discussed what can happen when multilingual learning is not adequately supported. We made an effort to show that benefits and risks may occur in both mainstream and bilingual education alike and thus highlighted the constant need for educators to be aware of the linguistic dimension in all types of educational contexts. By focusing on three vastly different sociolinguistic contexts, Poland and Finland in the EU and California in the USA, we were able to address a variety of topics closely connected with the need to support multilingual learning. We also relied on voices from teacher education and pupils in CLIL education. In this final section we draw upon these insights and formulate lessons worth considering when considering different aspects of supporting multilingual learning in education as a broad concept.

First, education systems cannot be treated in isolation from their surroundings; policymakers and educators need some awareness of historical developments and current political trends. All the contexts discussed in this chapter show how an understanding of background issues is necessary to situate educational practices. In Poland, it was WWII and communism. In Finland, it was constitutional bilingualism. In California, legal propositions have had a radical impact on educational provisions.

Second, across the systems, policymakers and educators need to be aware that educational culture is differently conceptualized, which may lead to serious misunderstandings, especially in the case of migrants and returnees. Bilingual children may behave differently than expected, but they cannot be looked at as ‘having problems’.

Bilingual and multilingual students, especially those with migration and re-emigration experiences, must not be made invisible in the education system. A lack of support for multilingual learning may result in many challenges for families, the students themselves and their teachers. It is schools that are obliged to support multilingual learning, as shown by the Finnish examples. Building on relationships within classes and schools, despite the fear of cultural clashes, and valuing multilingual repertoires

and all languages brought in by students is the starting point. Cherishing multilingualism means acknowledging students' languages, drawing some parallels between languages and normalizing multilingual language use in classrooms. It is also crucial to problematize the dichotomy between languages of high and low prestige.

All of this cannot be achieved without acknowledging the essential role of teacher education. In all three contexts examined, we have foregrounded the crucial role of linguistically aware and responsive teachers as the ones who can either cause or alleviate problems. Although a child may have mastered the everyday language of schooling well, teachers must understand that, to succeed in reading and writing tasks (especially in the higher grades), they must provide support with respect to the academic aspects of language. In light of this, we highlighted some issues with the assessment of bilinguals and the affective states that some CLIL tasks may evoke. Without linguistically aware teachers it is hard to support multilingual learning and student wellbeing. Educating teachers and teacher educators to understand and support multilingualism is thus a crucial goal to achieve across continents.

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