On the Role of Pre-service Language Teachers' Beliefs on Multilingual Education in Developing Teacher Training Programs

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Abstract For over twenty years now the role of teachers' beliefs in teacher education designed to help pre-service and in-service teachers develop their thinking and practices has been a topic of intense debate among teacher educators and trainers (cf. Freeman and Johnson 2005; Borg 2003; Mattheoudakis 2007; Farrell and Kun 2008; Gabryś-Barker 2010; Li and Walsh 2011). According to Calderhead (1996) the main areas in which teachers have been found to hold significant beliefs are learners and learning; teaching; the subject itself; the process of learning to teach; the self and the teaching roles. The present chapter, however, refers to those beliefs that are related to multilingual didactics (Jessner 2006; Ringbom 2007). More specifically, the article discusses and promotes the need to analyse the pre-service teachers' beliefs in the field of teaching a second foreign language (L3). Undoubtedly, the findings, which demonstrate what pre-service teachers think of L3 teaching and learning within the context of multilingual education may have practical implications for course design and evaluation in language teacher education programs—both in the area of ELT as well as in the field of teaching other foreign languages. Moreover, insights from such data could help to identify and address the gaps between pre-service teachers' beliefs and the requirements of the language teacher training courses. Thus, the present chapter advocates in favor of exploiting pre-service teachers' beliefs on multilinguality in the teacher training programs.

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1 Introduction

Although multilingualism is a relatively new area of research, it already covers a wide range of topics, from multilingual language lexicon, cross-linguistic influence and multilingual language awareness to learners' and teachers' language learning attitudes and their influence on multilingual education. Traditionally what is meant by multilingual education are "educational programs that use languages other than the L1s as media of instruction and aim for communicative proficiency in more than two languages" (Cenoz and Genesee 1998: 14). However, in a broader understanding, it may seem justified to extend the term to educational programs that teach at least two additional languages (L2 and L3) as school subjects simultaneously (cf. De Angelis 2011). In both cases the aim of the programs is achieving communicative proficiency and providing the multilingual skills that are becoming increasingly necessary in the modern world. Naturally enough, reaching such goals necessitates complex planning and new teacher education programs whose aim is to prepare language teachers for promoting and exploiting potential language learning benefits connected with multilinguality.

The present chapter attempts to shed some light on the role and impact of pre-service language teachers' beliefs on multilingualism in designing teacher education systems. At the outset, issues related to the multilingual education in the European context will be presented with a special focus on multilingualism with English. This will be followed by a discussion of the distinctiveness of multi-linguals' language learning processes and how these may differ from those of monolingual learners of a second language. The subsequent section introduces the idea of teachers' beliefs and analyses it within the context of multilinguality. The article closes with a brief discussion concerning future directions of research into the role and place of these beliefs within teacher education programs and the implementation of integrated foreign language didactics.

2 Multilingual Education and Multilingual Didactics

For many years research on multilingualism was defined in the literature as "a byproduct of research on second language learning and acquisition" (Jessner 2006: 13). More recently, following the rapid development of research on third and multiple language acquisition (TLA/MLA) in the light of which the knowledge of more than one foreign language is increasingly being recognized as an asset for individuals, a large proportion of European educational institutions are becoming more supportive of multilingualism and multilingual education.

The White Paper on Education and Training issued by the EU in 1995 stated that multilingualism should be viewed as an essential characteristic feature of the European identity. According to the official European language policy, EU citizens should be proficient in three European languages: their L1, one foreign language

with high international status-L2 (English in the majority of cases, although not a necessity) and a neighboring language-L3 (such as German in Poland or French in Germany). This policy exerted a direct impact on language learning and teaching programs since adding another language to the educational system evoked a need to analyze the existing language teaching programs thoroughly and triggered the rapid development of research on multiple language acquisition and multilingual didactics (cf. Hufeisen and Neuner 2003; Cenoz 2009).

The concept of multilingual didactics is not new. In fact, a multilingual teaching approach was already advocated by Wandruszka (cf. 1986, 1990), who argued in favor of an introductory course in Latin and Greek for all language students, claiming that it would provide them with the basics for learning modern European languages. Similarly, Hufeisen (2007) and Jessner (2008) promote the idea of integrating all of a learner's parallel languages into one common curriculum based on the multilingual concept. By way of example, programs based on such an idea have been introduced in Luxemburg (Hoffmann 1998) and Bulgaria (Dikova et al. 2001). Hufeisen and Neuner (2003) argue that introducing a common curriculum would limit the competition between languages, which seems to be beneficial for a number of languages such as French or German that might otherwise be dropped. Multilingual didactics not only promotes language learning but it also changes the approach to learning by helping learners exploit the previous knowledge and language learning strategies. In the words of Jessner (2008: 40), "teaching across languages presents a promising didactic tool of multilingual teaching, whatever languages are involved in the learning process."

3 Multilingualism with English

The spread of English as a lingua franca in Europe has triggered the acquisition of English as a second language for wide majority of Europeans.[1] Such a situation, however, does not imply that students should quit learning other languages. Contrary to many expectations, recent statistics prove that the proclaimed predominance of English has not resulted in a loss of interest in learning other foreign languages. Many studies (cf. Graddol 2004, 2006) show that English is and will continue to be learned together with other languages, at least in the European context. Therefore, including an additional foreign language in the curriculum of schools where English is a first foreign language seems to be well-justified and is also welcomed by both parents and students.

A question, however, arises concerning the role English should play in the multilingual language acquisition and learning. Opinions on this subject vary considerably. On the one hand, researchers such as Hufeisen and Neuner (2003) promote the idea that multilingualism could be achieved more effectively if

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[1] cf. Jessner (2006) for a thorough discussion of the changing status of English worldwide.

English is taught as a third language, after learners have already had some contact with other languages. On the other hand, many scholars advocate the view that early English learning should be organized in such a manner that multilingualism through or with English will be both supported and popularised (cf. Vollmer 2001). Bearing in mind the position and popularity of English as a European lingua franca, the latter option seems to be more realistic. Consequently, by activating and supporting cognitive processes, English could stimulate further language learning. It could also contribute to the development of metalinguistic and multicultural awareness by building a cognitive foundation for contrastive learning and reflection on language learning. In other words, English could and should "function as a kind of ice-breaker and this way create an openness to linguistic diversity" (Jessner 2008: 42).

4 The Multilingual Learner

As Ringbom rightly observes, "learning, including language learning, is based on prior knowledge. When you learn something new, such as a foreign language, you try to connect the new elements to whatever linguistic and other knowledge you may have" (Ringbom 2007: 1). Nowadays, the majority of language learners have some knowledge of other languages beyond the native one. In the modern educational context, the typical language learner is no longer a learner of a second language but rather a learner of a third or additional language. Moreover, a considerable group learns two foreign languages simultaneously, which further justifies the need for integrated didactics.

Numerous research studies on the effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition confirm the idea that in comparison to monolingual learners, bilingual learners experience a number of advantages when learning an additional language (cf. Cenoz 2003). As Hufeisen and Marx (2007) note, whereas the L2 learners in the process of learning a first foreign language are complete beginners, their situation changes the moment they start learning another language. A wide variety of factors, absent in the process of L2 learning, come to play supporting (and sometimes conflicting) roles, which have been fully described by Hufeisen in her Factor Model (Hufeisen 2004). Firstly, the L3 learner has already gathered some experience related to the foreign language learning process. Secondly, he/she has (consciously or subconsciously) developed or adopted individual techniques and strategies to deal with subsequent language learning, such as the ability to compare, transfer or make interlingual connections. Thirdly, he/she disposes of previous language interlanguages along with the target language interlanguage.

Clearly, L3 learners have "language specific knowledge and competencies at their disposal that L2 learners do not" (Jessner 2008: 23), which proves that L3 learners' needs must be far different from those of L2 learners, and thus they

should be catered to in a different way. Unfortunately, in the context of a foreign language classroom, it is often the case that although L3 learners already know so much, the moment they enter an L3 classroom they start from scratch.

5 The Multilingual Teacher

As mentioned in the previous section, over the last decade, the facilitative effect of one's native and non-native language on the acquisition of a third language has been widely acknowledged and approved by a number of research studies (cf. Ringbom 1987; Cenoz and Hoffmann 2003; De Angelis 2005; Cenoz and Gorter 2011). Yet, in too many cases today's teachers are still "influenced by advice that belongs to the past rather than the present" (Jessner 2006: 122). Many of them stick to the rules of Contrastive Analysis, which advocated the view that languages in the curriculum should be treated as separate subjects in order to avoid creating confusion in the learners' minds. Accordingly, many language teachers have avoided making use of knowledge about other languages in their classroom so as to avoid confusing their students. Thus, as Jessner observes

> in the ordinary language classroom contact with another language is still regarded as a hindrance to learning. With this in mind language teachers try to keep knowledge of and about other languages, including the students' L1(s), out of the classroom, assuming that this teaching method will prevent the activation of prior language knowledge in the students and ultimately fight confusion in the students' minds (Jessner 2006: 123).

Nevertheless, it has been confirmed that prior language learning experience does play a supportive role in the L3 learning. Multilingual learners clearly activate and exploit their prior native and non-native language knowledge regardless of how hard teachers try to discourage this from happening. It seems reasonable that instead of preventing the unpreventable, both teachers and learners focus on how to exploit the enormous potential that L3 learners bring with them into an L3 classroom.

A good example of a change in attitude towards a learner's previous knowledge is the usage of the native language. Until recently our attitude towards the use of a student's mother tongue in the foreign language classroom was highly critical. Recent studies on bilingualism, however, incontestably confirmed that learners' prior native language knowledge may in fact be beneficial to the learning process (cf. Cenoz and Hoffmann 2003; De Angelis 2005, 2007; Cenoz 2013). Similar evidence has been accumulated in the area of prior non-native language knowledge and language learning experience. Many researchers now tend to agree with Cenoz and Genesee's once controversial claim that 'bilingualism does not hinder the acquisition of an additional language and, to the contrary, in most cases bilingualism favors the acquisition of a third language' (1998: 20). Truly, recent research into multilingualism strongly promotes cross-language approach (cf. Clyne 2003) advocating for making use of the cooperation between the languages the learner knows.

The need for integrated foreign language didactics also results from the ever increasing amount of L3/Ln learners. As De Angelis rightly observes (2007) the growing number of multilinguals is a reality which more and more language teachers and researchers are dealing with in their daily work. Specifically, the position of English as a typical first foreign language imposes some important requirements on English teachers, who are no longer responsible for instructing only on the subject itself but also for training multilingual learners. A postulate which has also been commonly called for in the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) discussion (cf. Berns 2009; Mauranen and Ranta 2009).

In general, the role of prior language knowledge in the multilingual language classroom seems to be of great importance. Students must be allowed to use their language background in the learning process, and teachers (of both L2 and L3) should encourage learners by teaching comparative strategies and using materials specially designed for multilingual speakers. As Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) rightly observes, before multilingual awareness can be raised in the classroom, it needs to be manifested in the teacher through their own multilingual learning skills, knowledge and, above all, attitude.

6 Pre-service Teachers Beliefs on Multilingual Education

Undoubtedly, multilingual education poses a number of challenges. One of them is the redefinition of the role of a foreign language teacher who, as many specialists in the field emphasize, should be trained both to instruct for multilinguality but also to exploit the multilingual potential hidden in the students' prior linguistic knowledge. One way to achieve this goal is by introducing a multilingual education module into pre-service language teacher training programs. In turn, many educationalists and teacher trainers claim that such programs should be developed with consideration of or, even more radically, on the basis of teachers' beliefs.

Seemingly, the term teachers' beliefs speaks for itself. However, as Pajares (1992) observes defining beliefs may not be such an easy task. They can refer to:

> … attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertories of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature (Pajares 1992: 309).

It is beyond the scope of the present chapter to try to elaborate on the distinction between beliefs and a number of other related terms such as attitudes, judgments or opinions, all of which are used interchangeably in various studies. And thus, the term 'belief' in this chapter refers to any views held by the participants about the nature of foreign language learning and teaching, also in the multilingual context.

Language teacher educators agree that beliefs regarding the process of foreign language learning play an important role in pre-service teachers education.

Numerous research studies suggest that students enter EFL teacher training courses with a set of pre-conceived ideas (cf. Pajeras 1992; Richards and Lockhart 1994; Calderhead 1996; Borg 2003; Richards 2008; De Angelis 2011). Richards (1998) points out that it is through these beliefs that pre-service teachers process the content of the teacher development program. According to Phipps and Borg (2009: 380), "the study of teachers' beliefs has in the last 15 years emerged as a major area of enquiry in the field of language teaching".

A substantial body of research (cf. Freeman and Johnson 2005; Borg 2003; Mattheoudakis 2007; Farrell and Kun 2008; Gabryś-Barker 2008, 2010; Li and Walsh 2011) suggests that teachers' educational beliefs strongly influence both their professional development as well as their classroom practices (cf. Borg 2006; Farrell and Kun 2008; Li and Walsh 2011). As Kubler LaBoskey (1993: 23) puts it:

> (…) novices do not enter teacher education programs as blank slates. After many years in classrooms they have ideas about what teachers do. But these ideas are derived from a student perspective, not a teacher perspective, and thus, they are very likely to be inaccurate, inappropriate or incomplete. Such misconceptions may distort or block any new information presented in the teacher education program.

Similarly, Williams and Burden (1997: 56–57) claim that teachers' beliefs about language learning "affect everything that they do in the classroom", guiding and shaping classroom actions to a much greater extent than the use of a particular methodology or course book. Consequently, in the context of the present chapter, it may be argued that understanding the beliefs held by language teachers on multilingual learning seems to be crucial in the process of designing multilingual education programs. Teacher trainers need to consider prior language learning experiences as the foundation of prospective teachers' conception of teaching and account for "the potential influence of student preconceptions on the reflective activities and programs they design and implement" (Kubler LaBoskey 1993: 23).

Excellent as these recommendations are, their application remains somewhat of a challenge in the majority of contexts. Many studies have analyzed teachers' beliefs from a wide variety of perspectives; however, extensive research concerning the beliefs of pre-service foreign language teachers regarding the issue of multilingual education is still missing, as are the studies distinguishing and specifying both the roles and beliefs of L2 and L3 language teachers.

On the one hand, there is a constantly growing body of research offering insightful knowledge on TLA and MLA (cf. Ringbom 1987, 2001, 2007; Aronin 2005; Aronin and Hufeisen 2009; Cenoz and Gorter 2011; Otwinowska and De Angelis 2012). In addition, the applicability of research on multilingualism to language teaching has been widely recognized within the academic community. On the other hand, however, there have been few attempts in teacher education programs around the world to integrate current TLA and MLA research findings into the classroom. A thorough study is needed to shed some light on this issue by examining the beliefs of both L2 and L3 teachers on multilingual learning and integrated foreign language didactics. Similarly, it should also be specified how English (L2) language teachers perceive the relationship between TLA research

and language teaching and to what extent they believe the TLA research is useful and relevant for both L2 and L3 pedagogy.

7 Challenges for the Future

It is clear that contemporary foreign language teaching in the school context should be governed by a multilingual concept (Hufeisen 2007). Languages should not compete with, but rather support, one another (cf. Hufeisen and Neuner 2003; Cenoz and Gorter 2012). This can only be achieved by integrated foreign language didactics aimed at promoting multilingual development. In turn, cross language teaching can only be effective if we manage to train multilingually aware teachers to work with multilingual learners, which implies that the attitudes of trainees to multilinguality need to become more important indicators for the way in which pre-service preparation should be designed. As mentioned above, teachers' classroom practices largely hinge on their beliefs. Thus there is a need to conduct an extensive research of pre-service teachers' beliefs in the area of multilingual learning and teaching. Teacher educators and trainers should be more aware of such attitudes and biases as they have major implications for the way training programs ought to be constructed and their general objectives formulated.

Summing up, the fact that the large majority of language learners have contact with more than one foreign language means that language teachers should not only teach their own subject but also prepare learners for multilinguality (in case of L2 teachers) or exploit their learners' previous foreign language knowledge and language learning experience (in case of L3/Ln teachers). To achieve these goals we need to prepare language teachers to be more than just one-subject teachers. Education programs for foreign language teachers should obligatorily cover topics related to the role of prior linguistic knowledge and language learning experience in the process of additional language acquisition. Finally, since the increasing number of research has confirmed the strong connection between teacher's beliefs and thinking processes and the teachers' classroom actions, it seems reasonable to promote the view that the content of those multilingual modules needs to account for pre-service teachers beliefs on multilinguality.

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