
The Multiplicity Framework: Potential Applications for Heritage Language Education and Pedagogy

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Abstract

Engaging with language education in a heritage language context is a complex endeavor that transcends space and time. A heritage language is necessarily connected to past language use associated with older generations, perhaps even those who are no longer living. Heritage language is also associated with a different space, a place removed from the language context of those who are now seeking to learn or maintain the language. To engage with heritage language learning, previously established purposes and norms need to be reshaped through a younger generation who has different language communication opportunities, means, needs, and desires. This paper outlines a framework for understanding the communicative repertoire of heritage language learners and also for engaging them with their diverse and hybrid identities, the purposes for which they wish to use their languages and the various modes and modalities that are central to their diverse language learning needs.

Keywords

Multiplicity • Communicative repertoire • Hybrid identities • Heritage language needs

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Introduction

Effective, meaningful communication draws on a multitude of resources, as well as experiences in diverse contexts of use embedded in layered and evolving personal life trajectories. For heritage languages users, effective communication involves both the dominant and heritage languages of the community in which these users live, study, and work (He 2010, p. 73). As a consequence, effective heritage language education is not about teaching a single language variety but about exploring and establishing multiple ways of being and doing which engage with pasts, diverse presents, as well as with new ways of learning and using language for multiple futures. It is about catering for individual needs to relate to and communicate with/in diverse groups, while recognizing that effective communication is not the same for everyone. To engage with this layered diversity, we need frameworks for thinking about language that can embrace multiple options and complex interactions between diverse influences and sets of features.

Echoing the above, one of the defining characteristics of heritage language teachers and learners is their need to engage with complex contexts in which languages and identities are in the process of change (Cho 2014, p. 182), in both home and wider contexts. As a result, even as heritage language learners need to be seen as individuals who have their own learning needs and wants, as each attempts to develop an understanding of the multiple ways in which they experience and relate to the worlds in which they navigate (Zentz 2015, p. 88), they need to sustain relationships with sometimes quite fixed visions of the so-called heritage language and culture. Therefore, heritage learners need to use their varied resources in ways that appropriately acknowledge both the dominant and the heritage cultures, contexts, and ideologies that both constrain and enable them to interact and communicate with others (Creese et al. 2006; Leeman et al. 2012). These challenges mean that learners have to connect heritage languages with multiple and sometimes contradictory aspects of their identity, as they continuously perform and negotiate who they want to be in their daily interactions with their peers, parents, and older generations. To engage with this complexity, heritage language teachers need to see their learners as creative individuals who want and need to “signpost” their momentary subjectivities and voice them in ways that signal both membership and innovation. This is a difficult task for heritage language teachers to engage with as most language teaching methodologies downplay (to different degrees and in different ways) the totality of communicative resources available to learners as well as the multiple and

sometimes competing choices that learners have to make when putting those resources together, a task which is even more difficult when the resources involved are being used by learners from mixed backgrounds (see Shin 2010; Wu et al. 2014).

It would be easy to see the layers that heritage language learners engage with as simply a result of engagement with more than one language, but this would miss an important aspect of the nature of the communicative resources available to these learners. Guy and Hinskens (2016, p. 1) have recently remarked that the notion of the “coherent linguistic system” is increasingly becoming problematized as research unpacks the ways that individuals both “actively and idiosyncratically select from a palette of variants” as individuals explore and negotiate who they are and who they wish to be. While this point is one that has long been held (Le Page 1968; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), current research into multilingualism is increasingly taking the stance that linguistic systems are interconnected and intertwined in the lives and minds of their users (Canagarajah 2013a; Grosjean 2015). In other words, grammars are no longer seen as simple entities, and for plurilinguals, their grammars are no longer considered as discrete (Bruen and Kelly 2016), nor uniform. In mobile and diverse communities, each individual needs to negotiate their way through multiple worlds using the sets of communicative resources available to them efficiently and effectively. This involves a view of a plurilingual repertoire as not only structures and features of spoken or written systems (Coste and Simon 2009) but also involves a view of the repertoire as incorporating a range of other nonverbal features (Lüdi 2013; Rymes 2014), such as gesture, movement, and spatial positioning. Individuals must learn to combine resources in ways that best achieve their intended purposes while reflecting, but also shaping who they want to be. These features may extend beyond the resources of the human body to involve the use of digital technologies which are often used to connect friends and family in one language using one digital platform (e.g., using Skype to talk with grandparents) and other friends and family members in another language variety via other platforms (e.g., use of Instagram, Facebook, or Snapchat with peers). The complex range of features associated with these diverse purposes is the learner’s communicative repertoire. In this chapter we describe a framework that offers a systematic and comprehensive framework of communicative features and how these features connect so that both learners and teachers can engage with current and future communicative needs and wants when interacting and identifying in more than one culture and language. To locate this argument, we discuss the growing body of work that addresses the issue of the communicative repertoire.

The Communicative Repertoire

Gumperz (1964) and Hymes (1972) both explored the notion of a repertoire as a way of describing the sets of resources available to users of a language. The term has since been used to refer to verbal, stylistic, and more diverse nonlinguistic forms of communication (Rymes 2014; Nicholas and Starks 2014). To enable a communicative repertoire to be an educationally useful construct for the purposes outlined

above, we believe that it needs to encompass a wider range of features than language alone. It also needs to be seen as “a fluid set” of resources (Benor 2010, p. 160), able to change and reflect different communicative stances. Current responses to this challenge have tended to discard the notion of structure and bounded systems and present repertoires as lists of features (Fought 2006; Benor 2010). This is inherently problematic as lists do not reveal how different features work together. Learners need to understand the inter-connected communicative choices that they make, and teachers need to work with learners to develop an understanding of how to best make these connections in their communicative acts. This involves understanding that communicative acts involve purposeful controlled multidimensional combinations of structured features. While the notion of purpose is uncontroversial, the idea of structure is contested in a postmodern, poststructural world that brings with it the need to consider agentivity, creativity, and moments of interaction. Yet views of structure are not entirely absent. Stratilaki (2012) argues for the need for a description of multilingual competence that incorporates connections between macro-contexts and microcontexts while enabling its users to function as social actors with a repertoire that consists of different varieties and forms of knowledge that emerge and interact in different contexts. Melo-Pfeifer (2015, p. 212) has sought to capture relationships between diverse features by using visual narratives to connect up “the bits” to help understand the “multimodal representations of multilingualism.” Faneca et al. (2016) have attempted to address the issue of structure by drawing on and referring to Andrade et al’s (2003) attempt to construct a multilingual competence around different dimensions: affective, linguistic and communicative, as well as learning and management that learners can access when seeking to construct and perform their identities. Rampton (2011) has also confronted the need for some structure. While acknowledging that the field has seen “a major shift, away from the traditional emphasis on the conditioning of social structure towards an interest in the agency of speakers and recipients” (Rampton 2011, p. 1232), he has expressed some reluctance to give up entirely on structure and constraints, citing Heller (2007) and others who have argued that we need to “understand [system, boundary and constraint] as on-going processes of social construction occurring under specific . . . conditions.”

Even though researchers have engaged with the notion of structure for the communicative repertoire in limited ways, a framework is lacking which can engage with agency, individuality, creativity, and communicative resources in a multilingual, multimodal framework that can be used to help learners, teachers, and researchers to explore language learning, language needs, communicative acts, and metalinguistic processes. In this chapter we explore a framework (Nicholas and Starks, 2014) that is designed to meet these challenges and show its relevance for heritage language contexts. The framework is intended to be used to understand how learners/users (can) understand and work with the totality of their available resources for creating and interpreting communicative acts and for starting discussions about their individual needs and wants as communicators. The Multiplicity framework offers a structured and consistent means for understanding how users select and relate the various features available to them in ways that enable them to make

connections between and across diverse resources. A central part of our framework is a structure that enables learners to understand how they as individuals wish to both draw on and build on their communicative resources to communicate effectively and to expand their communicative repertoire in ways that allow them to express their various subjectivities.

The Framework

Multiplicity offers a structured way of viewing how individuals may draw on and combine features from their communicative repertoire. Multiplicity's structured view of the communicative repertoire is a theoretical construct common to all speakers/users, which individual learners/users draw on to construct their communicative acts. The structural features of the communicative repertoire provide learners with a framework through which to understand their communicative acts and build extensions or alternatives. In this framework, the first constraints of the communicative repertoire are presented as four sets of structured resources, each of which is drawn on in any communicative act, and together give each individual flexible ways of engaging with what and how they want to communicate. These four sets of resources (dimensions) constrain learners in different ways. Learners must use physical resources for the production of any intended communicative act (Modes). They are also constrained by the technological resources that they use to mediate their physical resources (Mediations). They are equally constrained by the social ways in which they wish to use language (Varieties) and the Purposes for which they wish to do this (Nicholas and Starks 2014, p. 16). As such, the four dimensions of the communicative repertoire, illustrated in Fig. 1, provide a framework for systematically understanding and connecting the necessary resources for communicative acts and can also be a useful tool for framing discussions with learners about how they wish to use these resources. Discussions about the dimensions provide the broadest way of understanding the resources available to learners. For example, while one heritage language learner may take as their focus a particular element within the dimension of Mediation and the particular feature sets from the dimension of Varieties necessary for effective TechSpeak, another learner may wish to focus on how to use the same type of mediating technology to perform the persona of a loving grandson. The framework identifies the resources used to construct communicative acts and enables learners to ask how these acts relate to momentary identities that they have been performing or want to (learn to) perform, which may be very different for different types of learners (cf. Hinton 2011; Lo-Philip 2010).

The Threads Across Each Dimension

A second layer in understanding and structuring the communicative repertoire is realized in the structures that constrain how a user reflects a "more or less" stance towards the features used in any communicative act. Different threads are embedded

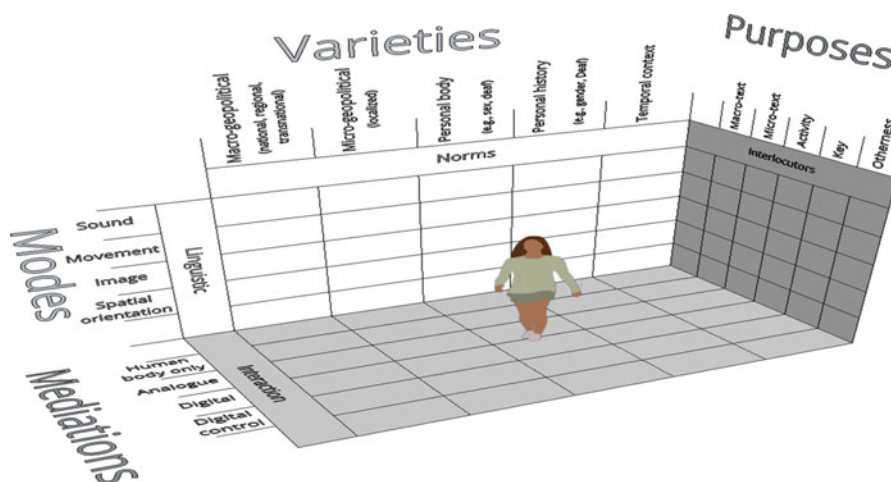


Fig. 1 The dimensions, threads, and elements of Multiplicity (Nicholas and Starks 2014, p. 69) (Permission has been granted for nonexclusive, English language rights for this diagram, originally published as Fig. 4.2, Dimensions, elements and threads of communicative repertoire on p. 69 of Nicholas, H. & Starks, D. (2014) *Language education and applied linguistics: Bridging the two fields*. London: Routledge)

in each of the dimensions within the framework. The thread within Modes constrains features as more or less linguistic. Many speakers use their voice to blur the sounds in the language they are speaking when they are unsure of how (or how appropriate) it may be to say what they are about to say. Others shout in order to indicate the urgency of their message. A slightly jerky/inconsistent handwriting may be a signal of the speaker's uncertainty about the spelling of a particular word. A script that is difficult to read may indicate the hurried nature of the act. The features within Mediations are connected by a more or less interactional thread. Alternative selections in relation to this thread enable users to variably engage their interlocutor in the interaction. A speech or piece of writing may be seen as entirely transactional or it may be written to engage with an audience (e.g., contain laughter, pauses for other responses or activities, etc.). The thread within Varieties enables users to relate "more or less" to norms to signal other aspects of identity. Users may wish to contest norms or conform to them in their entirety. Contesting may not be an easy choice as the use of new norms may not conform with the expectations of others (e.g., Reynold's (1998) reports on female Japanese teachers who attempt to contest traditional gender positioning in their classroom and the consequences of their acts). The thread that connects Purposes constrains how users adapt a communicative act to the interlocutor. Modifications can be quite small or extensive in nature. A heritage language learner needs to consider ways in which an interlocutor can be enabled to respond in a particular language. A central part of these threads is that the user is constantly combining them in various ways that nuance the "more or lessness" of the communicative act, reflecting the creative agentive self of its user. An individual may speak quietly both out of respect (norms) and because they are

uncertain about what they want to say (linguistic) and do not want their interlocutor to help them in the construction of the message (interaction). They may wish to send a message using clear language (interlocutor) but not too simple as to sound childish (norms). Identifying threads enables users to talk about what they want to modify, how and why in their communication. In classroom contexts, learners can exploit the “more or less” aspects of the threads in role plays where they can try out new ways of engaging diverse sets of communicative features.

The Elements Within the Dimensions

Within each dimension there is a further set of structured resources available to the learner, realized as elements. A discussion of the different elements within communication enables learners and teachers to explore agency in communication as learners seek to understand and control their communicative repertoire.

Modes

To illustrate, we start with the elements within Modes. Individuals have available to them diverse Modes for communicative purposes. These consist not only of the elements of “sound” and “image” which are typically associated with speaking, reading, writing, and listening but other elements such as “spatial” elements central to proxemics and gaze and “movement” associated with features of the repertoire such as “ways of walking” or “gesturing.” Within Modes, we have left blank a space for the use of other communicative resources. This could include the way that in passing one touches a relative on the shoulder to say “hello” or the way one smells the air in the kitchen to signal pleasure to the cook about the upcoming meal. When considered on their own, this collection of features is no different than a list that may “more or less” differ between languages. The power of the framework is that it offers a way to systematize how learners combine features from the same (multiple types of sounds) and different (sounds and movements) elements to form a whole and is extensive enough to accommodate the range of features in the various tools already in use in daily lessons such as those in visual narratives (Melo-Pfeifer 2015). These features include images distributed on the pages of books in various ways, the presence of various language scripts, and/or the representations of speech in different ways (speech bubbles). While learners from a heritage language background may already have an implicit knowledge of many of the features associated with Modes, by exploring the elements of Modes and the features associate with them, teachers can begin to draw out the strengths of their students’ existing resources and the ways that their existing features can be combined. A deep sniff in the kitchen as one passes someone cooking does not occur in isolation but is accompanied by features from other elements within Modes such as sounds (words), a smile (image), or movement (patting the stomach). Features of Modes interact with features along other dimensions such as when speakers talk on the phone or in face-to-face interactions

(Mediations). The features of Modes interact with features in Varieties (such as macro-geopolitical features of movement and spatial orientation (proxemics and kinesics) associated with one language or culture. Features of Modes interact with Purposes when speakers aim to adapt the way they speak to their audience, seeking to motivate or soothe, inform or persuade.

By engaging with the elements of Modes, a teacher can explore the types of features that their learners wish to express through the “what” he or she wishes to use or, in some instances, that he or she is already using. As is the case for all of the elements in all of the dimensions, the elements within Modes are complex and need to be negotiated. Decisions may be relatively simple ones such as whether the heritage language learner wants to engage with writing or not, but also additional issues as to whether the learner wants to focus only on the linguistic system or focus on the more nonlinguistic aspects, such as the neatness of their writing.

Mediations

Elements within Mediations affect how the communicative act is produced. These Mediations include some of the resources discussed as Modes in Kress (2009). In our framework, the Mediation elements reflect the technological “how” of the communicative act through the different resources used when realizing sounds or images (or other elements) in communicative acts. The different elements of Mediations reflect technological options. When languages are framed as heritage languages, they have as their starting point, connections with the past. These past associations are often associated with speaking, using the human body as the Mediation of sound in face-to-face interactions. Other past associations may involve those associated with letters written using the Mediation of a pen or typewriter. In such instances, the person physically produced the text using analogue technologies. Younger heritage language learners may not be interested in engaging with or have extensive experience of analogue technologies such as pens and typewriters, but they may still want to talk to others face to face and/or write notes in the sand on the beach or in the snow, examples of using the human body to produce the message. In heritage language contexts, there is an increasing use of digital technologies in computers or mobile phones for simpler communication such as email or texting or for richer communication types such as Skype, FaceTime, or Facebook (where any or all features from images, sounds, movement, and spatial orientation can appear) (Madianou 2014). Richer digital technologies can merge different Modes of communication for different purposes and use them in different ways (e.g., when talking/video linking and messaging at the same time). Heritage language learners need to learn to understand how to use these technologies to communicate in both their heritage language and the dominant language(s) of the surrounding community, and they may want to mix their Varieties when doing so. Priorities in the heritage and in the language of the dominant

community may differ. Heritage language teachers may need to work with their students to enable the students to teach their older relatives about how to use some technologies for communicative purposes, while at the same time possibly learning how to communicate using other technologies from those same relatives, a skill that *may* not be required for the surrounding community's dominant language. In relation to Mediations, teachers need to engage their learners with the "how" of communication and to envisage what future technologies may offer, for example, they may need to explore what grandparents might expect from them when communicating via Skype/FaceTime over long distances. It may not be the case that teachers have these resources or can explore all options in their classrooms, but they can open up the possibility for future means of communication potentially involving more digital control (e.g., spell checkers or auto-correct functions in various writing programs or other forms of computer assisted communication). When engaging with the youth of today, we need to encourage not only the use of existing technologies but also emerging ones. Teachers plant seeds and open up possibilities, and as such a space has been left blank in the Mediations dimension in Fig. 1 to include emerging technologies.

Varieties

Through the elements within the Varieties dimension learners engage with communicative resources framed in (relation to) particular settings, times, or even periods of time in their lives. We see the features within the elements of Varieties as including features of both the language and culture of the wider community as well the heritage language and culture, and all of the communicative resources and norms implied by those terms. As identity is shaped by and expressed through interconnected resources, the various elements of Varieties often blend into one another, as we illustrate below. We now consider how the features within the elements within the Varieties dimension can be used to explore what heritage language learners have access to, need to have access to, and want to have access to.

Features associated with the elements of Varieties help create connections between a user and the practices of various groups and groupings. Learners create connections by taking features of Modes (sounds) employed in face-to-face interaction (their human body) and combining them with features drawn from elements within Varieties to create practices connected with different kinds of communicative spaces, connected with place: here and now and there and then. For example, they could speak in ways that reflect a particular accent or embody sets of localized practices such as the Japanese self-introduction routine of "jikoshoukai" that is an important part of meeting people for the first time (Shigemitsu 2010). Mode features could be associated with different sorts of Varieties features including what we have labeled the macro-geopolitical element, the communicative features that we associate with languages (or broader communicative systems) in different places.

Embedded within the macro-geopolitical element are, therefore, features that a heritage language user associates and aligns with place in the macrosense: the historical homeland, their current homeland, and perhaps other places that they have lived in along the way. For example, Templer German speaking communities in Australia use not only some standard German features but also many nineteenth Century southwestern (Swabian) dialect features with some Arabic lexical items from their community's time in Palestine. For other heritage language speakers of German, macro-geopolitical features may include the use of specific words e.g., the use of "*Auf Wiedersehen*" [Good bye] for general (more formal) southern, Catholic-associated German varieties, or alternative ways of localizing such expressions ("*Pfiatt Gott*" for Bavarian or "*Adele*" for Swabian varieties). In other communities, this may involve decisions around certain movement (e.g., decisions to (or not) to shake hands in particular ways or with one or all genders) or other activities that engage in meaning-making (for example, whether to talk while eating at a dinner table or whether to move closer to or further from an interlocutor when a heritage language learner switches from one language to another). Because macro-geopolitical features are associated with Varieties and draw on the elements within Modes and Mediations, the possible combinations of features and the ways they are used by individuals are almost infinite. The macro-geopolitical element is not restricted to specific language use but also allows features of transnational varieties and mixes thereof to be considered. In heritage contexts, such transnational issues are often complex as multiple languages are used in diverse ways, which may or may not reflect the language use of the source country (for example, whether German speaking migrants to Australia should learn standard German names for Australian animals since these names may not be known in German-speaking countries or learners may choose to make use of the English names used in Australia, which would provide local recognition but no association with standard German norms). In this kind of macro-geopolitical context, blending is often the norm, and variation in these norms may occur across generations, families, and individuals. Sometimes this blending can be as simple as the use of a local word. As an illustration, in Australia, many post WWII speakers of German adopted the German name for a rubber tree, "*Gummibaum*", to refer to a "*gum tree*," the local Anglo-Australian name for a eucalyptus tree. Multiplicity as a Framework enables heritage language learners and teachers to engage with these blends and to talk about their use in heritage language contexts and the ways in which the norms in a heritage language context may differ from those in other contexts. Connections with multiple norms increase the potential features that can be combined and teachers need to be attuned to the fact that selections may differ from one student to another in the same class. For example, in a Macedonian-English bilingual program in Australia which one of the authors observed, children and teachers discussed how to refer to Australian television programs, locally available toys and beach/ocean creatures for which Macedonian had no readily accessible equivalents. As a result of the different decisions that individuals made in response to these possibilities of combination, individuals positioned themselves slightly differently in relation to given national/community

norms. In some contexts learners may (because of the different norms within the community) experience discrimination.

A second element central in considering how users project themselves into a communicative act is one that is equally tied to identity. This element, labeled the micro-geopolitical element, considers the localized domains in which communicative interaction occurs. Place is always localized in that each home, neighborhood, church, workplace, and playspace (what Fishman (1972) would label as domains) has its own sets of norms regarding language use. The norms in these micro-geopolitical contexts affect the choices that an individual has about how to use a heritage language. A common issue in many classrooms is how teachers are to be referred to, whether with names or titles or just by various expressions of the label “teacher.” These micro-geopolitical elements connect with various features in Modes, producing similar and different ways of speaking and writing and moving. They also connect with Mediations, producing similar and different options for how an individual wishes to communicate with relatives overseas, at home or elsewhere within the local community – by home phone, letter/postcard (analogue) or through various digital technologies (computer; smart phone).

An understanding of micro geopolitical features is important in heritage language learning as there can be a mismatch between the institutional variety that is being taught and the variety that is spoken in the home (for a good overview of this and how it affects middle-school learners of Chinese, see Wu et al. 2014). There may also be a conflict between the communicative acts within the workplace (where accent may not matter) and other contexts where accent may have a more important role (cf. Canagarajah 2013b). Heritage language programs often struggle with connections between macro- and micro-geopolitical agendas. Taiwanese community schools in New Zealand, for example, need to make conscious decisions about whether to teach Mandarin with a standard Beijing accent or with a local Taiwanese one. These choices reflect macro-geopolitical differences but they also reflect micro-geopolitical decisions within the institution and potentially within the classroom. Using the Multiplicity framework, learners can engage with the conflicts that are embedded in this, and the subtle ways that individuals may or may not want to draw on features that demark their separate identities.

Varieties that heritage language learners use to communicate are not solely restricted to connections with place but can be unique to each individual and manifested through aspects of their personal body. It may be that heritage language speakers see themselves as young and therefore not entitled to speak in public. They may see themselves as old and requiring certain protocols of address. They may see themselves as female and only able to talk to males in particular settings. Each individual will “more or less” ascribe to such cultural and societal norms. Views of personal body are often interconnected with another key element in heritage language learning contexts: personal history. This element contains features which reflect our personal identity, religion, sexual orientation, or hobby choices that heritage language learners may wish to draw on to make communicative choices, affecting communicative choices as well as how available linguistic resources are

used to reflect those choices. Such choices are reflected in the sounds that learners select to communicate to give them an accent associated with a particular “ethnicity” as well as broader communicative features reflected through the images used to embellish their human body (the way one dresses or the types of tattoos that are applied). Features of personal history can include the use of particular words for greeting protocols to perform particular identities. Tongans are known, for example, to greet each other in Tongan even when they do not know whether their interlocutor speaks Tongan or not. Personal histories can be made manifest through language choices that acknowledge one’s religious faith or even the selection of one linguistic feature over another as the preferable way to indicate a sexual orientation (Lunsing and Maree 2004).

The final element within the Varieties dimension is temporal context. Features connected with temporal context enable heritage language learners to engage with their communicative resources in yet other ways. For example, a lack of fluency can be used by an individual to signal that it is late in the day (or early in the morning) and that she is tired. A temporal element might also include stored words and ways of speaking and writing with specific temporal associations that may have been taught to learners, which they associate with the past. As an example, Lunsing and Maree (2004) report on the case of a Japanese homosexual who changed his use of first person pronouns to refer to himself in different ways in different years of his life.

By exploring elements within Varieties, a teacher can also come to understand the degree to which learners wish to suppress their heritage language use in their daily communicative expression of their dominant language (or conversely) include such features. Some of these features may be ones that a heritage language learner wishes to more directly associate with particular macro-geopolitical norms, others may be ones where the learner is happy to exchange heritage resources for resources from their dominant language. Heritage language teachers need to consider how they wish to work with their students to consider how each learner wishes to combine features from various elements to communicate. There are many complexities here. An individual may wish to learn how to connect heritage sounds and movement and gaze, or she/he may not wish to do so if all she/he wishes to do is write to her/his grandmother. In engaging in these discussions, the teacher can discover what learners already know, what resources they have access to and which features they wish to acquire/extend. Multiplicity provides a framework that can accommodate individuals not wishing to focus on all of the elements as well as those who may wish to do so in different ways, drawing on different features (eye movement, arm gestures, finger movements, etc.) to increase and differentiate their linguistic repertoire in ways that may be more or less associated with traditional views about what is or is not the heritage language. Learners may want to learn features at different points in their learning and in different ways. Some may start with more nonlinguistic ways of shrugging off a point and then move on learn to expand these with linguistic features associated with the heritage language, others may wish to learn non-linguistic and linguistic features simultaneously, whereas still others may only be interested in the linguistic features.

Purposes

The fourth dimension is Purposes. The elements within this dimension can be accessed through questions related to “why” a particular communicative act is structured as it is. This includes decisions about those aspects of communication that individuals draw on to construct coherent texts and that situate the speaker in relation to their interlocutors. This includes textual features that the learners use to construct meanings (spoken and written and signed) which are associated with macro-texts (arguments, narratives) and micro-texts (details added for particular communicative effects or features of particular parts of spoken, written and signed texts, e.g., the detail included in conversational openings and closings). For all languages and in nearly all circumstances, learners make choices about how to engage with textual features. A learner may consider a paragraph as more or less convincing if it ends with a main point rather than beginning with it. If learners are to control their text, then they need to both recognize that this is some kind of a structured choice that they are engaging with and understand the connections between the elements containing the features that they have used. In this respect, in the blending worlds in heritage learners’ plurilingual lives, a learner may want to include features from Modes, Mediations, and Varieties that signal fluency and competency but may wish to have macro-texts that express a different purpose, a blended self, one that writes like a “nativelike-speaker” at the sentence level but carries hybridity at other levels within their text. Multiplicity provides a framework for seeing how these combinations are reflected in micro-texts through the selected use of sounds and images, including emoticons, to indicate a self that is not restricted to one particular language but understands the conventions of all the languages involved.

Elements connected with texts are tied to the activities in which these texts are embedded (whether we choose to communicate as a competent user of a smart phone, a teacher, or as a public speaker in face-to-face interaction). Each activity has associated with it different expressions, and potentially different features and combinations thereof. It may be useful, for example, to mix features in particular ways while Facebooking and in another way when texting that may involve other displays of hybridity such as emoticons. In a heritage language context, a learner may engage in some activities and not others, for example, whether they learn through formal activities by attending a specific-purpose class in an out-of-hours school or learn only in informal activities in the home. For many learners, the activities embedded in complementary schools (such as writing activities) may not be common at home. In the out-of-hours school, they may also engage in learning games (activities) that bring additional linguistic resources into play. Activities enable learners to engage with their own learning and develop new communicative skills. Often whether/how learners have experiences of learning to read or write in the language are connected with activity choices (language use for shopping). A fourth element within Purposes is the key that we use to express ourselves (formal, informal, relaxed). It is important in heritage language contexts that some learners need to know how to “chill” as well

as give a speech. These different types of key involve features associated with other elements, including macro and micro text and activity, encouraging learners to stylize their own ways of communicating, if they wish to do so. A complex but vital part of decisions learners make about Purposes also involves how learners wish to be seen as when they communicate. Heritage language learners may at times wish to use their communicative resources to distance themselves or to present themselves as belonging to another group. As an example, in the early years of a primary school bilingual program supporting the development of both English and Macedonian in Australia, one of the authors witnessed the following exchange between M and V about a third girl, A:

[M and V are stronger in Macedonian; A is stronger in English]. The parts of the conversation that were in Macedonian are in italics. M to V: *Tell A I don't like her. Go on, tell her, I'm not coming to her party. Go on, you tell her. I'm not her friend.*

While the instructions to V are in Macedonian, the message for A (which borders on bullying) is prepackaged in English that M believes A will find easier to understand.

Within the Multiplicity framework, a communicative act will involve features from all four dimensions (Modes, Mediations, Varieties, Purposes), to various degrees. Because communicative acts involve multiple layers, heritage language learners have the capacity to embody more than one layer through the features embedded within elements in any communicative act. In much of the literature, these are presented as simply alternatives or boundless lists. Multiplicity offers a structured way of engaging with the layering that allows individuals to go about creating unique selves at different moments and to communicate the complexity that they feel to be an inherent part of their message through various features and threads. Multiplicity engages with how something uttered in one, two or more languages can convey multiple layers. We hope that this framework will allow teachers and learners to deepen and diversify how they engage (and wish to engage) with language learning in their own heritage context.

Conclusion

While heritage language classrooms tend to be designed for language learning in the heritage language, in teaching it is not uncommon for both teachers and students to draw on the totality of their linguistic resources. Li Wei (2014, p. 162) notes that such learning environments are often considered as “a safe space for the pupils to practice their multilingual identities and contest the monolingual and monocultural ideologies” and that these contexts often contain within them “funds of knowledge” for “real world meaning making.” In developing the Multiplicity framework, we have sought to provide a way of opening up discussion between heritage language teachers and learners which can draw out symbolic competence in language use and

explore individual histories, life experiences, and future language-learning trajectories and the ways in which these are reflected (and want to be reflected) in individual communicative repertoires.

An important part of understanding a “whole” is to consider the ways in which the various parts of the whole interconnect and how learners relate to these resources in different ways. As difference is an essential part of heritage language users’ experiences and futures, the Multiplicity framework aims to enable a more inclusive, nuanced yet structured approach to understanding the diverse needs of learners, who may want to engage with different parts of their repertoires in overlapping and discrete ways. By working back from the larger structured frame for understanding the totality of resources available to be drawn on in any particular communicative act to the kinds of combinations of resources that can be achieved, the framework opens up pathways for discussion of both similarities and differences that learners feel are part of their resources and provides opportunities for heritage language learners to learn to create unique and confident selves who are able to communicate effectively in different and diverse moments of interaction. To this end we have included a number of key questions that can be included in activities to spark discussion about the options available to teachers.

Implications for Teachers

If Multiplicity is to be used as a framework in classrooms, it is important to ensure that the technical terminology necessary for outlining the theoretical import of Multiplicity does not become an additional learning burden for either teachers or learners. It is therefore important that the issues that Multiplicity is grappling with can be accessed through nontechnical language and in ways that engage with the issues that learners might realistically be expected to want to talk about in ways that they would want to discuss them.

It is possible to achieve this through some broad plain language questions that reflect on the various elements, threads, and dimensions embedded in the framework. Resources can begin to be discussed through questions about the “what,” “how,” “when,” “where,” “with whom,” and “why” of communication. Seeking answers to these questions enables the learner and teacher together to build up a view of the resources relevant to each learner as structured sets of resources that can then be engaged with in relation to each of the elements, threads, and dimensions of the framework. The patterns that emerge in the use of these resources enable learners and teachers to explore the relationship between how the learner currently presents and how that same learner wants to present through their communicative resources and hence to identify learning needs and consequently teaching priorities. This process is a dialogic one. The plain language questions provide a way of starting to think about features and how they can serve as part of a communicative act. The answers can then be explored to consider how they may help in understanding the effect multiple features have on communication, and how learners can use

combinations of features to communicate what they want to say and how they want to say it using the totality of their communicative resources. Then the whole can be considered in relation to the parts.

Key questions heritage language teachers could ask themselves when using the Multiplicity Framework are:

When you observe your learners communicating spontaneously, what communicative resources do you observe them using (and in which combinations)?

In your classes, which communicative resources do learners ask questions about?

What do they want to be able to do? What frustrates them?

What are the communicative resources that the textbooks or materials in your programs encourage your learners to use?

Which communicative resources are particularly important for you as a teacher (and in which combinations)? (Why?)

Which communicative resources are highlighted/missing in your own approaches to teaching?

If you were to adopt a different methodology in your language teaching, what changes would you have to make in the communicative resources that you would include in your teaching? (Why?)

Cross-References

- ▶ [Building Empowering Multilingual Learning Communities in Icelandic Schools](#)
- ▶ [Plurilingualism: Vision, Conceptualization, and Practices](#)

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