SOMMAIRE

INTERVIEW

De Gabriele BUDACH

University of Southampton

par Christian MÜNCH

Teachers College, Columbia University, New York

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Germany is seldom referred to as a multilingual country in the world. What motivated you to undertake a project such as the one you have presented? Where do you see a role for researchers from Germany within the international context? And how did the international contributors of the volume react to your initiative?

It is true that for a long time multilingualism has been ignored as a social feature of German society and its political discourse. It is only recently that Germany has started to see itself as a country of immigration. However, in major cities with large numbers of ethnic and migrant communities such as Frankfurt where the editors' research is based, cultural and linguistic diversity have not only become part of political discourse, they are also celebrated by city officials as a symbol of richness, tolerance and openness towards the world.

Yet, multilingualism is still seen and dealt with very differently when it comes to schooling. Like in other nation states, it is highly valued as a cultural capital of the social elite, whereas it is seen as a hindrance for the integration of lower social classes. Members of the latter are referred to as migrants and advised to give up multilingualism for the sake of a successful social integration into German society.

This is a well established view since the introduction of general schooling in the 19th century in many Western European nation states. However, as an old model of national civic education which is persistently reiterated across those countries, it becomes undermined by new types of educational programs in recent years. Especially in the German context, there is an increasing number of bilingual two-way-immersion programs (in the United States also referred to as dual language programs) to the development of which this volume dedicates great attention.

These programs are very interesting from either a societal or a historical perspective. They take into account societal multilingualism including mixed groups of children from monolingual German, or bilingual and multilingual background which are taught bilingually across the entire curriculum and by teachers from different, both linguistic and social backgrounds (combining German with languages such as Italian, Portuguese, French or others).

Historically, these programs are revealing as they reflect specific features of European history. There is a continuity of interstate relations and a tradition of bilateral agreements concluded between nation states, specifically in the case of Germany and Italy. Bilateral top-down policies were emphasized after the Second World War when mass migration from Southern European countries needed to be organized in ways to effectively feed the German industry during its economic boom years during the 1960s. A decade later, negotiations between nation states reached the domain of education after migrant families became more numerous and multilingualism needed to be accommodated within the German school system. At this time, the tradition of sending teachers from countries like Italy or Greece was installed, they were paid by their home countries to teach migrants in Germany.

In recent years, social mobility of the middle classes has created a growing pressure for multilingual education from below. To cater more effectively to those needs, an increasing number of local parent initiatives has arisen in urban areas across Germany over the last decade and led to the establishment of bilingual programs on a local level.

All of those aspects can be studied in relation to bilingual two-way-immersion programs and their current practice in Germany. As an example, those programs highlight processes and practices that are of interest for scholars internationally. Here is where I would situate the special contribution that Germany has to make to the international debate on multilingualism and schooling.

So where exactly would you situate the German contribution within the international context of research on the subject?

Even though a substantial body of research on dual language education has been carried out in the United States during the last twenty years, studies of a similar kind in the European context have only started to emerge in the recent past. Also, the European situation provides specific historical and socio-cultural features, therefore it is worthwhile to adopt a comparative angle.

The international scholars who we invited to participate in the volume reacted very positively to our book project. This seems to demonstrate that there is a need for reflecting collectively on multilingualism and the kinds of answers that are given (and those that still need to be developed) by school systems in different national contexts.

Even within a European context, schools have remained a domain of national responsibility. Your volume, however, does highlight international perspectives. Do you see a need for international approaches to multilingualism in schools, e.g. in a European context?

One of the main reasons for planning a volume of that scope and size was, indeed, to present an international perspective on multilingualism and schooling. As social processes underlying societal multilingualism are similar in many countries around the world, we were interested in understanding how it is dealt with in various nation states. We therefore invited authors to explain and discuss responses to multilingualism as they are developed in their respective environment.

We suggested three areas to concentrate on and asked authors to reflect first on *concepts* underlying the dealing with multilingualism in education, secondly on *institutions*, their mandate and respective position in or in relation to the national state school; and thirdly on

the role of *social actors* in educational planning and practice*,* teachers, children, parents, politicians, and of course academics who we suggested to consider as social agents of change. Individual chapters focus more directly and extensively on one or two of those areas. Yet, all reflection is well grounded in the history of the place and the respective nation state.

We hope that studies of this kind will help readers to deepen their understanding of other local solutions and possible answers to multilingualism in education. Furthermore, we also hope to help clarify the complex nature of global processes and ways in which they shape societal multilingualism by creating new social forces. Those forces we see represented, for instance, in teachers and parents from mixed linguistic and cultural backgrounds who can act and contribute greatly to changes in the educational landscape of one country.

And which international perspectives did you include?

Alongside a large number of chapters dealing with aspects of bilingual schooling (two-way-immersion programs) in Germany, this volume also includes case studies from France, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the USA. A specific space has been given to studies related to France. This selection of chapters highlights the interdependent relationship between multiple facets of multilingualism including regional minority languages (specifically Corsican), languages of migration (as a source for language learning and pedagogy), the dimension of trans-national, trans-border exchanges as new sources for multilingual schooling (looking at the French-Belgian border) and, last but not least, the role of research and researchers as a key element in language planning and educational change (considering specifically the role of Corsican sociolinguistics).

Institutional environments under scrutiny are first of all *mainstream classrooms* and ways in which socio-linguistic diversity is dealt with (represented by a case study on Sweden). Secondly the volume focuses on educational programs as being distinct from mainstream classrooms which take three different forms: First of all, special language classes for migrants, so-called *reception classrooms* or *aules d'acollida* which are looked at in an ethnographic study on Catalonia/Spain. Furthermore, there are community based school programs, also referred to as heritage language classes which are represented in this volume by a chapter on Chinese *complementary schools* in the United Kingdom. Finally, there is bilingual two-way-immersion, also referred to as *dual language programs* which is represented in this volume by one chapter, relating to its place of origin, namely dual language education in the US, and a larger number of case studies located within the German context.

Our intention there in was that reading across those case studies will provide a comparative account of how language ideologies and teaching/learning practices intersect with institutional structures and how social actors engage with multilingualism in those different spaces.

From your introduction one cannot help getting the impression of a political undertone, which may well be in line with the needs and problems educators face in a school context. Yet, at the same time it seems as if for the sake of scholarship and impartiality, taking a political stance has been avoided at all cost. Do you think that leaving politics out of such politically charged research domains does serve its purpose? How do you compare your approach to that of the "activist scholar", e.g. in the North-American context?

First of all, let me say that I really appreciate your statement and question. It provokes several answers. I would like to start by claiming that, at least in my view, it is impossible to undertake educational research without getting involved with issues of language and educational policy. This immediately leads me to explain our own research approach and the rationale behind our project. I think, what we wanted with this volume is to push for a twofold agenda.

First, we would like to encourage more researchers to engage in locally grounded, ethnographic research which investigates actual practices and processes of multilingual teaching and learning. We believe that this is a way to explore and create better understanding of innovative practices of teaching and learning developed by teachers and practitioners on a daily basis, from which current educational theory can benefit greatly. Often enough, experiences of this kind are understudied and therefore not available for educational research. I would argue confidently that more changes are actually happening in our schools and educational practices as frequently perceived, reported and reflected on by scholarly discourse.

Our second goal is to link these local practices to societal processes on a larger scale in an attempt to make sense of national, but also trans-national changes. Those ought to be explained within a framework of recent and past history (as described by Braudel in terms of histoire de *courte* et de *longue durée*.). Following the motto "Look locally, think globally", both perspectives should be linked in order to create an awareness of where we stand and why we are there, and of course where we want to go.

Pursuing those two perspectives, I would locate many of the chapters within a paradigm of qualitative educational research which is historically sensitive. This positioning is important as educational research can take different theoretical directions. Chapters in this volume definitely engage with socially critical approaches towards schooling, either analyzing relations of domination in mainstream schooling or suggesting new ways of integrating multilingualism as regular routines which are carried out in various forms and environments of schooling. Case studies thereby share a (predominantly) socio-cultural perspective on learning and investigate social conditions as fundamental forces in shaping processes of teaching and learning.

In the introduction to the volume we set out to provide a historical framework. It highlights various ways in which language, multilingualism and schooling have been connected through discourse and policy in different (mostly European) nation states. First of all, there is the example of state monolingualism developed in France which has been adopted as the model par excellence by many nation states throughout the world. Another approach developed in the context of the Hapsburg monarchy is quite interesting as it promoted multilingualism and granted rights to local minority languages in order to guarantee the persistence of the empire. Although models of that kind have rather low currency at the present time, the UK (and precisely language policies of the Welsh language) are an interesting example of comparison here. Yet, the dominance of national languages is striking on a global scale, even though some countries have opted for several national or official languages (such as territorial multilingualism in Switzerland or official bilingualism in Canada).

In reconstructing the "national histories" of those language policies and underpinning their ideologies, we attempt to understand, yet also question the monolingual foundations that still are at the heart of schooling in many nation states. This could be viewed as a hidden agenda, as your statement and question somewhat insinuate.

Ok, so if I am not totally misreading you, one of the goals of this volume is to encourage researchers to take on socially and politically more active roles.

Yes, we definitely want to raise awareness and engage in a reflective process on what the accustomed educational norms we work under are about and what these naturalized forms of behavior and thinking (theorized as *habitus* by Bourdieu some 30 years ago) actually mean in educational practice today. Even though traditions are strong, its limits are being tested and stretched by many practitioners in their daily work. Those experiences should be seen as key elements of possible educational changes in the future.

This is the point where "action research" which you have referred to in your question becomes important. Many of the chapters are based on ethnographic fieldwork. They take into account local practices and produce knowledge that is based on qualitative evidence provided by various social actors. Much has been said about teachers and their status and legitimacy within the process of knowledge construction. Especially the editors of this volume – I think this is also true for many of the other contributing authors – share a view that grants major importance to the contribution of all social actors involved in the research process, especially those of teachers. In that sense, it can be said with certainty, at least from the perspective of the editors, that research has been evolving as a collaborative process which involved teachers and children as key participants, and parents, community representatives and educational politicians to a more limited extent. Especially between the researchers, the teachers and the children, a partnership was built over a long period of time encompassing five years of intense classroom based fieldwork.

In our view, the role of teachers is not only limited to providing information to the researcher. Teachers have become active participants in the production of academic knowledge themselves. A prof of their action and participation is clearly demonstrated throughout this book. Several chapters are written by practitioners who also presented their experiences at the workshop. This is a way to not only value the knowledge of practitioners, it is, we would argue, necessary and even indispensable for academic knowledge construction as the experience of teachers cannot be replaced and is complementary to academic scholarly knowledge.

Although it might not be apparent from the outside, the research presented in this volume is heavily inscribed with traces of "action research". There are different ways to approach current mainstream schooling from a critical perspective. This is definitely an attempt even though the language in which it is formulated might differ from other scholarly work, as it is produced for instance in the United States.

While recognizing the ambitious character of the volume you have presented and its scholarly diction, the organization of the volume itself, its multilingual content, the layout as well as its price are hardly bound to attract readers except for the usual academic crowd. What are your intentions and objectives beyond documenting the workshop that you had originally organized? And do you see a contradiction between the intentions of the research you are presenting and the public you may be able to reach? If so, what other forms of publications would you see fit to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from academia to its application in a school context?

Yes, I agree, one could call the aim of the volume ambitious. But, what we really would like to achieve is the beginning of a dialogue; a dialogue between academics and practitioners about ways in which societal multilingualism can be valued in new ways. We believe that very interesting approaches are currently being developed in many places including various countries and institutional settings. However, facilitating this communication is not all that evident. Often academic cultures and networks are not well linked internationally, so that some examples of good practice haven't been exchanged or circulated in international discussion yet.

It is also true and truly ironical that multilingualism often works as a barrier and becomes a criterion of social selection, even within academia. We also needed, again, to be selective in our choice of languages accepting German, French and English, excluding many other languages such as Spanish, Catalan or Swedish as languages of publication. However, we are aware of those language (policy) issues that have been debated in the editorial team, and that we tried to address by keeping a balance between our wish to represent multilingualism on the one hand and to cater for the needs of larger groups of our expected

readership on the other. We also made an effort to provide abstracts of all chapters in the two other languages that are not the language in which the chapter is written.

The workshop that we organized with academics and practitioners in May 2006 and from which the idea for this book initially came already was a multilingual event with presentations in three languages. With this volume we propose to extend this dialogue and exchange of experience, by enlarging the international angle and deepening the historical perspective.

Finally, I appreciate your comment on the dissipation of academic knowledge. We are truly sensitive to it and I totally agree with you that most of scholarly production is not easily accessible for large numbers of practitioners, be it for financial reasons or because of the close nature of academic circles. I also agree that knowledge that is based –to a large extent– on contributions of practitioners should be made available in a form that is useful to them and thus benefiting the advancement of teaching practice.

Therefore, under my leadership members of our research group are currently producing an online-publication on simultaneous biliteracy teaching which will hopefully be available online by the end of this year. The documentation will present the approach of initial literacy teaching as developed by teachers in an Italian-German bilingual program in a primary school in Frankfurt/Main. We intend to document experiences of classroom practice and to give a voice to teachers, children, parents and school officials expressing their views on bilingual teaching and learning. We see this as the outcome of a five year long research collaboration between practitioners and academics and as a useful way to share experiences that are usually not accessible to a larger public. Here, the possibilities of the new media open great opportunities that we hope to use effectively to allow for a wider dissemination of the results of our research. The document will be accessible through my personal homepage at the University of Southampton.

A collection of essays by researchers from different backgrounds allows for many interesting insights and invites discussion of related problems; however, inevitably this approach also leaves many issues untouched. Where do you see the need for further inquiry, research projects or even subsequent volumes such as the one you have presented?

We consider that our schools are in need of a new understanding and evaluation of multilingualism which, in our view, should be considered as a resource, regardless of whom brings it to the classroom. This is how we would describe our concern and mission which lead us to push research further. We think it is essential to peruse a route which is looking actively for ways to achieve the inclusion of societal multilingualism without discriminating and categorising negatively the holders of such linguistic capital. This calls, without any doubt, for the critical revision of language ideologies and a critical analysis of the ways in which linguistic capital is instrumentally used as a structuring force at the present.

The collection of chapters in this volume is just a modest and limited contribution which can be seen in line with publications on multilingual schools that are guided by a similar spirit (García, Torres Guzmán & Skutnabb Kangas 2006, Torres Guzmán & Gomez in print). Yet, more studies on ways of dealing with multilingualism in schools are needed. Thereby, we allow for the possibility to reflect collectively with other members of the international scholarly community on issues that we all are concerned with. Interdisciplinary and cross-context comparison also allows us to better situate ourselves and to understand about our own limits in which we work.

We wish to encourage qualitative research despite its low currency in current educational policies across Europe and in other parts of the world which are under the influence of neo-liberal models of accountancy and performance based views of learning. We do not believe – and educational statistics in various countries have shown it as well – that this approach will enhance positive change in educational practice. We therefore suggest the investment in

qualitative ethnographic research which is able to inform our quest of *how* to change educational practice and which can suggest concrete solutions with relevance for teaching practice and concrete applicability.

Quantitative studies which aim at proving the viability of bilingual education analysing students' academic achievement have been conducted for more than 20 years showing similarly positive results. Educational politicians might accept them or not. Instead of continuously reifying this discourse of self-justification and legitimisation we think it is worthwhile to move on and to help actively the creation of new models of practice on the ground.

We need to think about possibilities of including "funds of knowledge" (Moll 1992) that lie beyond national curricula and enhance the contact between schools and local communities. We also need to better understand and explore through ethnographic research the different worlds that children with migratory backgrounds live in, be it in terms of their cultural, literacy practices or in terms of other sources for identity positioning. This knowledge can contribute importantly to better address the needs of those children in schools.

Again, the comparison of local cases across national contexts, thereby, helps us to discern what is specifically local and therefore requires specific, local solutions, but also what is ultimately global, occurring in trans-local patterns and requires from us to take into account experiences made in various contexts and across national and language borders. In the long run, it would be desirable to develop a transferable knowledge base as well as internationally viable solutions and suggestions for local and national language and educational policies that are supported by evidence around the world.

While much remains to be done, we would feel content if our book contributed to taking this huge project only one step further.

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