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## Introduction to the special issue on ‘Linguistic Diversity in Urban Areas and their Schools’

*Joana Duarte and Ingrid Gogolin*

*University of Hamburg*

*Although mountains may guide migrations,  
the plains are the regions where people dwell in greatest numbers.*

*Ellsworth Huntington*

Research has long been committed to finding the guiding motives of migration movements, as well as the structures and practices of migrants within the regions they migrate to. In attempting to grasp the nature of today’s migration however, one would, on the one side, need a more complex understanding of the motives and channels for migrations, which have increasingly become more diversified within the last twenty years, and, on the other side, have to reflect on the processes and outcomes of migration in urban areas, assuming these are the modern “plains where people dwell in greatest numbers” (Huntington, 1919, p. 15). As an alternative to the multiculturalism paradigm, the concept of “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007) has been suggested as providing a new approach to the classification and analysis of migration movements. It attempts to seize the recent migration phenomena since the end of the Cold War, which resulted in increasing globalisation movements, characterised by an intensification of migration typologies (in terms of countries of origin, language, ethnicity and religion, as well as of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of integration into host communities, etc.). In the context of the ‘super-diversity’ framework, Martiniello speaks of a diversification of diversity, in an attempt to address the complexity of capturing new migration forms which derive from a dynamic interplay of linguistic, cultural and social phe-

nomena, exceeding the magnitude and present understanding of complexity in societies (Martiniello, 2004).

Research on super-diversity has predominantly been carried out from sociological and anthropological perspectives. Both linguistic and educational studies on the emergence and consequences of these new forms of migration are still scarce and, if existing, are not usually conceived in an interdisciplinary way. Exceptions are the few studies conducted within the framework of educational linguistics (Spolsky & Hult, 2008), which attempted to describe linguistic practices amongst multilingual speakers in complementary schools (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009). In addition, language use in super-diverse contexts has also been looked at from an anthropological and sociological perspective (Blommaert & Backus, 2011; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Blommaert, Rampton & Spotti, 2011). However, not very much attention has been paid to the effects of super-diversity, particularly relating to language-related issues, on educational settings and educational systems, especially with regard to relevant background information of the speakers as explanatory approaches of, for example, educational disparities.

The super-diversity of migration practices consequently leads to linguistic super-diversity within educational institutions. It is well-known however, that most schools in Western countries are characterised by a tension between the plurilingual populations and the monolingual mindsets of educational institutions. Furthermore, languages are appreciated according to a historically constructed hierarchy, whereby immigrant languages occupy the lowest positions, followed by foreign and national languages (Ellis, Gogolin & Clyne, 2010). In addition to the placing of languages within societies, large-scale monitoring studies have repeatedly exposed the achievement gap between pupils with and without an immigrant background (OECD, 2010). This has been often linked to a lack of age-appropriate proficiency in the language of the host societies, leading to efforts in supporting the national languages. The flip side of the coin is low or no emphasis on explicitly fostering the mode of bi- or multilingualism which is due to migration (in contradiction to other modes, such as controlled bilingualism due to educational programmes). In addition, other factors have been proposed to account for the achievement gap (Diefenbach, 2010), mostly focussing on the unequal distribution of social, cultural and economic capital. In this volume, other explaining variables will be taken into consideration, such as motivation, literacy-related practices or the role of home language proficiency and educational aspirations.

The present volume intends to contribute to the on-going discussion on language diversity in the context of the super-diversity framework, by particularly addressing different relevant school-related aspects deriving from or influencing linguistic

diversity. It focuses on specific language-related competences of multilingual speakers, as well as on explanatory background variables.

In light of the increasing significance of language education in multilingual contexts as a result of globalisation and mobility movements, more and more educational systems are experiencing the need to train teachers, educators and administrators in aspects of linguistics that are relevant to educational practice. Language and literacy competences have often been identified as a key element for school success of both allochthonous and autochthonous students and should thus be allotted greater attention within the European research context. Results of the studies presented in this volume can contribute to the reflection of pedagogical practices in institutions in linguistically diverse contexts.

Additionally, this issue intends to provide an insight into relevant aspects of the so-called phase of later language development (Nippold, 2007; Tolchinsky, 2004). Research on language development of multilingual speakers mostly focuses on either the early acquisition phase or the development in adults. Focus on school children, particularly in adolescence, is less common. The contributions to this volume aim at redressing this research gap by focussing explicitly on adolescent learners between the ages of 11 to 16 years.

The issue derives from a joint symposium presented at the 2011 European Conference for Educational Research (ECER, 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2011 at the Free University of Berlin). The guiding question for the contributions to the symposium was: which commonalities and differences can be unraveled in the field of educational research on linguistic diversity in urban areas and their schools.

The contributions to this volume are composed as follows: Two of the articles collected in this volume explicitly deal with the issue of language competence in the adolescence phase and in particular with the acquisition of academic language proficiency as a predictor for school outcomes (Cummins, 2000). *Christoph Gantefort* investigates so-called “concealed language difficulties” (Knapp, 1999) – defined as aspects of academic language proficiency – of disadvantaged pupils with and without German as a second language. The pupils attend the lowest school track concerning academic demand within the tripartite German system (the *Hauptschule*). Gantefort’s study includes a range of variables on familial background, which go beyond the typical sociodemographic scales used in most international monitoring studies, as it comprises items to address literacy-related cultural resources. Similarly to findings on early language acquisition of bilinguals (Leseman, Scheele, Mayo & Messer, 2007), data revealed a significant influence of home-literacy variables on the production of academic vocabulary but not on the measures for colloquial language skills. This was valid for the multilinguals as well as for the monolinguals in the sample. Gantefort’s study is innovative in that it

highlights the importance of academic language proficiency for all disadvantaged pupils, including those growing up monolingually. He thus expands knowledge about early language acquisition to the phase of adolescence. The article is a valuable contribution to the on-going claim for continuous, systematic and inclusive language support for all learners up to adolescence (Gogolin et al., 2011). This challenges the current situation in many European schools, in which language support is mostly concentrated in pre-primary and primary education and conducted in additive forms, outside mainstream classes.

Under the assumption that home-literacy activities contribute to raising educational performance, *Vesna Ilić* addresses the issue of language use and choice during home-literacy activities and a range of other literacy-related activities, both oral and written. She asks for their relation to productive academic language skills of adolescents with and without an immigrant background. Her descriptive analysis of questionnaire data on self-reported language practices of  $n = 354$  adolescents provides important information on the reality of language use and choice of migrant families. Results show that multilingual practices constitute the normal behaviour of adolescents, although the heritage languages and German serve different purposes. While the heritage languages are mostly used in the interaction with parents on migration specific subjects and family issues, German is preferred for literacy activities and literacy-orientated issues. The study offers a theory-based and empirically supported insight into home-literacy practices during adolescence. It provides evidence for the lack of opportunities of migrant families to foster literacy skills in their heritage languages, which constitutes one of the features of linguistic super-diversity in urban areas.

The two other articles focus on explanatory factors for educational disparities, tying in with the discussion on so-called secondary effects in the creation of class differentials in educational attainment (Boudon, 1974). *Rebecca Hartmann, Nele McElvany, Miriam Gebauer* and *Wilfried Bos* investigated school motivation of a large sample of linguistically diverse pupils, as well as of a German monolingual control group, attending grade 6 (about 12-year old pupils). The study shows the complexity of factors influencing educational achievement, especially school motivation, particularly in relation to migration, language diversity and socioeconomic background. Martin's theoretical model of school motivation was taken as a basis for analysis. It includes a cognitive as well as a behavioural dimension, distinguishing also between adaptative and maladaptative dimensions (Martin, 2007). Results of a covariance analysis performed on the data show significant differences between the two groups in the sample in relation to maladaptative cognitive dimensions. However, after including socioeconomic status as a covariate in the model, only the cognitive dimension 'anxiety' remained significant for both groups. This

study provides a deeper insight into the issue of capturing school motivation for linguistically diverse populations. Furthermore, it offers implications for educational practice as to possible ways to increase school motivation of all learners.

*Marina Trebbels's* article addresses the controversial issue of heritage language proficiency and its impact on school performance, seen through the lens of educational aspirations and expectations. Although it is undisputable that competence in the majority language positively influences school outcomes of pupils with an immigrant background, there is still an on-going discussion on the most appropriate way to achieve high proficiency and on the role of the heritage languages in this process. While one party in the controversy clearly favors linguistic assimilation, thus hazarding the consequence of loss of the heritage languages (Esser, 2006), the other (Gogolin & Neumann, 2009) considers multilingualism, and particularly the development of biliteracy, a value in itself, irrespective of other potential effects on educational outcomes. Trebbels's study focuses on the role of parent-adolescent interaction in raising educational aspirations of the adolescents. In particular, it investigates (self-reported) interaction forms in the heritage languages and in German in their relation to educational aspirations. Results are indeed "a case in favor of bilingual language practices in migrant families" and thus against the assimilation paradigm. Trebbels found a positive relation between higher levels of parent-adolescent interactions and higher probabilities of attaining high educational outcomes. She thus concludes that monolingual German interaction in migrant families can have a negative impact on school outcomes.

Although the data resulting from the research projects presented in this volume were collected in Germany, the approaches and findings are relevant in an international comparative perspective. All European urban areas share the same general problems that are addressed in the contributions to this volume. While the features of migration and migration-induced linguistic diversity differ between the areas or countries on the level of phenomena, underlying principles, such as the challenge of dealing with diversity in educational contexts with a tradition of homogenization and, most importantly, of monolingual self-concepts of their school systems, remain common. Thus, the contributions to this volume invite a comparative perspective, geared towards future research in international teams sharing a *tertium comparationis*. Super-diversity as a concept certainly offers a relevant starting point for such an endeavor.

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