Schools as Major Sites for Blending and Melting

Immigrant Multilingualism versus Language Education Policies in Europe

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AIM

To briefly reflect on European policies on multilingualism to show the relationship between supranational and national developments

To critically assess the aspirations of EU regarding individual, group and societal priorities and needs for language policy.

To show the discrepancy between (global) EU ambitions and local (national) developments.

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Multilingualism in the EU

"Unity in diversity"
"Multilingualism is an asset for Europe and a shared commitment"

These are some well-known ideals in the EU.

To what extent, are these representing a vision or social reality?

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Multilingualism in the EU

First of all, we need to point out that European Union has a firm decision to create a democratic society based on principles of diversity, inclusion and mutual respect.

To achieve its goal, EU language policy takes the needs of both individual and the group but at the same time takes the priorities of individual states into consideration.

The Challenges for Multilingualism

Taking the needs of the individual, the group and the priorities of individual states into consideration is NOT always easy.

- The individual needs are not always in harmony with the state priorities (ideologies).
- Individual rights seem to clash with national unity and social cohesion ideology of nation-states.
- Individual human rights and valuing cultural diversity are secondary to social cohesion arguments.

Multilingualism in EU

Discussing policies on multilingualism in the EU is always very difficult because there are many variables and complicating factors.

At the national level, the local dynamics might overrule the supranational European policies.

Multilingualism in EU

In the context of **Language Rich Europe** project, we examined almost all the policy papers and EU commission recommendations.

In the next two slides, we see a brief outline of the development of EU language policy over the years.

Table – Some key elements of European language policy

European Union		Council of Europe	
1980s Incentive measures for multilingualism	– European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages – Erasmus – Lingua	1950s–1990s Supporting languages for all (democratic citizenship)	– Unit credit scheme – Guidance on Communicative Language Teaching – Workshops – ICT, Autonomy, exchanges – Establishment of ECML in Graz
1990s Co-operation and support for mobility	– Maastricht Treaty (1992)	1990s Regional and minority languages	– European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) – Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)
1995–2004 Supporting the 'knowledge society'	– White Paper – Towards the Learning Society – Lisbon Strategy – Barcelona Council	1995–2004 Intercultural communication Plurilingualism	– Development of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

2001 Coherence, awareness raising, information European year of languages	– European Language Label – Eurobarometer	2001 Coherence, awareness raising, information European year of languages	– CEFR – European Language Portfolio
2000s Promoting mobility as a right Supporting quality in language learning	– Action Plan (2003) – Increased support through funded programmes	2000s Planning, curricular development, assessment	– CEFR – European Language Portfolio development
2005 Growth/social cohesion/ individual fulfilment	– Framework Strategy for Multilingualism – Action Plan	2003–11 Language policies	– Language Education Policy Profiles in 15 countries or regions
2007 Diversity an asset	– Multilingualism Commissioner – Lifelong Learning Programme – Communication – an 'Asset and shared commitment' (2008)	2005 Languages of schooling	– Conferences and Reports

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Multilingualism in EU

EU policies so far emphasized education as the major vehicle for promoting multilingualism.

Through learning languages and understanding about other cultures, it is believed that European citizens will understand each other better and Europe will become a more tolerant place where there is mutual respect and a multifaceted 'European' identity.

Multilingualism in EU

The assumption on which European policy is based is that **all languages are of equal status**. Yet, there are significant practical distinctions between 'official', 'working' and 'operational' languages in the EU.

The status of 'non-European' immigrant or world languages is also less clear. There are no binding regulations regarding immigrant languages.

Multilingualism in EU

On the whole, EU has made solid progress with regard to inclusive policies.

There is still discrepancy between the EU level policies and the state level practices but the development at the EU is positive.

Multilingualism in EU

For instance, based on LRE findings:

The **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (ECRML) has been ratified by parliament in 11 out of the 18 countries.
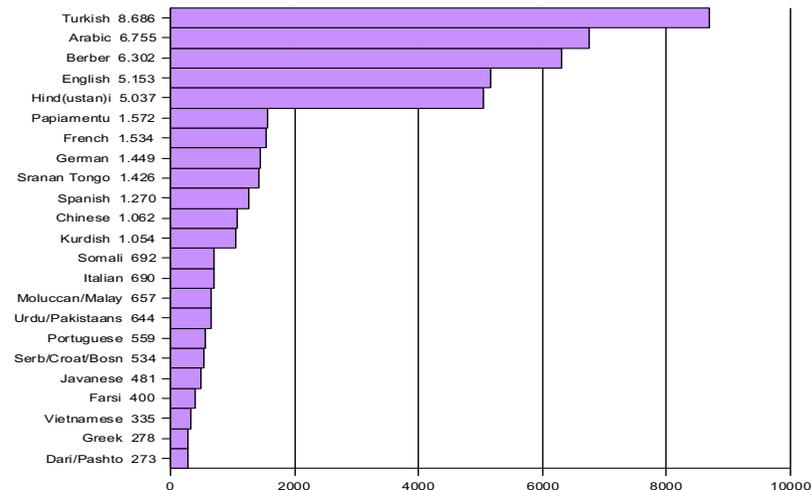
It is signed by government in France and Italy (but not ratified in the Parliament).

It has neither been ratified nor signed in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania and Portugal.

Immigrant Population in Europe

Country	Immigrants (thousands)	% of the population
Belgium	1 809.0	16.1
Denmark	595.9	10.5
Germany	10 220.4	12.6
Greece	1 242.9	11.4
Spain	5 891.2	12.7
France	7 908.7	11.9
Italy	5 805.3	9.5
Netherlands	1 996.3	11.8
Austria	1 474.6	17.2
Sweden	1 602.5	16.4
Norway	746.4	14.4
Switzerland	2 258.2	27.4
United Kingdom	8 411.0	13.0

Immigrant Students in Holland

Language	Count
Turkish	8.686
Arabic	6.755
Berber	6.302
English	5.153
Hind(ustan)i	5.037
Papiamentu	1.572
French	1.534
German	1.449
Sranan Tongo	1.426
Spanish	1.270
Chinese	1.062
Kurdish	1.054
Somali	692
Italian	690
Moluccan/Malay	657
Urdu/Pakistaans	644
Portuguese	559
Serb/Croat/Bosn	534
Javanese	481
Farsi	400
Vietnamese	335
Greek	278
Dari/Pashto	273

Sample size circa 140.000 pupils

Immigrant Multilingualism

Immigrant minority languages are often connected with the problems of

- poverty,
- underachievement in school,
- unemployment, and
- lack of integration into the mainstream community.

"Stigmatized" multilingualism

Multilingualism is the ABILITY of individuals and societies to be able to communicate in multiple languages.

Multilingualism in "prestigious" languages is valued.

English + French or German + English is positive.

"Stigmatized" multilingualism

If Multilingualism involves a less "prestigious" language plus a national language, then it is NOT valued as much.

For instance Arabic + French or German + Turkish is less valued.

This is usually because of the social status of immigrant languages. They carry a social stigma.

Stigma can be defined as a negative mark or disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person.

"Stigmatized" multilingualism

Which factors contribute to the stigmatization of immigrant languages?

Social status factors associated with certain groups.

Institutional and economic factors.

Political factors both national and international.

Combination of these factors have an effect both on the host society and also on the immigrant groups.

"Stigmatized" multilingualism

Cause-effect relationship of stigmatization and its social, political and educational outcomes are complicated.

A steep **hierarchy of languages** leading to rigid language boundaries in policy, economic and social life.

Mainstream-only policies deny immigrant students' linguistic and cultural identities.

As a result, there are institutional restrictions on language development of immigrant children.

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"Stigmatized" multilingualism

Deficit perspectives dominate the discourse surrounding IL's. - FL's as cognitive benefits but IL's as deficits!

IL's are coupled with difficulties and problems that schools need to overcome.

Helot & Young (2002) report the common belief of teachers: Immigrant bilingualism blocking the acquisition of French.

Immigrant parents are advised by schools not to speak the heritage language with their children.

Schools ban the use of minority languages (NL court case – Belgium Plaster on the mouth).

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School Achievement Comparisons

Immigrant students are compared with mainstream students and performance differences are reported in media.

Immigrant languages are coupled with lower school achievement (cause of failure).

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School Achievement Comparisons

Years	Turkish	Moroccan	Surinamese	Native- Low SES	Native- High SES
1994/95	524.1	525.1	527.1	531.9	538
1996/97	525.2	526.4	527.4	531.2	537.4
1998/99	526.9	526.9	529.2	530.6	536.9
2000/1	527.3	527.4	529.8	530.5	537.3
2002/3	527.3	528.3	528.3	530.6	537.3
2004/5	527	527.7	527.9	528.9	536.2

Family income level	Background	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Lowest income level 1st 20%	Native Dutch	533	533	533	533	533	533
Lowest income level 1st 20%	NW immigrant	528	528	529	529	529	530
Second income level 2nd 20%	Native Dutch	534	534	534	534	534	534
Second income level 2nd 20%	NW immigrant	529	529	530	530	530	531
Average income level 3rd 20%	Native Dutch	535	535	535	535	536	536
Average income level 3rd 20%	NW immigrant	531	531	531	532	531	532
Above average income level 4th 20%	Native Dutch	537	537	537	537	537	537
Above average income level 4th 20%	NW immigrant	533	533	533	534	534	535
Highest income level 5th 20%	Native Dutch	539	539	539	539	540	539
Highest income level 5th 20%	NW immigrant	537	538	538	538	538	538

Causes of Lower School Achievement

Most of the educational experts and researchers blame multilingualism of immigrant children for lower school achievement (Dronkers, 2010; Dagevos et al. 2003).

Ethnic diversity in schools is correlated with lower educational achievement (Dronkers 2010). The higher is the ethnic diversity, the lower is the achievement.

"Stigmatized" multilingualism

Linking educational disadvantage to home language environment.

Most teachers have fixed and rigid views regarding immigrant children's educational problems.

Restrictions on language development of immigrant children are not discussed.

"Stigmatized" multilingualism

Causes leading to lower school achievement is never questioned.

Conditions of submersion education – monolingual pedagogy.

Teacher preparation for bilingual and multicultural groups!

Restrictions on immigrant children's language development: limited input in L1 – limited or no literacy acquisition in L1

Outcome of social stigma: Children are embarrassed to talk in their native language (Abdullah anecdote).

Diverging developments

EU's policies regarding multilingualism are rather progressive and inclusive in nature. All languages are supposed to be equal.

When we examine the Dutch policies over time, we see a totally opposite development to that of EU.

The Netherlands had been highly supportive of minority languages prior to the year 2000's. In the next couple of minutes, a brief reflection on policy development would very helpful to analyze the current situation.

Language policy development over the years in NL

The Dutch government had pursued an integration policy that focuses on combating educational disadvantage as well as on maintaining the cultural identities of ethnic minorities.

In the late 1990's, cultural pluralism, the maintenance of collective cultural identities, and teaching of immigrant languages came to be seen as a threat to the process of sociocultural integration of immigrants into the Dutch society.

Language policy development over the years in NL

1970's:
Dutch government offered home language instruction to immigrant children with the aim of maintaining ethnic language and culture. No connection between the acquisition of first and second languages was assumed. Intrinsic value of HLI was more important (5 hours of HLI per week).

1980's:
A very positive connection between HLI and individual identity development of immigrant children as well as their socio-economic integration was assumed (3 hours of HLI per week).

Language policy development over the years in NL

Early 1990's:
Decreasing connection between HLI and individual identity development of immigrant children; the focus being much more on their socio-economic integration and learning of only Dutch in schools (2 hours of HLI per week).

Late 1990's:
Negative connection between HLI and socio-cultural integration. Individual socio-economic disadvantages are caused by socio-cultural differences (1,5 hours of HLI per week).

Language policy development over the years in NL

2000's:

Negative connection between HLI and socio-cultural integration. Socio-cultural differences are the cause of migrants' socio-economic disadvantage, which damages social cohesion in the society. All efforts should be on Dutch <u>Solution</u>: NO HOME LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION.

Conclusions

EU level policies and the Dutch practice show quite the opposite developments over the years.

In the Netherlands, two major changes took place: The line of reasoning shifted from an intrinsic to a utilitarian perspective: from 'legitimacy' in terms of valuing a group's own language and culture in their own right, to legitimacy in so far as learning one's own language helps in learning Dutch.

Secondly, the maintenance of cultural identity was no longer seen as a possible contribution to integration but, on the contrary, as an obstacle.

Conclusions

Finally, explicit calls for linguistic assimilation of immigrant children is commonplace in many 'democratic' European countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and even Sweden.

This change has resulted in far less positive attention to migrant children's own language and culture.

Right-wing populist parties have played a significant role in promoting the idea that migrant identities are a threat to processes of integration as well as to national identity and that both are incompatible.

Conclusions

In the face of all these developments, critical sociolinguists and educational specialists need to place the interests of the children in the center:
- Social and emotional development
- Linguistic development
- Sense of belonging
- Educational achievement, and
- Full integration of immigrant children should be the focus.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION! AND QUESTIONS!

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