Introduction: The Multilingual Edge of Education

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In this volume, we raise the need to invest in new educational perspectives in which multilingualism is valorized and used strategically in settings and contexts of instruction and learning. While the title of the book, 'The multilingual edge of education', undeniably alludes to the way in which the multilingual repertoires of pupils in mainstream classrooms are often perceived as an insurmountable problem, it equally underlines more current perspectives in which multilingualism is viewed as possessing cutting-edge

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potential for transforming linguistically heterogeneous classrooms into more inhabitable, more equitable and more efficiently organized spaces for teaching and learning. Is the multilingual edge an abyss, or do we look to multilingualism for giving learners the edge over the challenges faced by the educational contexts in which they participate today? The chapters in this book are written by an international group of contributors who present findings from empirical studies on different educational approaches which draw on students' multilingual repertoires as a pedagogical resource for learning and teaching. The authors document a variety of classroom practices, while engaging with students' and teachers' experiential voices, local and national policy contexts and so on, so as to explore the potential of multilingualism as learning capital, which, once capitalized upon, can enrich and support educational processes in diverse sociolinguistic contexts.

Education systems have mostly responded to the present climate of heightened linguistic diversity in polarized ways, which have left little room to negotiate and engage more fully with what it means to be a multilingual speaker in today's globalized world. The prevailing tendency has been to present assimilation as a civic ideal, with proficiency in the dominant language as its single and most important language learning outcome. Political debate has tended to slip rather easily into a deficit view on the real and potential effects of linguistic and sociocultural diversity on educational achievement, in general and language learning, more particularly. In addition, advocacies in favour of models of bilingual education have been hampered by political, legal and organizational constraints, and where implemented, for example 'pockets' of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in some Western European contexts, such initiatives have been restricted to socioeconomically prestigious languages which are already represented well in educational systems. Instruction in less prestigious minority languages has been disregarded. How the language use of multilingual minority pupils relates to learning processes and whether there can be any room for the multilingual learner's first language as a resource remain outside the picture.

Furthermore, educational programmes in general continue to be based on traditional, more static, notions of 'bounded languages', notions that have been called into question by a growing body of sociolinguistic research into practices that have been identified as characteristic for youth

growing up in the rapidly changing urban multilingual landscapes of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The need for a new socio-linguistic vocabulary has resulted in the introduction of terms such as 'crossing', 'translanguaging' and 'polylanguaging'. The provision of monolingual education in mainstream schools and classrooms is there-fore ever more challenged by pupils and students who make fluid and creative use of increasingly complex linguistic repertoires as they navigate through the multiple environments in their everyday lives. While these uses have been noted in detail in recent multilingualism research, the implications of such insights about multilingual practices for instruction and learning deserve a fuller treatment in the language educational litera-ture than has been the case so far. In more than one respect, the debate is still to be conducted, as we are only beginning to document the results of educational implementations which seek to valorize the range of com-municative resources which pupils may bring to a classroom context.

The chapters in this book offer a selection of papers from the International Conference on Urban Multilingualism and Education (UME), which was organized at Ghent University in March 2013 (http://www.smo-ume.org/). It was one of the first conferences which was dedi-cated exclusively to bringing together research lines in urban multilin-gualism with those in urban education. Together, the chapters form a thematically coherent set of research papers which focus on various aspects of the 'multilingual edge' of education. The book falls into four parts. At the end, there is a concluding commentary by an invited expert.

The three chapters in **Part I** set the scene and offer a *status quaestionis* on multilingual education in a context of globalization and with particu-lar references to the challenges presented by ethnic and national diversity in mainstream classroom contexts around the world. Each of the chapters in Part I is based on large-scale empirical research which is detailed in the chapter and provides the basis for critiquing a number of received ideas about language, multilingualism, language difference, language learning and educational achievement. The three chapters in this section also expound multiple histories of public and professional debate on mono-lingual, bilingual and multilingual orientations in education. *Slembrouck, Van Avermaet* and *Van Gorp* build a case for 'functional multilingual learning' in a monolingualism-dominated environment. Their chapter

deals with the challenges posed by evidence-based policy developments. It covers the design, scientific assessment and policy outcomes of a longitudinal pedagogical intervention which was implemented by a local education authority in the Flemish city of Ghent. The experiment in four primary schools involved the introduction of home language use in class and a cycle of early literacy/numeracy instruction in the first language. Next, *Garcia, Seltzer* and *Witt* thematize the educational significance and value of a translanguaging approach by gauging its cognitive and affective effects in two school contexts in New York, an elementary and a secondary classroom. Adding theoretical support for translanguaged classrooms, the chapter covers the sociolinguistic situation of the classroom and school community and focuses more specifically on the actions of two teachers to redress the linguistic inequality that exists in most urban classrooms with a diverse student body. The chapter by *Cummins*, finally, focuses on what we know about the causes of underachievement among immigrant-background and socially marginalized students and how schools can respond to these causal factors. It will be argued that in order to be successful in educating students from socially marginalized minority groups, schools must be willing to challenge the devaluation of minority group identities in the wider society. Cummins draws on accumulated research insights from North America and Europe.

Part II offers a set of four chapters which document various 'gaps' between diversity in the home context, the normative discourses of educational institutions and the sanctioning of code-switching and resource-crossing practices in a classroom environment when the pupils' first language is relied upon as a communicative resource. *Marawu* concentrates on the code-switching behaviour of bilingual teachers in South African schools as exemplifying both identity practice and educational strategy. Code-switching serves as a communicative resource which moderates the effects of the disparities between the pupils' home background and the specific linguistic demands of the school. *Alby* and *Léglise* concentrate on the gaps between doing and talking about code-switching in the context of French Guianan schools. While education policy generally dissuades teachers from using other languages than French in the classroom, the authors' ethnographic data reveal how code-switching and translanguaging are common practices in everyday classroom interaction.

Caruana and *Scaglione's* chapter adds a cross-national perspective by concentrating on how schools attend to and invest in the linguistic diversity that comes with populations of children and schools. The project covered six Southern European countries, all regular destinations for immigrants. Finally, *Slembrouck* and *Rosiers* concentrate on the socio-linguistic, interactional and pedagogical determinants of a successful approach to learning founded on translanguaging. They do so through close examination of two video-recorded interactional sequences in one of the schools which participated in the Ghent 'Home Language in Education' project.

Part III thematizes perception, experiential voice and narrative in accounts of multilingualism, from the point of view of teachers (Conteh, Makalela) and pupils (Jaspers, Gkaintartzi et al.). These chapters address the question of heterogeneity in emerging forms of sociolinguistic awareness and their pedagogical value when it is exploited more systematically. *Jaspers's* chapter studies mixed-ethnicity classrooms in Dutch-defined schools in Belgium's bilingual capital and discusses how teachers and pupils interactionally manage the daily complexities of linguistic friction and contradiction when they evoke and exploit linguistic rules and regulations, so as to contribute to the creation of a 'cosmopolitan conviviality'. *Conteh* shows how the education system in England lacks expertise to professionalize teachers to exploit pupils' language repertoires and undervalues the skills of multilingual practitioners. She details in her chapter how the insights of a small group of multilingual teachers into their own English as an additional language (EAL) practices with multilingual pupils can be used to suggest possibilities for what could constitute 'multilingual pedagogies' which turn a 'problem' into an 'asset'. Such an approach is more than a matter of training packages with 'tips and tricks'. A central role can be assigned to multilingual professionals in a bottom-up approach based on research evidence and a theoretical framework for professionalizing teachers. *Gkaintartzi et al.* present the language views and practices of 19 bilingual students of Albanian immigrant descent who attend a mainstream Greek primary school and kindergarten. Their chapter also details the results of a language project that enables teachers to connect with the multilingual realities of their migrant pupils and their families. Concluding the third part, *Makalela* reports on

alternative approaches in post-apartheid South Africa which valorize plural, versatile and fluid educational spaces for integrated multilingual development. The focus is on gauging the effects of multilingual pedagogies on pre-service teachers, more specifically on how these practices lay bare the artificial arbitrariness of apartheid-imposed boundaries between languages and hence contribute in the current South African context to the creation of an 'Ubuntu'-inspired pluralism.

The two chapters in **Part IV** of the book seek to chart the added value of plurilingual repertoires. The ethnographic case studies presented here derive from contexts where schools have been investing actively in a multilingual policy. In the first chapter, *Sierens* and *Ramaut* address the influence of locally monitored multilingual education policies which challenge a national monolingual ideology on the sociolinguistic and educational practices of the teachers involved in a four-year experiment in Flanders. To what extent did the mainstream teachers draw on pupils' home languages as a resource for rendering learning environments more powerful? Next, *Little* and *Kirwan* discuss how a Dublin-based school with almost 80 per cent of non-native speakers of English lifted the barriers against the use of home languages. The school developed an open-language policy and an inclusive pedagogical practice with a strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills, a reflective approach to learning and respect for teachers' professional autonomy.

Finally, the book is concluded with a commentary by an invited expert, *Kathleen Heugh*. In it, she revisits the volume's main themes, while raising the question of possible and plausible scenarios for future research on urban educational multilingualism. Her concluding discussion also includes a listed set of recommendations for school policy and classroom practice.