Chapter 8

Migration and linguistic diversity in higher education: implications for language teaching practice and policy

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[H1]Abstract:

An increase in migration has led in recent years to growing diversity in society, particularly linguistic diversity, which in turn is influencing higher education. A significant percentage of students now present with a mother tongue different to the medium of instruction. Many also possess additional competencies in a range of other languages.

This chapter considers the challenges and opportunities which this situation poses for language teaching practice and policy in a university context. It also discusses possible implications for the design and delivery of foreign language degree programmes, if they are to better reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity in an increasingly multilingual student body, and to enhance the experience of all students studying foreign languages at university.

[H1]Linguistic and cultural 'super-diversity' in the European Union, Ireland and the Irish higher education sector

Societies are becoming increasingly diverse, with migration presenting as one of the most pressing political issues in Europe and beyond. In 2014 alone, a total of 3.8 million people immigrated into one of the EU-28 Member States from outside of the EU, while at least 2.8 million emigrants were reported to have left an EU Member State (Eurostat 2016). However, these figures alone do not provide the full picture in terms of migration flows as they do not include movement between EU member states. Increases in diversity caused by migration into and within the EU led Vertovec (2007, p. 3) to coin the term 'super-diversity' to describe 'a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced', and to represent 'a dynamic interplay of variables including country of origin, migration channel, legal status and human capital'. The term itself remains controversial in the literature (see for example Pavlenko 2016). Mass migration has also undoubtedly resulted in significantly more diverse societies.

In this context, the internationalization of higher education is firmly on the policy agenda across OECD countries (Finn and Darmody 2016). The number of students enrolled in tertiary education outside their country of citizenship has increased from 1.3 million in 1990 to 4.3 million in 2011, with Asian students representing 53% of these students, primarily from China, India and Korea (OECD 2013).

In Ireland, for example, foreign nationals from 199 countries make up 12% of the population (Duncan and Pollak 2015). The number of international students attending higher education institutions in Ireland increased by 58% between 2010/2011 and 2014/2015, growing from 20,995 to 33,118 students (DES 2016, p. 18). The *International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020* has set a medium-term target to have 44,000 international students enrolled in Irish higher education institutions by the end of the 2019/2020 academic year, which would represent 15% of the total student body (DES 2016, p. 43). In 2014/2015, the number of full-time international students represented 8.8% of the student body (DES 2016, p. 31). However, it should be noted that these figures do not capture students from migrant backgrounds who have taken up Irish Citizenship. Additional data from the Royal Irish Academy (2011)

indicates that migrant children make up approximately 14% of the school-going cohort, and approximately 15% of those at university (Bruen and Kelly 2014). Therefore, we can be relatively confident in concluding that, at any one time a fifth of the student body in Ireland presents with a complex repertoire of languages and cultures, and, importantly in the context of this chapter, a mother tongue other than English.

The example of one module from a Master's programme in Dublin City University illustrates the extent of linguistic diversity which can be evident in the student body. This module forms part of the core language programme in the university and is not specifically targeted at non-native speakers of English. In a cohort of 24 students enrolled in this module in the academic year 2016-7, 21 languages were spoken with level of competency ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (native speaker-like proficiency) in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001). These languages were, in descending order, English, Irish, French, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, Korean, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Ukrainian, Polish, Chinese, Portuguese, Futunian, Latin, Arabic, Lithuanian, Tagalog, Romanian and Urdu. The mother tongues spoken by the students registered on this module were English, Swedish, Polish, Hungarian, Tagalog and French.

In a referendum in June 2016, British citizens voted to withdraw from the European Union, a process now commonly referred to as 'Brexit'. This post-Brexit environment is likely to result in further diversification amongst the Irish student body, with Ireland now to become the only English-speaking country in the EU. Currently, there are 15,600 full-time non-EU students and 2,880 full-time EU students (excluding those from the UK and Northern Ireland) studying in higher education in Ireland, compared with 493,570 international students studying in the UK, with 70,000 EU students coming to the UK each year (HEA 2016, p. 14). These figures are important in that political scientists (including Barrett et al. 2015) are of the view that 'Brexit' is likely to result in the diversion of migration away from the UK towards Ireland and, in turn, towards its education system. Barrett et al. (2015, p. 56) state:

> To the extent that there are potential migrants from Central and Eastern Europe who are eager to acquire stronger English language skills, they may be willing to move to Ireland if the UK is removed as a potential destination.

According to the HEA (2016, p. 14), there is already evidence of nervousness amongst potential international students wishing to pursue their studies in the UK. In addition, there are approximately 27,000 EU students who study in the UK as part of Erasmus/Erasmus+, a major EU undergraduate mobility programme, compared to 7,000 students who come to Ireland on the programme (HEA 2016, p. 14). For the UK to continue to participate in Erasmus, special arrangements would need to be set in place if student mobility would need to continue after Brexit (the United Kingdom exiting the EU). Should the UK not accept the principle of mobility, it is possible that Ireland, as an English-speaking member of the EU, might become an even more attractive Erasmus host, taking a percentage of the students who would otherwise have gone to the UK.

Ireland's ability to respond to this increasingly complex situation is crucial. Many of these students will enrol on undergraduate and graduate programmes originally designed for a predominantly linguistically homogeneous student population of native English speakers. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities for the Irish higher education system, and indeed for higher education systems globally who find themselves in a similar position. It has ramifications for all subject areas and domains of study. However, given the central role played by language and linguistic diversity in this context, increased linguistic and cultural diversity is likely to have a particularly significant impact on the teaching and learning of foreign languages at university (see for example, Kramsch 2014). It is this single issue which will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

[H1]Teaching foreign languages in a super-diverse university setting: Lessons from the literature

A limited number of studies have been conducted with a focus on the impact of linguistic diversity in the language classroom on the teaching and learning of foreign languages at university. In particular, there has been little systematic work which compares the experience of non-native speakers of the medium of instruction studying a foreign language through their second (or third, fourth etc.) language, and native speakers of the medium of instruction studying the same foreign language.

Instead, to date, many researchers (including Gkaintartzi et al. 2015; Pauwels 2014; Scarino 2014) report the existence of a 'monolingual mindset' which results in all students being treated as though their mother tongue was the medium of instruction both in research into language teaching and learning, and in the language classroom itself. Galante (2016) states that due to the limitations of the monolingual theoretical framework, students' knowledge of languages and cultures have often been underused and devalued. Others such as Gogolin (2011) are of a similar view and describe this approach as a 'deficit perspective' (p. 242). This is particularly so in universities where English is the medium of instruction, as it is in an Irish context. According to Scarino (2014), a monolingual perspective results in a failure to recognize, and potentially harness, linguistic diversity in the learning process. This echoes Holmen (2015), whose study looks at the linguistic diversity among students as a potential resource in their academic development. According to Holmen, despite University of Copenhagen's new language strategy, 'More Languages for More Students', which supplements an explicit language policy, and despite the fact that it is a multilingual learning space through its language teaching and through the linguistic diversity which is brought into the academic learning site, students who participated in the study say that their language resources are seldom seen as assets. Similarly, Haukås' (2016) study looked at Norwegian teachers of a third language to students whose second language was English. Her study makes three key findings: (i) although teachers view multilingualism as an asset and find it beneficial in their own language learning, they do not necessarily regard it as an asset for their own students; (ii) although teachers claim to make use of students' first and second language in teaching them a third, they do not focus on the transfer of learning strategies as they feel that learning the third language is a different experience from learning the second; and (iii) teachers who are teaching a third language think that collaboration across languages could enhance the language learning experience of the student, but no such collaboration exists.

A gradual change is taking place, however, in the field of applied linguistics. The change stems partially from the emergence of alternative theories of how languages interrelate in the brain and how they are acquired by the language learner. For example, researchers (including Canagarajah 2011; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Mazak and Herbas-Donoso 2014) are of the view that languages are not stored separately in the brain. Instead, they believe that they are integrated and connected in the learner's mind and influence one another in a dynamic manner (see Bialystok 2001, Herdina and Jessner 2002).

Allied to this perspective, and particularly within a context of linguistic diversity, is the concept of the 'linguistic repertoire' of a language learner, a notion originating with John Gumperz in the early 1960s (Gumperz 1964). Gumperz defines a linguistic repertoire as the total linguistic resources controlled by the speaker, ranging from different languages, dialects or styles, with the speaker selecting a particular language variety that is appropriate to a particular situation the speaker finds themselves in. A learner's linguistic repertoire is made up of all of the languages of which the learner has some knowledge, regardless of how basic or advanced the level of competency might be, or regardless of grammatical distinctiveness. Moore (2014, p. 586) suggests that harnessing the linguistic repertoire of an individual learner in some way 'may be advantageous for learning a language and participation in [similar] higher education classroom settings'. Haukås (2016, p. 1) stresses the role of the language teacher as a key facilitator and states that 'learning multiple languages is best enhanced when learners

are encouraged to become aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and language learning knowledge'.[1]

In this regard, Hopkins (2014) studied the process and impact on the learner of teaching a third language to students through their second language. The results of this study indicated that this approach facilitated the acquisition of both the second and the third language. Some disadvantages were observed in that the learners involved in the study spent quite a lot of time translating from their second language into their third language. They also experienced difficulties with pronunciation, which in some cases led to confusion between the second and third languages. At times, grammatical explanations were also reported as being less precise.

In a similar vein, Jaensch (2012) examined the experience and outcomes of students studying an additional language through their second language. She observed that the level of proficiency in the second language appeared to be an important predictor of success in acquiring the additional foreign language through the learner's second language. She also reported that students who had already acquired one language to a high level displayed several of the characteristics associated with successful language learning. These included high levels of metalinguistic awareness and lexical understanding, as well as more developed cognitive skills.

These findings are supported by those of Bruen and Kelly (2017) who studied the position of university language students whose mother tongue was a language other than the medium of instruction. Specifically, their focus was on the attitudes and experiences of non-native English speakers studying either German or Japanese as foreign languages at an English-medium university in Ireland. Their findings suggest that the non-native speakers of English considered themselves to be at an advantage over the native speakers of English in the study of German and Japanese as Foreign Languages. This was even though the medium of instruction was English, at least in the early stages of the language modules. The reasons given for this attitude by the participants included the fact that the non-native English speakers were already experienced language learners with an extensive linguistic repertoire on which they can draw when acquiring an additional language. This view was supported by feedback given by the native speakers of English. The only concerns expressed by the non-native speakers of English regarding their experience of foreign language learning in an English-medium environment were related to an assumption at some points in the curriculum of a knowledge of Irish (in this case the host) culture and society.

In addition to studies which attempt to monitor the impact of learning an additional language through a language which is not the mother tongue, another group of studies explores ways in which this process can be enhanced. Specifically, these studies attempt to harness the fact that the students in the classroom have different mother tongues and diverse linguistic repertoires to the benefit of all of the students present. In other words, these studies look for ways in which linguistic diversity in the foreign language classroom can serve as an opportunity rather than a complication. In other words, they embrace a plurilingual approach to language learning (Jeoffrion et al. 2014), that is, an approach which views the linguistic repertoire of the language learner as fluid and supportive of the acquisition of additional languages.

Embracing a plurilingual perspective, Hufeisen and Neuner (2004) seek to identify at the macro level the conditions that might support a plurilingual approach to language learning. The conditions referred to concerned language, education policy and institutional arrangements, among others. While accepting the diversity of educational systems, Hufeisen and Neuner (2004) advocated a focus on identifying the interrelationships between languages. They stress the fact that linguistic distance or difference between languages is likely to be central to the development of a plurilingual pedagogical approach. For

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[1] See Galante (2016) for further discussion on linking the theory of plurilingualism in a linguistically and culturally diverse language education context with practice.

example, they argue that it could inform decisions regarding the order in which foreign languages should be learned within education systems and the proficiency levels which learners should reach in one language before beginning to study the next language.

Cenoz and Gorter (2013) present a critique of the policy of language isolation in TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages), stating that the teaching of English as a second or third language has traditionally been associated with pedagogical approaches that encourage the isolation of English from other languages in the student's linguistic repertoire. They propose an innovative plurilingual approach to the teaching of English that softens the boundaries between languages, making them more fluid. The authors note that the English language teacher is often expected to only use English, and to avoid any reference to elements of the first language or other languages, stating that these ideas and concepts are deeply rooted both in society at large and in second language and foreign language teaching practices (Cenoz and Gorter 2013, p. 592).

While Hufeisen and Neuner's (2004) and Cenoz and Gorter's (2013) research was situated within a macro-level policy environment looking at languages-in-education policies more generally (see also Bruen 2013), other studies, such as Heyder and Schädlich (2014) and Bruen and Kelly (2016) adopt a more micro-level approach. Heyder and Schädlich (2014) report that most of the teachers in their study frequently compared and contrasted language elements, particularly German (the host language) and the foreign language they were teaching. Bruen and Kelly (2016) report on the results of their study exploring a set of individual, tailored plurilingual activities designed and implemented in four language modules in a higher education institution in Ireland. Despite operating at a micro classroom level, the study was focused on using the interrelationships between languages to support language learning. In other words, a plurilingual pedagogical approach was taken in designing the activities implemented as part of this research. The main activity involved engaging the participants in comparing the way in which core grammatical concepts operate in their target languages (in this case German and Japanese) with the way they operate in their mother tongue (French, English, Russian, Spanish etc.) and in the other languages in their linguistic repertoires. These other languages included Korean, Arabic, Chinese, Irish etc. The activities were conducted during language classes and were supported by the lecturers. The concepts which were compared across languages included cases, sentence structures, tenses, the passive voice and register. These activities were carried out several times over the course of a semester, and feedback from the students was obtained on whether or not the exercise helped in the learning of their target language for that module. The feedback indicated that more than two thirds of the undergraduate students who participated felt that the activities supported the learning of their target language. The majority also reported that the exercises were most useful when they were grouped with students with similar linguistic repertoires to their own, and where they shared common languages which were similar to the target languages. This feedback echoes the important role played by degree of linguistic difference, stressed by Hufeisen and Neuner (2004). Logistical challenges identified included the time-consuming nature of the exercises and difficulties associated with grouping students with sufficiently similar linguistic repertoires.

Thus, although, as we have noted above, a relatively small number of studies have been conducted to date on the delivery of foreign languages in super-diverse environments, and a 'monolingual mindset' continues to exist in many classrooms. However, some significant guidelines are beginning to emerge to support the design and delivery of university language courses in super-diverse environments.

For example, a sufficiently high level of proficiency in the language which is the medium of instruction appears to play an important role on the success of acquisition of the target foreign language (see Jaensch 2012 above). Several studies (including Bruen and Kelly 2016) would appear to suggest that a minimum grade of a B2 (upper intermediate) within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001) is required for a language that is not the mother tongue to function as a vehicle for the acquisition of an additional language.

In addition, student feedback in plurilingual settings (Bruen and Kelly 2016) indicates that lecturers and curriculum designers should not assume an in-depth knowledge of the culture and society of the country which is acting as host to the students. Instead, a focus on the culture of the target language is advisable in more diverse classrooms. Where cultural comparisons are felt to be valuable, allowing students flexibility in selecting the country or culture to be compared with the target language culture helps recognize the diversity within the classroom.

In addition, engagement with plurilingual activities involving the different languages within students' linguistic repertoires, particularly it would seem those which share similarities with one another, appears to support the acquisition of a target language and the language learning process more generally (Bruen and Kelly 2016). Therefore, although research in this area is lacking, there is support for a plurilingual pedagogical approach in the foreign language classroom.

However, more research is needed in all these areas. The following section considers in more detail the type of research that is needed to provide greater guidance to those designing and delivering foreign language courses in diverse linguistic environments. It also considers the policy implications for higher education given the limited information that is currently available.

[H1]Implications for future research requirements, and for higher education policy and practice

As suggested earlier, a gap remains in the literature in this field of practice. There is a need for further research, ideally classroom-based and action research with a focus on addressing several key questions.

These include how best to design and integrate plurilingual pedagogies into the foreign language classroom. For example, initial, exploratory studies have shown that it is possible to identify students with complementary linguistic repertoires and pair or group them in virtual or face-to-face learning environments allowing them to engage in the kind of explicit comparison of grammatical concepts across languages (Bruen and Kelly 2016). In order to develop these activities further, studies are needed to help identify what languages best constitute 'complementary linguistic repertoires'. Bruen and Kelly's (2016) study suggests that the grouping of students with a degree of proficiency in Japanese (beginners) and German (intermediate) has a number of benefits, particularly with the acquisition of German cases and Japanese postposition markers. Similarly, useful comparisons appear to be possible between French (intermediate) and German (beginners), particularly with regard to the use of auxiliary verbs in the formation of the perfect past tense. Hufeisen and Neuner's (2004) report, on the other hand, looked at synergies in the school system between the study of English as a first foreign language followed by German as a second foreign language. Collaboration with teachers of other languages would help facilitate this, particularly, as noted by Haukås (2016, p. 13), if teachers recognize the benefits of cross-language collaboration. Longitudinal as well as cross-sectional studies would add to knowledge in this area and allow conclusions to be drawn on the different proficiency levels at which engagement with plurilingual pedagogies of different kinds appears most helpful to the learner.

In addition, further research into teaching materials, and course textbooks that can help teachers adopt a more plurilingual approach in the classroom would be helpful. Research into the kinds of Information and Communication Technologies that are required to support endeavours of this kind where a decision is made to situate such exercises within a virtual learning environment is needed. This would help to address some of the logistical challenges associated with the grouping of the appropriate students during often limited class contact time.

In relation to proficiency levels, more information is needed on the optimum or indeed minimum proficiency levels required for one language to act as the medium for the acquisition of an additional language. Information of this kind would allow universities to determine appropriate minimum entry requirements in the language which is the medium of instruction for those students interested in

studying an additional foreign language through this medium.

It is also important that the impact of linguistic diversity in the classroom on the teaching and learning of additional foreign languages should not be divorced from the associated impact of cultural diversity. One issue concerns an assumption of knowledge of local culture as discussed previously. It is also important to consider learner preferences, diverse learning styles and the different learner expectations which sometimes accompany international students in particular (see Sudhershan and Bruen 2015 for further discussion of this issue).

The importance of a greater understanding of the impact of diversity within the language learning environment and context in informing policy making is highlighted here, and stressed by May as follows:

> It is only from an informed research base, which in turn directly influences language educational policy development, that further progress can be made on realigning the predilection to monolingualism that still so dominates public policy on language education (2014, p. 234).

May's reference to public policy is an important one. While recognising that much is yet to be learned, the field is nonetheless now able to make evidence-based recommendations in terms of the development of languages-in-education policy and higher education policy more generally. These include the following:

Many of those involved in designing and delivering degree programmes and modules in foreign languages engage with continuous professional development (CPD) in their field. It is important that such CPD should include awareness raising exercises around the concept of a 'monolingual mindset' as well as a grounding in the key concepts relating to plurilingual pedagogies and their implementation in the classroom.

A similar point can be made in relation to Initial Teacher Education as it relates to the education of teachers to teach languages at primary and secondary level within school systems. Research has repeatedly indicated that, without effective education and training, the way in which they were taught is an important influence on how many teachers teach (Oleson and Hora 2014).

There is a danger that this could perpetuate a 'monolingual mindset' which stands in direct contradiction to the information on language learning emerging from the literature. Indeed, Haukås (2016, pp. 2-3) goes so far as to say that language teachers ought to be able to address a number of requirements, such as: be multilingual themselves and thus serve as models for their learners; have well developed cross-linguistic and metalinguistic awareness; they should be *au fait* with research on multilingualism, and know how to encourage this in their learners; they should also be sensitive to individual learners' cognitive and affective differences; and they should be willing to collaborate with other language teachers in order to enhance learners' multilingualism.

Finally, the issues discussed in the previous sections highlight the considerable degree of complexity associated with the teaching of foreign languages in universities. The growth in linguistic diversity adds an additional layer of complexity. If plurilingual pedagogies are to be implemented effectively, a great deal of student interaction in small groups supported by language lecturers is required. Such intensive approaches require a manageable student: lecturer ratio. In the face of super-diversity, it is important that this be recognized in higher education sector, and beyond.

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