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Introduction

Multilingualism and beyond:

An endless evolution

Alessandra Rizzo

The growing international interest in multilingualism, which has been marked by the changing political and economic landscape of different nations in the world, is significantly represented in the media and in public discourse. Globalization, transnational population flows and the spread of new technological platforms have given rise to remarkable linguistic, cultural and demographic transformations, still occurring in the globe. The burgeoning research in bilingualism and multilingualism, which covers a broad range of specific domains from linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics to neurolinguistics and clinical linguistics, from education and societal behaviourism to migration studies and computer-mediated communication, has seen the emergence of new strands of investigation which “have incorporated critical and post-structuralist perspectives from social theory and embraced new epistemologies and research methods” (Martin-Jones, Blackledge and Creese, 2012: 1). Besides, a clear shift of focus to empirical work, which has become more interpretative, ethnographic and multimodal in nature, has reinforced, on the one hand, the understanding of the particularities of multilingual settings and practices and, on the other, has begun to provide insights into the nature of the cultural and societal changes taking place in recent times. Multilingual competences and practices—involving bilingual and multilingual speakers who, while crossing existing social and linguistic boundaries, adapt themselves to unfamiliar and overlapping linguistic spaces—are highly relevant to many areas of linguistic and sociolinguistic investigation. New research on multilingualism and multilingual behaviour is shedding light on the dynamics of multilingual realities, such as multiple language acquisition and learning (L3, L4, Lx), psycho- and neurolinguistic components deriving from conditions of forced multilingual spaces subsequent to forced exiles, patterns of translanguaging, early

bilingualism, and heritage language development. Intercultural and globalisation phenomena quite naturally gravitate towards situations involving bilingual and multilingual speakers, where lingua francas are adopted. Clearly, multilingualism is anything but recent, and multilingual scholars from different parts of the world, have been engaged in multilingual practices for centuries, if not millennia, translating Arabic, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Aramaic, to name those that include the post-Christian era.

In the contemporary world, multilingualism has gone hand in hand with technology-driven globalization and is taking new paths and directions. Multilingual situations potentially involve any combination of languages, but for statistical reasons, will often involve today's big world languages functioning as lingua francas, such as English, Arabic, Spanish, French and Russian. The number of speakers of the various language combinations is unevenly distributed, meaning that speakers of smaller languages will adopt world languages in both every-day and professional situations. In the current European scenario, considering the fact that many migrants are constantly involved in multilingual and intercultural practices (Katan, 2004; Rudvin and Spinzi, 2015) in all domains of life (work, health, education, justice, home) shuttling between their family language(s) and the host country language, they are constantly performing 'multilingual identities'. The broad range of both migrant languages and the language of the country of arrival has thus a strong impact on economic growth and social opportunities. Globalising mechanisms, the transnational mobility of people, advances in new technologies and the creation of Internet platforms are highly influential at the level of political, societal, economic and educational contexts. According to Aronin and Singleton (2008), one of the main factors that has contributed to changing views on and approaches to multilingualism, derives from the notion of 'medium'. In the past, multilingual communication was basically written, but in the 21st century, multilingual communication has been transformed into a multimodal device that is disseminated rapidly and forcefully due to the spread of the Internet.

Useful reflections on multilingualism come from the European Commission (2007), according to which multilingualism refers to the sphere of competences and abilities of societies, groups of people, individuals and institutions to engage on a regular basis with more than one language in everyday life. Wei Li and Melissa G. Moyer define a multilingual individual as "anyone who can communicate in more than one language be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)" (2008: 4). These two definitions, as pointed out by Jasone Cenoz, are relevant to the debate on the individual dimension in contrast to the social sphere of multilingualism, even though "[i]ndividual and societal multilingualism are not completely separated [...] and the individuals who live in a multilingual community speak more than one language than [...] individuals who live in a monolingual society" (2013: 5). Nevertheless, the spread of English as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2004; Canagarajah, 2007; Guido, 2008) and "the high level of linguistic diversity as a result of immigration, particularly in contexts in

which English is the majority language” (Cenoz, 2013: 5), help classify multilingualism “at the same time an individual and social phenomenon” (ibid.). Thus, if plurilingualism, as the Council of Europe website emphasises, is the repertoire of varieties of language used by many individuals, which means that some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual, multilingualism, by contrast, refers to the presence in a geographical area of more than one variety of language (see Council of Europe, *Education and Languages, Language Policy*).

A brief chronology

The evolution of studies on multilingualism is characterised by three main phases, which include three types of linguistics: a linguistics of community, a linguistics of contact and a linguistics of global societies. A broad shift from a “linguistics of community”, as pointed out by Mary Louise Pratt (1987), to a critical and ethnographic sociolinguistics, has led to a linguistics that is mainly rooted in the phenomenon of globalisation and in the diffusion of migratory processes occurring across the globe today. This transition is, of course, linked to a decisive change across the social sciences towards post-structuralist and post-modern theories and approaches. Recent fields of enquiry on multilingualism have thus extensively turned their attention to globalization and the political, economic, demographic and cultural processes that have somehow participated in the changing global landscape. The multilingual realities of the global age we live in have encouraged, on the one hand, the growth of new perspectives as a result of the rise of ethnographic research and, on the other, the investigation of specific communication modalities. New forms of mobilities (especially through the technology-driven revolution in cyber-communication) have led to a transformation of the dynamics of time and space, reshaping communicative practices in spoken and written language across a variety of media, genres, narratives, semiotic modes, registers and styles.

Changes in perspectives of multilingualism have had a crucial role with regard to the shift from a linguistics of community to a linguistics of contact, which has evolved in the linguistic interface between technology and globalization. Indeed, if, on the one hand, models of linguistics of community are meant to accommodate linguistic diversity, on the other, their main concern has remained the scrutiny of sub-communities classified in terms of social categorization, such as ethnicity, gender and class. The concept of “communities of practice” was introduced in the 1990’s in the social sciences, where mutual engagement between people involved in similar activities and somewhat shifts the focus away from the notion of social categories in terms of ethnicity, class and gender. A new vision of “speech communities”, seen collectively as groups, was born and developed in different linguistic and cultural circumstances. From a bounded notion of speech community, which reinforces the concept of a bounded lexis and syntax (somehow limiting multilingual creativity), scholarly attention has shifted to a dynamic

perception of communities of practice, where individuals can see themselves as engaged in multiple endeavours and tasks. As stated above, a major shift away from a linguistics of community was signalled by Pratt by focusing on the idea of a “linguistics of contact”:

Imagine ... a linguistics that decentred community, that placed at its centre the operation of language across lines of social differentiation, a linguistics that focused on modes and zones of contact between dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities, speakers of different languages, that focused on how speakers constitute each other relationally and in difference, how they enact differences in language. Let us call this a linguistics of contact. (1987: 60)

The notion of a “linguistics of contact” has represented a gradual move that has contributed to the decrease and disappearance of a “linguistics of community” and to its replacement with new developments in multilingualism starting from the mid-1980s onwards. These new trends have introduced new perspectives on multilingualism, focusing on advances interfacing disciplinary traditions (Pratt 1987; Woolard 1985; Gal 1989; Heller 1992; 1995a; 1995b). Since the early 1990s, new forms of research have included different cultural and historical contexts, and different social spaces, which have been taken into account by looking at face-to-face interaction and multilingual literacy practices (Arthur 1996; Zentella 1997; Baynham and da Fina 2005; Cincotta-Segi 2011).

Initially, considerable research on multilingualism was done from the perspective of language ideology in relation to the role of language in nation-building and the construction of citizenship (Fishman, 1972; Anderson, 1983). Genealogical studies on multilingualism have shown that movements of groups of linguistic minorities in the 1960s both in Europe and America, supporting the renewal of language and ethnical revival, turned language into a symbol of mobilization, solidarity and fluidity. As remarked by Monica Heller (1999), the concept of linguistic mobility is useful and relevant if placed in an ideological context where language has nation-building connotations. Studies on revitalization movements challenging discourses of linguistic nationalism have demonstrated that languages are clearly bounded systems supporting their own cause, and that linguistic minorities exist where nationalism attempts to exclude them from public life (Urla, 1993; Heller, 1999). Despite the numerous critiques across the social sciences about the association of monolingualism and nationhood, it has been widely proved that the citizens as members of nation-state buildings should share a common language both in public and political discursive areas. In particular, as shown by Adrian Blackledge (2005), multilingualism has been increasingly debated since the beginning of the 21st century in the UK both in media and political discourses. At the same time, over the last decade or so, the notion of multilingualism as opposed to monolingualism has become politically and

culturally crucial to societal developments and identity formations as a result of the varieties of language repertoires deriving from linguistic minorities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The approach to multilingualism proposed by Heller (1988) within an ethnographic framework of research on multilingual settings has often been multilevel and has shown a direct interest in the texture and dynamics of everyday communicative life, as well as in the phenomenon of heteroglossia in spoken language practices and literacies as embedded in wider social, cultural and historical processes. Much of this research has taken inspiration from the ethnographic tradition of communication and interactional sociolinguistics (Hymes 1967; 1974; Gumperz and Hymes 1972). In general, research on multilingualism at the level of interactional and conversation analysis have mainly focused on interactional processes and the crucial role of agency in the local construction of social life and in the extensive circulation of discourses on language occurring in conversational encounters.

In the first decades of the 21st century, transnational migration and new population flows have brought about significant demographic changes, while creating a more varied territory where the number of migrants has also contributed to shifting the attention of multilingualism to globalization and language and, in particular, to new patterns of migration and post-migration that have been identified with the term “super-diversity” (Vertovec 2007a). In the UK (Vertovec 2006), for instance, new models of migration and post-migration have stimulated “a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade” (2007b: 1024). The concept of “super-diversity”, which was initially used to refer to the interweaving of diversity, where not only ethnicity but also other components interacted, has influenced the composition of social location and trajectories of migrants in the 21st century. 2007 was also the year when Makoni and Pennycook (2007) proposed a “reinvention of languages” by means of which heterogeneity could be acknowledged, while maintaining the fact that languages perpetuate social inequities as forms of social constructions. The notion of a language as representative of a singularity, instead, of a plurality, and the concept of uniformity over diversity, have been dismantled by the practice of translanguaging, viewed as a multiple discursive practice in which multilingual speakers are engaged and which includes incorporating phenomena, such as code switching, code mixing and “mistilingualismo” or “enunciazione mistilingue”¹ (Berruto 1987).

¹ Gaetano Berruto describes the linguistic phenomenon known as “mistilinguismo” in relation to the mixing of codes within the same utterance, which he identifies in terms of *mistilingual* utterance or “enunicato mistilingue”. Mistilingualism differs from the phenomenon of code switching, which is to be meant as the mixing of codes not within one utterance but at the end of each utterance (see also Berruto 1990).

The contributions to this Special Issue encompass a wide and varied range of research related to multilingualism. The primary focus has been that of highlighting sociolinguistic and ethnographic research that incorporates critical post-structuralist perspectives. Within this particular strand of research on multilingualism, the contributors aim to testify to the amount of considerable variations in the field of multilingualism research with a range of views and interpretative stances that present new and alternative ways of addressing the theoretical and methodological challenges of research in the present age. The volume contains four contributions where research is undertaken in different cultural and disciplinary contexts, in different sociolinguistic spaces, though addressing similar research themes and locating the topics and work from an empirical perspective. The third development of research on multilingualism – involving globalisation and migration (“linguistics of global societies”) – is where the contributions can be located. The contributors have provided cutting-edge research within theoretical frameworks that stretch the limits of existing descriptive systems for “analysing and understanding multilingualism and the dynamics of language change” (Bloommaert, 2010: 8) in order to extend existing landscapes on multilingualism and expand individual research. The first two papers draw on technical and technological modes of research and communication and address various issues relating to (mis)understanding in multilingual and intercultural contexts; they illustrate how different language conventions, also through ELF, culture-based behaviour affect the communicative event as a whole. The next two contributions examine multilingual situations in media communication and look at how identities are formed in multilingual language contact.

Turning to the richness offered by the four papers related to multilingualism and its innumerable faces, the volume opens with Mette Rudvin’s long essay on the opportunities that the economic model Game Theory can offer as an analytical framework for multilingual settings across mediated multilingual encounters (through cultural brokerage, mediation or interpreting) and non-mediated platforms and modes of intercultural encounters (when using ELF or translanguaging). The paper, entitled *Mediated Multilingual Interactions. Suggestions for a game theoretic framework*, investigates how a game theoretic framework can be adopted to comprehend the mechanisms relating to the rational choices that speakers make in multilingual and intercultural settings of interactional contexts of situation. The author provides a rudimentary but useful non-technical introduction to the basics of Game Theory and discussion of the methodology, its opportunities and limitations, including a brief focus on the problem of ‘rationality’. She explains, in non-technical language, terms that have come into common parlance such as non-zero games and “the prisoner’s dilemma” (this volume, p. 28). The non-technical, ‘soft’ introduction softens the impact of a rather complex mathematics-based model for readers not well-versed in mathematics. Rudvin then shows how intercultural encounters can be seen as a ‘game’, where each interlocutor makes decisions that are considered to be rational (in the framework of the model) based

on certain assumptions, on preferences, on what s/he wants out of the ‘game’ as the desired result, on the information s/he has at hand, and on the expectations of what the other person will do. She argues that assumptions and preferences are influenced by culture and embedded in language conventions, illustrating how broad intercultural dimensions and communication modes (e.g. power distance, hierarchy, high and low context) and discourse strategies (e.g. face negotiation, politeness, accommodation) can be seen as moves in a game (not unlike a chess game). Understanding one’s interlocutors and their linguacultural habitus and discourse conventions—leading to certain expectations—becomes crucial because one can thus more easily anticipate their moves based. In a collaborative situation, the more communication channels and information available, the easier it will be to reach a positive outcome. In a competitive situation where communication channels are less open, this may be a bit more complex. The author shows how the situation differs when a mediator (broker, mediator, interpreter, translator) is present and the communication channels and level and quality of information are increased. Thus, the approach to the study of multilingual and intercultural communication from a game theoretic perspective can shed light on the identification of the actions, mechanisms and strategies employed by interlocutors in multilingual computer-mediated or non-mediated platforms of exchange. In addition to an appendix with examples that illustrate how real-life situations can be modelled through games, Rudvin presents original case studies with data from migrant settings (Afghan and Pakistani national) in point where, in a given communicative context, there is a situation of “Imperfect Information” (ibid., 30) because the players’ intentions are situated within specific communicative contexts and belong to different language codes and a differential access to knowledge.

Rudvin focuses on how accommodation is adopted as a game strategy in a non-mediated multilingual setting and shows how institutional power asymmetry, governed also by expectations and the desired outcome of the ‘game’; she suggests that in professional transactional multilingual settings, the higher the stakes are, the higher the collaboration and cooperation, but this could be affected by power asymmetries as well as cultural conventions. Game Theory can thus function within multilingual and intercultural settings – which also involve speakers of Lingua Francas – as both a resource and means that provide the instruments to uncover the speakers’ expectations and their linguacultural discourse modalities. While contributing to the production of terminological and conceptual frameworks aimed to evaluate goals and risks, Game Theory helps identify and catalogue behavioural and decision-making processes in the context of multilingual communication within digital and non-mediated platforms.

Technology and communication, conversational contexts of interaction and ELF are also central issues to the second paper entitled *Troubled Talk in Cross-cultural Business Emails. A digital Conversation Analysis of Interactions*, where **Marianna Lya Zummo** conducts a resourceful analysis of multilingual and cross-cultural communicative processes within the context of online asynchronous interactional

modes by providing the reader with a scrutiny of selected materials taken from business discourse in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The use of ELF becomes crucial to the identification of a variety of non-mutual understanding factors in conversational analyses of social interaction, which Zummo investigates by taking into account Jaanson Kaur's four main sources of misunderstanding: "pragmatic ambiguity, performance-related misunderstanding (mishearings or slips of tongue), language-related misunderstanding (non-standard use of lexical items) and gaps in world knowledge" (this volume, p. 62). In the cases scrutinised, "language-related, channel-related and cultural-related constraints" (ibid.) produce misunderstanding at different levels in the online exchange via mail between the general manager of an Italian manufacturing company, the general manager's staff and some Pakistani consultants. Against a theoretical backdrop which includes studies on High and Low Context culture, as well as on pragmatic perspectives relating to communication across written genres and marked by strategies of politeness (e.g. email correspondence), Zummo foregrounds the relevance of business mails which witness, not simply how the interactional event is *per se* complicated and dangerous due the channel of communication, but also that intercultural and multilingual interaction between identities having different ethnical, linguistic and cultural identities, and across online interactional platforms, may lead to misinterpretations and misjudgments. From this perspective, digital conversational analyses guarantee strategic tools for studying "intercultural communication in terms of different strategies employed by native and non-native speakers" (ibid.).

The third contribution entitled *Empowering the Italo-Australian community through news translation. A case study on Il Globo community newspaper* by **Gaia Aragrande** is rooted in the study of multilingualism in connection with migration and the numerous linguistic, cultural and ethnic shifts that are involved in the migratory process. In globalised spaces affected by human crossings of territories and seas, multilingualism becomes a sort of stage for the exploration of dynamics of micro-community development and growth, highly marked in terms of ethnicity. As pointed out by Aragrande, community newspaper is one of the instruments through which micro-communities can find a voice, where the community expresses meanings belonging to native cultures and traditions. By shedding light on the Italo-Australian newspaper *Il Globo*, Aragrande scrutinises a corpus of 12 target language articles within procedures of contrastive analysis in order to highlight the several translational features that are representative of the dichotomies between minority communities (Italians) and national groups (Australians). Within a media discourse framework, where news translation is turned into a channel through which to negotiate native culture-specific items, migrants' communities exist and speak in the countries of arrival thanks to the presence of community newspapers that contribute to the preservation of ethnic identities, languages and cultures, offer "a sense of unity and belonging" (this volume, p. 91) and keep "the heritage language alive" (ibid.). Thus, local media sources, such as *Il Globo*, have the role of transferring the "fluid linguistic shift of

the contact variety” to public multilingual and intercultural contexts in order to reinforce the multilingual identity constructed, in the case in point, by Italo-Australian citizens.

The fourth and final paper is based on the study of language crossing, a sociolinguistic practice in which social actors renegotiate ethnolinguistic boundaries. The concept of crossing is situated within the linguistics of contact and relates to “polylingual phenomena”, in which it is possible to distinguish “multi-ethnic vernaculars, codeswitching, codemixing and stylization” (Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese 2012: 20). Against the backdrop of studies on codeswitching, as one of the most widely researched language-contact phenomena, and on audiovisual translation in relation to languages of minorities (Federici 2011) and difference and linguistic variation in multilingual films (Ellender, 2015), **Alessandra Rizzo’s** contribution entitled *Somers Town. Multilingual settings explored in audiovisual translation contexts* aims to provide a framework of analysis where an alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by one or more bilingual speaker(s) does not affect the meaning of each language (basically they do not come into contact); instead, it impacts the socio-cultural contact between the characters. The question that this paper wishes to raise regards the translation choices and strategies employed in the transfer of multilingual dialogues to subtitled versions of a target language. On screen, the presence of more than one language involves issues related to bilingualism and biculturalism (here used synonymously with multilingualism or implying more than one language); naturally, occurring bilingual speech data are important to the characterization of the actors as social beings in the environment where they interact with people sharing their native language and also the language of the country of arrival. The paper thus examines issues of subtitling and interrogates audiovisual translation techniques and strategies in order to understand to what extent multilingual films have to respect audiovisual translation norms, while sacrificing multilingualism in their subtitled versions. If creative forms of subtitling could be used in the cases of films where aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism are essential to the transmission of the socio-cultural message (intended from the perspective of Michael Halliday’s experiential or ideational metafunction), then, multilingual films would approximately regain those significant bilingual interactions and switches that are present in the source language films. Interactions and switches are very important in multilingual films, since they redefine situations and functions employed as traits of markedness, or as expressions of unmarked code choices.

The increasing variety and number of studies on multilingualism and related topics testify to the fact that scholarly research evaluates multilingualism as determinant in the building of a multilingual Europe that has the potential for encouraging a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity and promoting the learning of diverse languages in addition to mother tongues. The endless mobility of people due to factors depending on work, learning and leisure, on the one hand, and due to forced exile, war, starvation and poverty, on the other, should stimulate

the creation of a European programme of inclusion and collaboration across language boundaries, as well as argue for establishing more fluid boundaries between languages.

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