Researching Media, Multilingualism and Education

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Abstract

The media are a particularly rich site for investigating multilingual practices - the things people do when they draw upon more than one language to communicate or act. It is also a highly relevant context to examine various forms of formal and informal learning processes. It is thus not surprising if the past decade has witnessed a booming body of research engaged with the nexus of multilingualism, media and education, as intersecting fields of investigation.

This review traces how progressive changes in the mediascape have raised simultaneously new methodological challenges for researchers interested in multilingual practices in/of the media, and in investigating the role of the media in formal and informal learning processes. The entry takes a broad view of the media, incorporating discussions related to the printed press, radio and television broadcasting, the entertainment industry as well as the Internet, recognizing that in the new media sphere these media tend to converge. Taking a close look at international research in the field, the review shows how different research questions and strategies have developed over time to keep abreast of transformation in the media sphere while also reflecting the development of the field of sociolinguistics. As a result, many options are today available to conduct research about media, multilingualism and education, with no single one occupying a privileged position.

Early developments

Boyd-Barret et al. (1996) is often heralded as the first thorough review of the field of 'multilingualism and the mass media'. In this review, the authors note that at the end of the 1990s, the interest in this topic is rather marginal and eclectic. When discussions comes up about multilingualism and the media, it is mainly related to other, broader topics, such as the role of languages in consolidating the nation state, the rise of movements for minority language rights, the role of technologies in sustaining or erasing cultural and linguistic diversity, and imperialism. To understand why discussions about 'multilingualism *in* the media' and '*of* the media' do not abound at the time (Kelly-Holmes and Milani, 2013), it is useful to remember that up to that period, *stricto sensu*, in many Western countries, there are not many multilingual practices visible in the media and education, mainly because these practices are largely 'edited out', invisibilized or limited to token items.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the broadcast media, with their monolingual and standardized linguistic habitus, function in many countries very much as an institutional instrument for consolidating the nation-state. If we take the radio as an example, radio anchors not only speak the national language but also very often its most prestigious variety, thus contributing to promoting this variety as the norm. As a result, in such media a monolingual ideal dominates (Androutsopoulos, 2007). The language varieties of lay people are not typically heard in this public space, and if they are, it is mostly in entertainment programmes such as 'talk' radio (when an audience member 'phones-in' to exchange with the talk-show host). As for the voices of those speaking 'with an accent' (Lippi-Green, 1997) or in another language, they remain typically unheard in the mainstream broadcast media, unless minority movements manage to claim wave space and challenge the monopoly of the state, by setting up for example their own broadcasting channels. In this context, what interests a majority of researchers is to examine processes of standardization and de-standardization and

vernacularization of the media. To study these processes, researchers typically adopt a Labovian kind of approach: they study large corpora for their language feature and variables, and examine different styles of use and their variations.

A similar situation is found in the entertainment industry, in which the same monolingual habitus ideal dominates. In a famous study, Lippi-Green (1997) screened animated Disney films for the language variety spoken by the main characters. Through a quantitative analysis, she finds out that systematically, the characters with the most positive evaluations are also those using the more mainstream US accents, while other 'accented' varieties of English are kept for less likeable characters. In films (Bleichenbacher, 2008), advertising (Cheshire and Moser, 1994), radio shows (Coupland, 2001) or TV broadcasts (Jaworski et al., 2003; Piller, 2001) many studies will subsequently corroborate that when other languages or other varieties of one language are used in the media, it is often for 'stylizing' an exotic other for a majority audience (Androutsopoulos, 2007, p. 213). That is, when a language is used in the media that is different from the dominant language in the community, it is used for entertainment purposes, to index the specific identity of a national 'other' but usually not to make deep, profound points. In methodological terms, initial contributors to this line of research show how quantitative approaches can be revealing of patterns of language use that reflect deeply entrenched social prejudices or stereotypes.

The early and mid-1990s mark a huge turn for the media landscape as they correspond to the emergence of the Internet and the World Wide Web. As a global network, the Internet seems at first to offer the promise of a truly pluralistic and multilingual platform. But the early days bring disenchantment as, at the time, the Internet is first and foremost an English network. The majority of sites and users are English speaking or use English as Lingua Franca. Many researchers underline that the ASCII code used for computing makes it difficult to use other character sets than the English set (Danet and Herring, 2007; Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012). They also research the creative ways users find to overcome these limitations (e.g., romanising scripts, or playing with typographic, orthographic or linguistic conventions; Paolillo, 1996) again with a mainly quantitative outlook.

With regards to education, there too a monolingual habitus dominates largely. If the media very early on are perceived as a formidable tool for both formal and informal education, they are specially mobilised in language education. The 1960s, for example, is a period where many educational settings become equipped with language labs. First audio, then video-recorded material become used within the classroom or for independent learning. The 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s see the development of educational TV programs, and in particular of programs meant to democratize the first steps into literacy (e.g. *Sesame Street*) or foreign language learning (e.g., *Muzzy in Gondoland, l'Anglais avec Victor, French in Action*). Edutainment is made available on mainstream broadcast TV and radio as a means of distance education for both children and adult alike. In the 1980s, the spread of microcomputers and the development of the videodisc signify the beginning of multimedia education and marks the start of what will later be called the field of CALL – or computer-assisted language learning (Hubbard, 2009).

In this early period, a common situation dominates: there is little visibility of multilingual practices, which are reserved for the privacy of the home but not viewed as legitimate in the public or educational sphere. In addition, much of the research that ventures in analyzing multilingual practice take a quantitative, statistical point of view and, on the whole, do not make much provision for the contextual dimension of the language data collected.

Major contributions

The years 2000 mark the beginning of a multilingual turn in media research, stimulated by two major sociocultural changes affecting deeply the 'public display of diversity' (Androutsopoulos, 2007, p. 208). One is the acceleration of globalization. With increased mobility of people, ideas and goods, multilingual practices become more visible and topics such as the articulation of the local and the global, multilingual audiences or transnationalism come to the fore in media research. The second major change is the transformation of conditions for media production and media reception. Whereas before the production of media content was still very much in the hands of professionals, with new technological developments lay users can now produce, edit, and comment content on the Web and they do so drawing from the variety of linguistic repertoires that are available to them (Androutsopoulos 2007, p. 208).

With these changes, new practices of multilingualism begin to emerge. As Androutsopoulos (2007) notes, media users can now easily switch codes in ordinary exchanges (e.g., on email, instant messaging); minority group activists as well as diaspora members are afforded access to and visibility in the public sphere through the Internet, blogs or on-line newspapers; advertisers have the possibility to target their sales pitch to always more specific linguistic or cultural niches; artists can sample and mix media content from all over the world (p. 208). With the diversification of languages on the Internet, it becomes usual to navigate from content in one language to content in another when browsing the web. In order to meet the challenge of accessing this multilingual content, Machine Translation programs continue developing (e.g., SYSTRAN, BabelFish, WordLingo, or Google Translate). In parallel, public and individual initiatives proliferate to offer (foreign language) educational resources. This is also a period where studies of multilingual practices multiply, whether focusing on print media (Kelly-Holmes and Milani, 2013), advertising (Kelly-Holmes, 2005) or the entertainment industry (Bleichenbacher, 2008; Budach, 2008).

In this context, two trends of research begin to be distinguishable as Kelly-Holmes and Milani underline (2013): investigations that focus on analyzing which languages are represented *in* the media, paying particular attention to which ones are visible, what their status is and how they are talked about; and studies looking at the multilingual practices of the users *of* the media, paying more specific attention to how people use the affordances of a L1, L2 and other languages to communicate, act or negotiate identities. With these research foci also come different methodological takes.

For a while, for example, measuring language choice and diversity on the Internet is high on researchers' agenda. The issue is to determine whether the Internet weakens the status of minority languages because of the domination of larger languages, or on the contrary offers a public space for languages hitherto hidden or unwanted in traditional media to gain visibility. Such studies make use of quantitative survey methodologies to attempt to provide an index of global diversity. As Paollilo (2007) shows however it is extremely challenging to find figures which account in an uncontroversial way for the proportion of different language use on the Internet.

Other research use more traditional sociolinguistic approaches. Pioneering researchers in the field of computer-mediated communication favor techniques drawn from variation analysis, consisting in coding and counting structural units of analysis and correlating them with linguistic and nonlinguistic variable (Herring, 2004). They focus, amongst others, on variations between spoken and written features of texts, grammatical and orthographic substitutions, and how they correlate with age, genre or gender. With this research, scholars establish the patterned dimension of language variation online. As Androutsopulos (2011, p. 278-279) notes however, such studies have inherent limitations. Firstly, they are more suitable to the study of the more conversational practices online (email, mailing lists, Internet Relay Chat and Instant Messages) than more static genres. Secondly, as the categories are

related to single linguistic systems, they cannot appropriately address multilingual practices and code-switching. Thirdly, the analytical focus both on the linguistic system exclusively as well as on 'counting' tends to exclude from analysis anything that (i) is not a linguistic variable (e.g., emoticons and script choice), (ii) cannot be counted easily, or (iii) appears infrequently.

The publication of the special issue *Multilingualism on the Internet* (Wright, 2004) and of the volume *The Multilingual Internet* (Danet and Herring, 2007) marks another transition in linguistic research on computer-mediated communication. In the first, UNESCO-sponsored, project, a common macrosociological research design is adopted by all authors, who use a survey to investigate preferred language use of 300 university students in 10 different countries, with the aim of understanding what happens in situations of language contact for these students. Do they prefer to use English? What happens across language boundaries? (Wright, 2004, p. 8) The second volume (Danet and Herring, 2007) takes a more mixed approach, combining micro- and macrosociolinguistic tools to study a range of languages, geographical locations and usage. Their point of departure is that the majority of Internet users are people for whom English is not their first language. They have thus several options: they can use English as a Lingua Franca, mix English with their first language or other languages that they know, or they can code-switch between English and other languages. With this range of possibilities it becomes interesting to study the specific multilingual practices of Internet users, the motivations behind their language choices and the functions and meanings they assign to them in the specific media context in which they operate.

In this context, researchers begin to convoke tools from interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, conversational analysis, genre analysis, and discourse studies. They use them to approach traditional sociolinguistic issues such as the construction and negotiation of identity, socialization processes into online communities, the construction of turn-taking, politeness and terms of address or the study of code-switching on-line. They seek to develop an understanding of how these dimensions might be shaped by the demographics of chat rooms, the transnational character of a forum or a gaming environment, the specificity of a particular genre (email, user discussion list) or the sociolinguistic context of the author and its presumed audience. With this sort of studies, more attention is paid to discursive and social contexts, but a strong focus on studying log data still predominates.

A third type of approach, inspired by sociology and language ideology as well as critical approaches to language, consists in focusing on discourse analysis of micro-level features of media language to identify how these are shaped or are shaping social ideology. Traditional newspapers, TV and films are the main media investigated in this vein (Johnson and Ensslin, 2007). Researchers consider that folk linguistic theories about language can be found in the (mass) media and that investigating them opens a window for understanding language ideologies, categorization, stereotyping, language regimes and language hierarchies.

What characterizes investigation of 'multilingualism in the media' at the turn of the millennium then is that, on the one hand, the research very much draws on well-established approaches in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. On the other hand, the specificities of the communicational landscape created by the new media also leads researcher to adjust and adapt their methods of data collection and analysis. Still only few research concentrates on the nexus of media, multilingualism and education.

Work in progress

The years 2005 and onward witness the further diversification of languages on the Web making obsolete all predictions from the 1990s that English would end up dominating

the Internet. In fact, multilingual practices become ever more present and visible, as more people draw on more varied multilingual repertoires. Statistics from the Internet World Stats (2010) show for example that for 73 per cent of internet users, English is not their first language and that Chinese and Spanish have become prominently used languages on the net. The web content in English has likewise decreased from 80 per cent to 55 percent between 1998 and 2012 (Barton and Lee, 2013, p. 43-44). As Barton and Lee point out (ibid., p. 11), even users that would have been previously categorized as monolinguals now find themselves exposed on a regular basis to multilingual texts and practices. In Europe and elsewhere, diversity in education becomes likewise more visible with mobility and migration reaching new heights.

From a methodological perspective, the Web 2.0 challenges again discourse analysts, pushing them to explore new methodological directions. Jones and his colleagues (2015) highlight that the multimodal nature of digital texts calls for approaches that go beyond analyzing solely written and spoken language; the interactive features of social media with their options for commentary also transform the relationship between authors and readers and subverts tradition categories such as what is a 'text' and what counts as a 'conversation'. Studying ideologies in the new media context requires also honing new tools as in digital environments loci of power, control and authority are more diffused and variegated (p. 1). During this period, both traditional theories and methods continue to be cultivated while new strands of research also develop alongside them to address new emergent questions. Here too different methodological approaches are taken.

One first avenue consists in moving away from focusing exclusively on communication in the media as text and as language, to begin exploring the practices of media consumers and producers (at the intersection of online and offline practices) (Barton and Lee, 2013, p. 165; Kelly-Holmes 2015). To do so, investigations of new media start including an ethnographic outlook, combining the analysis of text and language with surveys, interviews, participant observation in order to understand people's everyday (digital) media practices. While some researchers limit their observations to what is going on in on-line communities with or without interacting directly with their members, others are interested in uncovering the continuities and discontinuities between on-line and off-line practices by both observing discourse on-line as well as interviewing internet actors to elicit their emic perspective about their practices, an approach Androutsopoulos (2008) also calls 'discourse-centered online ethnography'.

Connecting traditional linguistic analyses with practice-based approaches also lead researchers to think up new solutions to methodological problems. Increasingly, they adopt for example mixed-method approaches. This view contends that no single approach is suitable for examining language as/in practice but that a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies is necessary to approach the complexity of situated multilingual practices online. To do this, researchers continue to use logbooks, online and face-to-face interviews. They do 'persistent observations', descriptive statistics, surveys, but add also techno-biographies, multimodal analyses of users productions, diary entries (Barton and Lee, 2013, p. 167-174), as well as focus groups, simulated recall sessions, video observations, the gathering of photographic data, auto-(n)ethnography and object ethnography (Jones et al., 2015). With experimenting with new designs, it becomes clear that digital communication is not just the object of research but also a research instrument itself. Barton and Lee (2013, p. 173) note for example that in interviews through ICT, not sharing physical space might have interesting side effects: the interviewee feels more comfortable, shares more private and personal information. While waiting for the respondent to finish typing up an answer, the researcher has also more time for reflection. She can think about which questions to ask next

without being caught in the immediacy of the interaction, which allows for carefully constructed data.

With regards to learning and education, researchers continue to ask themselves about the extent to which the media, and in particular digital media, can constitute a resource for teaching and learning. Do they allow more autonomous forms of learning? To what extent do they help teachers connecting more with the practices and interest of their learners? (Benson and Chan, 2011; Lamy and Zourou, 2013). How can digital technology contributes to give a voice to plurilingual students? Anderson and his colleagues (2015), Barton and Lee (2013), and Walker (2014) review different strategic uses by teachers of the new media in the classroom: video games can become a resource for second language learning, virtual worlds such as Second Life serve making interactions less intimidating for the less outspoken students, Facebook or microblogging are used to practice argumentation and writing much in the same way than making a newspaper or a radio programme in class would be used earlier. In a globalized online space, the practice of foreign languages becomes less restricted and artificial as students have the opportunity to engage regularly in genuine translingual activities with native speakers of a language even without traveling.

Outside the classroom, researchers show that the new media are also a powerful place for everyday, 'informal' or 'vernacular' learning (Barton & Lee, 2013). Individuals use YouTube videos, films, music, e-books, Facebook posts, blogs, the press as stepping stones to process, elaborate, and construct their own meanings and personal cultural repertoires. Benson and Chan (2011) show, for example, that the practice of subtitling videos by fans or 'fansubbing' and the forum discussions to resolve question provides a lively space for learning and discussing language as people comment and correct translations. Likewise, Barton and Lee (2013, p. 126-136) discuss how engaging in an activity such as 'taking a photo a day' and posting it daily on Flickr is a learning practice leading participants to: exchange with others, reflect upon their participation, deliberately seek advice about problems, receiving positive feedback, finding mentors, and through all this activity to develop new identities through practice. The authors argue that the sort of learning afforded by the media differs from more institutional forms of learning in that it is incidental and not controlled by any authority, but rather depends on the learners own motivated goals and engagement in practice.

Problems and difficulties

One major challenge for researchers is that the media keeps changing, transforming researchers' understanding of what is a text, what count as an action or an interaction, what is context, what is power and who has it (Jones et al., 2015, p. 1). In such a context, it is important to move beyond mere descriptive analyses of the multilingual practices that the new media afford, and start asking 'why' do multilingual practices change and 'what changes' in the world because of these new practices. For example, how do choices at the individual level (such as responding to a comment in one's language, or seeing more films with dialogues in foreign languages) is connected to a broader social picture (transforming language policies from below)? Or, how do such practices change our view on learning in general, and language learning in particular? Do people learn, in fact, differently since the advent of new technologies?

Another major issue with media research relates to ethics. The question of ethics has been a hot topic for researchers of media practice for a long time as the new media are partially a public and partially a private space where the issue of ownership and right is dealt with differently in different national legal systems. Obtaining informed consent in advance is not always possible when newcomers keep on joining an online community. Many

researchers are also participants in the practices they research, calling into question the naturalness of the data. The potential invisibility of the researcher doing persistent observation as a lurker might also raise questions about participants' awareness that they are part of a study. A sensitive and flexible approach is often required in that context, determined by the specificity of the project undertaken, the media researched, the content and the potential risk of harming people with the study (Barton and Lee, 2013; Herring, 2002). In that sense, new technologies only exacerbates the old questions linked to dealing with human subjects.

A third issue concerns the role and place of the researcher. In new media research, Davies and Merchant (2009, p. 173) note that investigators typically occupy one of several positions. Sometimes they are the 'identifiers of new tropes' as for example when they put a name on a previously undiscussed phenomenon such as 'NetSpeak'. Sometimes they are 'insiders', looking at the digital practices of others while also having a history of using the technology themselves. At yet other times, they can turn their own practices into objects of analysis (e.g., doing auto-ethnography) and thus being both 'subjects and objects' in the research process, or become engaged on questioning the impact and effect of the new media and adopt an 'activist' perspective. In the course of one's work, it is not rare that the researcher moves across these different positions in order to make sense of the lived experience of the participants with the technology and to understand how digital practice is woven into the fabric of everyday life.

Finally, researching multilingualism means also that researchers have to integrate in the research process linguistic repertoires beyond their own if they want their research to be reflective of the diversity existing in contemporary society. Researchers in bilingual or multilingual settings have begun asking themselves what it means to produce knowledge involving more than one language, with questions such as: What is the role of translation, interpretation, collaboration or mediation in the research process? How does doing research multilingually affect the research design, literature review, consent procedure, data generation, analysis and reporting (Holmes et al., 2013)? What does researching multilingualism do to the hegemonic pressure of having English as the main language of international research?

We see that there are many stimulating methodological and empirical questions that arise in examining the nexus of media, multilingualism and education.

Future directions

Media support, production and consumption keep on evolving and transforming rapidly, and multilingual practices are increasingly visible everywhere. If this trend continues in the future, as it is likely to do, this means that discussions about data and methods in researching the nexus of media, multilingualism and learning have only begun. Consequently more critical reflexions will be needed in the future about data collection and analysis, ethical issues, vernacular learning, the application of traditional methods of data analysis to new technological and social contexts, the creative elaboration of new methods to face media changes, genre delimitation, or corpus design. For the time being, we can only play at listing some transversal areas that have the potentiality to attract more attention in the near future.

In the field of education, publications about social media in relation to learning and teaching are only taking off. Future research will likely explore the opportunities that availablee online tools offer to educators (Zourou, 2012). Here more investigations are needed about the relations between social media and (language) learning and teaching, the investigation of how socialization in networked spaces pertains to (language) learning (Lamy

and Zourou, 2013), or the commercial appropriation of bilingualism or trilingualism and the further commodification of language skills for the knowledge economy.

When multiple languages appear in the media (films, the press, songs, videos), they make possible 'multilingual imagination' (O'Sullivan, 2007). It becomes more difficult to tame or invisibilize diversity and it generates new ways of thinking about, reacting to, adjusting to or negotiating multilingual practices and identities. Fields of normativities also become challenged. One second area of research therefore relates to how norms will transform with the pull and push dimension of the media. Will there be a growth in global media products? A growth of minority language media? Or continuing mixed practices? And what will be the role played by key actors and agents, media practices and texts in these processes? (Blommaert et al., 2009)

Multilingualism also makes the question of mediation more visible. When one cannot assume anymore that the text, movie, song, news article, advertment produced will be destined to a monolingual audience new issues related to understanding, translation, mediation, come into play. To paraphrase Egoyan and Balfour (2004), 'every [text, film, image, discourse] is a foreign [text, film, image, discourse], foreign to some audience somewhere – and not simply in terms of language' (p. 21). One area that will require more attention in the years to come then might relate to processes of cultural and linguistic brokering, examining the resources the media might constitute for cultural exchanges across borders and for engaging in 'critical connections' with others (Anderson et al., 2015).

According to Barton and Lee (2013, p. 183), with the new media, people engage in new forms of multilingual encounters, they have become more open to informality and language varieties different than their own, they reshape vernacular practices through making them public, legitimate and acceptable, they project and explore new and multiple identities and use multimodal resources to position themselves. As they do, new 'contact zones' (Pratt, 1991) appear that are sometimes spaces of learning, sometimes spaces of cultural friction and of awkward engagement. The challenge for researchers then is to find the methodologies that will allow to shed lights on the shared meaning-making, the divergent meanings or the learning that arise between actors occupying different positions in the media field when they have access to different repertoires. It is likely that multi- and cross-disciplinary research beyond the realm of language studies alone might prove useful for this endeavor. As they have done in the past, researchers will continue venturing beyond their own field and expand the circle of analysis to have creative and sturdy ways of answering the important linguistic and social questions they care about, to share their research results and to create new forms of dialogues with both their fellow researchers and the public at large.

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