Migration-Based Multilingualism in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom: Learners' and Teachers' Perspectives

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Durch Internationalisierung, Globalisierung von Wirtschaft, Politik und Kultur sowie durch aktuelle Entwicklungen im Bereich der Integration von Geflüchteten sind territorialer sowie individueller Multilingualismus Normalität geworden. Die internationale Tertiärsprachenforschung hat verschiedene individuelle sowie institutionelle Erfolgs- und Risikofaktoren identifiziert, die sich auf die Mehrsprachigkeit des Individuums auswirken und den Erwerb weiterer Fremdsprachen beeinflussen. Der Fokus wurde dabei allerdings bisher zu wenig auf eine subjektorientierte Akteursperspektive gelegt. Der vorliegende Beitrag stellt Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojekts vor, in dem 26 mehrsprachige Lernende (14-18 Jahre) sowie acht Englischlehrkräfte einer Gesamtschule interviewt wurden. Diskutiert werden Ergebnisse zu den Überzeugungen und Einstellungen der Lernenden bezüglich der Einflüsse ihrer Erst- und Zweitsprachen auf das Erlernen der Fremdsprache Englisch, Aussagen zur Nutzung sprachlicher Ressourcen und Strategien sowie insgesamt bzgl. der wahrgenommenen Potenziale ihrer Mehrsprachigkeit für das Erlernen von Fremdsprachen. Im letzten Teil des Beitrags werden Ergebnisse der Interviews mit Lehrkräften vorgestellt und Empfehlungen für das Unterrichten in mehrsprachigen Klassenzimmern formuliert.

1. Introduction

Migration processes of the last decades have contributed to increasing multilingualism and to the development of multicultural identities in many countries all over the world, including Germany. This context creates new challenges as well as new pedagogical opportunities for foreign language teachers. Although research has shown that in most cases bilingualism/multilingualism favours the acquisition of additional languages (e.g. Cenoz & Valencia 1994; De Angelis 2007, 2008), the literature has also pointed towards the key role that teachers' and learners' perceptions play in allowing this potential to be realized (Hu 2003). However, these perceptions have been under-researched; therefore, there is a strong need for further investigation of the underlying beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism that shape teachers' and learners' behaviour.

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These observations motivated the design of a school-based qualitative study aimed at investigating teachers' and learners' perceptions on the influence of migration-based multilingualism in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. In order to address the purposes of such a study, two main research questions were formulated:

(1) Do learners and teachers of English in a German secondary comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) setting regard migration-based multilingualism as an obstacle or as an advantage for successfully acquiring EFL?

    (a) If learners and teachers regard multilingualism as an advantage, what are their perceptions regarding the specific cognitive and metalinguistic abilities that multilinguals bring to the process of learning an additional language?

    (b) If learners and teachers regard multilingualism as an obstacle, what are their perceptions regarding the negative effects of multilingualism on additional language learning?

(2) Do the teachers use migration-based multilingualism as a resource in the EFL classroom? If so, how?

The data collection[3] was conducted in a comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) in a rural part of North Rhine-Westphalia, in the west-central part of Germany. Eight English teachers (with German as their mother tongue and no migration background) and 26 multilingual students with migration backgrounds[4] were interviewed within a period of three months. Key informant interview was the main research instrument used in the study. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was used to guide the collection and analysis of research data.

This discussion on learners' and teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of migration-based multilingualism in the EFL classroom is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review, while section 3 describes the research context and methodology used in the study. Section 4 presents and discusses the research data and the final section draws on the teachers' insights to develop pedagogical recommendations for the teaching of EFL in a multilingual context.

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3   We are especially thankful to Rebecca Lembcke for collecting the data and to the research participants for sharing their time, experience and perceptions on multilingualism with us.

4   In this article, we define those as having a migrant background according to the definition used by Statistisches Bundesamt (2013), which includes in this group not only those who themselves have immigrated to Germany since 1949, but also those who were born as foreigners in Germany and those who have at least one parent who is an immigrant to Germany.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Multilingualism

Some authors see multilingualism as superordinate of bilingualism, trilingualism, and all other phenomena describing the knowledge of a certain number of languages (Cenoz 2000: 39). Cenoz & Genesee (1998), however, narrow down the term multilingualism by claiming that it describes the state of having acquired two or more non-native languages. A growing number of researchers are convinced that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) differs from Third Language Acquisition (TLA) in various respects (Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner 2001; Jessner 2006, 2008). As they explain, TLA implicates all the factors associated with SLA and also includes unique/more complex factors associated with the interactions that are possible among the various languages being learned. For example, in a multilingual system, cross-linguistic influence not only takes place between L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) but also between L2 and L3 (third language), and L1 and L3. These authors hence advocate the need for studies of TLA to provide essential insights into language learning which, according to them, neither FLA nor SLA can provide.

For several years now, there have been attempts to model multiple language acquisition based on empirical research to represent the entire spectrum of acquisition from L1 to Lx. The assumption resulting from previous research is that existing multilingualism usually supports additional language acquisition in the absence of counteracting factors (Cenoz 2000: 45; de Angelis 2007: 113). In total, five supplementary models have been developed, each illustrating subdomains of the multilingual competence structure and of multilingual competence acquisition: (1) The Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (Herdina & Jessner 2002) models the dynamic character of competence acquisition, (2) the Factors Model (Hufeisen 2000, 2003) portrays the richness of multilingual acquisition, by illustrating that the systematic-dynamic process of learning an L1, L2, L3, Lx is affected by a set of unique and individual factors (neurophysiological, learner external, affective, linguistic factors), (3) the Role-Functions Model (Williams & Hammarberg 1998) according to which previously acquired languages may play different roles (instrumental or supplier) in the activation process of the L3, (4) the Ecological Model of Multilinguality (Aronin & Ó Laoire 2001) represents societal multilingualism and multiculturalism, and (5) the Foreign Language Acquisition Model (Groseva 1998) views the first language as a central reference point for all further language acquisition, in the tradition of the contrastive hypothesis. All models take phenomena of transfer and interaction between an individual's different languages at their core.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, several authors have discussed the existence of different types of multilingualism. Hélot & de Mejia (2008), for instance, emphasize the problematic distinction typically made between multilingualism involving languages with high prestige (visible multilingualism) and multilingualism involving languages associated with underdevelopment, poverty and backwardness (invisible multilingualism). In the German context, for instance, some examples of 'visible' languages are Spanish, English or Mandarin, which are generally considered 'more valuable' than immigrant heritage languages, like Polish or Turkish. Studies from the German language context show that multilingual students (especially those with heritage languages) often experience that their multilingual identity plays little role in the classroom or even stigmatizes them, leading to discrimination or even exclusion (Gomolla & Radtke 2009). Hu (2003) points out that heritage languages are indeed a meaningful part of the identity of learners with a migration background and serve as important orientation-points within their biographies.

2.2 Third Language Acquisition (TLA) – Success and Risk Factors

International TLA research has identified various individual success and risk factors for bilingual L3 learners. Next to individual factors like intelligence, aptitude, personal learning styles, motivation, age or self-esteem (De Angelis 2007: 12), which influence language acquisition in general, the following individual success factors emerged for additive bilingualism (Cenoz 2003), describing a sufficient development of the first and second language (ideally the alphabetization in L1 and L2): for example, increased meta-linguistic awareness (de Angelis 2007), more extensive and flexible use of (language) learning strategies (Hufeisen 2000; Todeva & Cenoz 2009), higher level of learner autonomy (Todeva & Cenoz 2009) and increased willingness and less anxiety to learn and use the new language (Dewaele 2002). According to Schroeder & Stölting (2005: 63, cited in Keßler & Paulick 2010: 274), multilinguals are ascribed as having overall success factors like language related pre-experiences, a more comprehensive repertoire of language learning strategies and techniques, and an increased language intuition, which lead to an earlier analysis and more conscious control of language.

Many studies connect multilingualism to enhanced metalinguistic competencies and cognitive processes, which facilitate further language acquisition and learning (Mißler 1999; Hufeisen 2000; Cenoz 2009). As those studies explain, bilinguals already contain a great deal of knowledge about language while learning a third language, including grammatical knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge. The KESS 4 Study from Hamburg (May 2006: 213f.) and the EVENING Study from North-Rhine-Westphalia (Groot-Wilken & Paulick 2009: 190ff) support these

results. The results reveal that, while multilingual learners do not exhibit homogenous performance in English, they do possess a heightened metalinguistic awareness for learning EFL.

Additionally, further research agrees that acquiring more than one language creates different kinds of connections in the brain, giving multilingual students an advantage compared to monolingual individuals (Bialystok 2009). Lambert (1981), for instance, found that bilinguals (especially balanced ones) have a substantially higher level of cognitive flexibility than their monolingual peers.

Another important advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals on L3 acquisition is enhanced communicative sensitivity, meaning that bilingual children use more communication strategies and are more sensitive and responsive to the needs of their interlocutors than monolingual children (Thomas 1992). Research has also shown that the magnitude of transfer between languages can be affected by various factors, such as the linguistic distance among the languages (typological proximity) (De Angelis & Selinker 2001), the 'foreign language effect' – the mother tongue being rarely used for transfer in favour of another learned language (Meisel 1983), the 'recency effect' (Hammarberg 2001), and the tendency for L3 language learners to activate the first foreign language they have learnt.

As individual risk factors, L3 research identifies subtractive bilingualism (insufficient support of L1, L2 and no alphabetization in L1 and L2), lower socioeconomic status, general poor school performance (Schoonen, Van Gelderen, De Glopper, Hulstijn, Snellings, Simis & Stevenson 2003), general slowed process of third language acquisition as well as negative linguistic influences and appearances of interference of the different languages amongst themselves (Stedje 1976). In terms of the latter aspect, Groseva (1998: 22) assumes that through the (conscious) acquisition of L2, an L2 system emerges which, among other things, contains appearances of interference to L1. This system is consulted to correct and monitor each next further foreign language – thus asymmetries between L1 and L2 are seen as potential problem sources since they are transferred to the L3, even if it exhibits symmetry to L1.

The targeted support of L1 and L2, including metalinguistic awareness, is viewed as especially positive for multilingual learners acquiring an L3 in schools. Related to this, Krumm (2009: 235) points out the necessity of abandoning monolingual habits. In particular, the EVENING study (Groot-Wilken & Paulick 2009: 194) showed that the multilingualism of learners is basically not accounted for in the classroom. This finding, already made in other studies, has several causes: 1. The 'monolingual habitus' and the 'linguistic purity law' lead time and again to ignoring the actual multilingualism (Gogolin 1994) in the existing student population. 2. Part of this complex of atheoretical knowledge is that teachers lack confidence concerning the potential of life-world multilingualism for the acquisition of a third

language in school, and often view children with migration backgrounds as having deficits. 3. Even if teachers acquire a different habitus, they often lack the pedagogical and methodological knowledge to be able to account for the life-world multilingualism of their students (for example Hu 2003).

New research on multilingualism thus proposes a shift away from isolation towards cooperation between the languages in the learner (cross-fertilization) (Jessner 2008; Hu 2011; Hofer 2015). These proposals are in line with insights gained in the research on bilingualism. For instance, Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis (iceberg hypothesis) (Cummins 1991) reveals the relationship of the first language to the learning of another language, and his common underlying proficiency model states that proficiencies involving more cognitively demanding tasks (such as literacy, content learning, abstract thinking, problem solving) are common across languages.

2.3 Language Learning and Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms – Proposals on Foreign Language Pedagogy

Jessner (2006, 2008) discusses research findings indicating that, in spite of all the potentials discussed above, L3 learners often do not take full advantage of their prior language knowledge. As she points out, learners (and even teachers) enter the foreign language classroom thinking their L1/L2 will inhibit or otherwise stand in the way of learning an additional language. In this context, Apeltauer (2003) indicates that such an exclusion of the L1/L2 leads to uncertainty, demotivation and failure in multilingual learners. Several authors have pointed out that foreign language learners should be encouraged to reflect and draw on their rich store of language information and skills (De Angelis 2011; Haukås 2016), build on an already developed language system (Cummins 1991), and move away from isolation towards cooperation between the languages (Jessner 2008). In other words, they should develop their plurilingual competence. As pointed out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001), "(a) given individual does not have a collection of distinct and separate competences to communicate depending on the languages he/she knows, but rather a plurilingual and pluricultural competence encompassing the full range of the languages available to him/her" (Council of Europe 2001: 168). A growing body of research focusing on the concepts of plurilingualism and plurilingual education stresses the dynamic process of language acquisition and use. Piccardo (2013: 601) for example points out that while the notion of multilingualism keeps languages distinct at both the societal and individual level, the notion of plurilingualism is focused on the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of languages.

Regarding the EFL context in particular, several authors have stressed the importance of connecting the acquisition of English with the students' previous language knowledge (e.g. Jessner 2006, 2008; De Angelis 2011). Several authors have thus proposed pluralistic approaches to EFL teaching (e.g. Corcoll 2013) that involve several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages or cultures. As Candelier (2008) points out, these approaches can stimulate curiosity about learning other languages, support the development of multicultural awareness and could serve to activate and support cognitive processes for further language learning.

Jakisch (2015) sees the role of the English language classroom as a precursor for multilingualism. She points out at the same time, however, that there are also subject specific and practical concerns that arise when opening up the English classroom to the potentials of multilingualism. Particularly, these are rooted in the necessary modifications to the goals of the subject (paying attention to overarching language aspects), the classroom design (connecting to other languages) and the type and cooperation of the teachers (collaborating interdisciplinarily).

3. Research Design

The research approach adopted in this study is part of a tradition of research into teachers' and learners' cognition in language teaching. These studies examine what teachers and learners think, know and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what they do in the foreign language classroom (Borg 2003; Barcelos 2006; Kalaja 2006; Kalaja & Barcelos 2006). We believe that research on teacher and learner cognition can help assess the gap both in practices and in beliefs between what is intended by the language curriculum and teachers' actual practices and learners' behaviour. In this way, it can also inform the support systems essential for the successful implementation of pedagogical innovations.

The research employed an ethnographic approach, in which the researcher suspends his/her own judgements and attempts to understand the world he/she is investigating in terms of the participants' viewpoint. Such an approach comes largely from the field of anthropology and is based on the idea that, because reality has particular meanings within particular contexts and cultures, it is necessary to participate within a culture to understand how participants interpret reality and construct meaning within that particular context (Erickson 1986). In order to put this orientation into practice, Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was used to guide the analysis of research data. Grounded Theory is a research methodology in which theory and models are inductively extracted from the analysis of empirical data. The analysis thus involves the iterative discovery of concepts and tentative explanations of phenomena, as theory emerges from data. Therefore, our research

data were approached with relatively little preconception, as we endeavoured to identify categories of meaning from the data. The data were coded and categorized according to prominent themes that emerged from the interviews in response to the main research questions.

The data collection was conducted in a comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) in a rural part of North-Rhine-Westphalia, in the west-central part of Germany. Eight English teachers (with German as their mother tongue and no migration background) and 26 multilingual students with migration backgrounds were interviewed within a period of three months. Seventeen students were eighth and ninth graders, ranging from 14 to 16 years, and attended either regular level or advanced level English classes. In addition, nine twelfth graders who were intending to graduate from secondary school with the highest possible degree of the German school system (*Abitur*) were interviewed. The ethnic backgrounds of these students represented the student population of the school, as the majority of students had a migration background: Of all 26 interviewees, 15 reported their family to be of Russian origin, five were of Turkish heritage and six were from other ethnic backgrounds, such as Polish, Greek, Kurdish and Albanian. All learners investigated have comparable language biographies, since they all have their parents' language as L1, German as L2, and English as L3.

Key informant interview was the main research instrument used in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eight teachers. The interviews combined a pre-determined set of open questions (fifteen in total) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further. The interviews included questions focusing on more general information about the teachers, their professional education, their perceptions of multilingual learning, their analysis of previous classroom experiences and their suggestions for future teaching strategies and professional development. Each interview lasted half an hour on average.

Individual structured interviews, lasting approximately ten to fifteen minutes on average, were carried out with the students. The interview questions (fifteen in total) were divided into three main sections: a) general information about the students' language background and everyday language use, b) learners' perceptions on the interactions between their different languages and c) learners' perceptions regarding the possible advantages and disadvantages of their bilingualism/multilingualism for additional language learning. The students were labelled according to the grade they attended and the level of their English class. For instance, 10G_1 is the label of a tenth grader who attends the regular-level class (*Grundkurs*), whereas 9E_3 refers to a ninth grader who attends the advanced-level class (*Erweiterungskurs*). The twelfth graders were not labelled according to the level of their English

class, since in that context there was only one level. Teacher and student interviews were conducted in German. All data were audio-recorded and transcribed. The data analysis was an ongoing process that started from the very beginning of the study when the researchers thought about the main themes and issues which were emerging. The transcripts of the teacher interviews and learner interviews were coded for categories on an individual basis and analysed across transcripts to identify common themes. The quotes presented in this article are excerpts of general patterns found in the data.

4. Results

4.1 Psycholinguistic Factors: Second Language Transfer

According to Kecskes & Papp (2000: xvi) transfer describes "any kind of movement or influence of concepts, knowledge, skills, or linguistic elements (structures, forms), in either direction between the L1 and the subsequent language(s)". As stated earlier, one of the aims of this study was to investigate whether the migration-based multilinguals in the study make use of transferring skills between the various languages they speak, and if this is the case, whether they perceive these skills as supporting or hindering their learning of English as a third language.

Some students who claimed not to make conscious use of transfer from their heritage languages to the learning of English argued that the perceived linguistic differences of English and their L1 prevented useful transfer of linguistic knowledge from one language into the other. The following quote from a learner with Russian as L1 illustrates this argument:

> (1) Russian is a completely different language, there are also great differences in spelling – it simply cannot be matched to English[5] (9E_3 - Jochen[6]).

Other students, however, do perceive other languages they know (as L1s or not) as similar and they consequently use their prior knowledge to learn English as an additional language, as can be seen in the following quotes:

> (2) I cannot use much German to understand English, therefore I think more of Italian words, because they are more related to English. But also not much (12_5 - Sandra).

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5   All quotes were translated from German into English.
6   All names have been changed in order to protect learners' anonymity.

This pupil, for instance, is aware that Italian and English share many Latinisms in contrast to German, which makes Italian a useful language to draw on when learning English. However, she has not provided any concrete example of linguistic transfer. Other students discussed these similarities in more detail, as can be seen from the following quotes:

(3) Well, in English there are some words which I can derive from Turkish – there they are just pronounced differently. Those are easier to learn (12_3 - Reiner).

(4) Or my mother tongue, because there we also have words that are similar or almost identical to English. I also talked with my mom about that, because for example the word *Flughafen*, which means airport in English, is the same in Albanian – we also use airport, with the same spelling. Because of this similarity, it is much easier to learn. (...) This already happened several times, that I already knew English words, because we use the same writing (9E_5 - Anja).

(5) If I would, for example, start again to study Spanish, then I could probably make many more comparisons when I learn English and French. We also studied once a bit of Italian in a project and it was easy to find our way around (12_4 - Anna).

(6) Yes, in Russian we don't have the *der, die das* for example; we just have one as in English (10G_5 - Jürgen).

The first two students quoted above mention the advantages they have in learning vocabulary because the similarities between their mother tongues and English helps them to learn or to understand new words. One student even names the example *airport* very quickly during the interview (Anja), which indicates that she uses the strategy of transfer between her languages regularly and is aware of the advantages this might have for her. The third girl (Anna) explicitly mentions the advantage she ascribes to everyone knowing more than one language. In her opinion, the more languages one knows, the more opportunities for transfer and comparisons are made available, which eases the learning of a language considerably. Finally, the last student quoted above refers to a grammatical feature, since he perceived a similarity between his heritage language Russian and the target language English (Jürgen). Even though his perception is not totally correct, since Russian has no articles, his statement reveals his perception of English being more similar to Russian (in comparison to German) regarding that specific grammatical aspect. These findings are in line with previous research showing that perception of typological similarity is one of the main factors affecting the magnitude of cross-linguistic transfer (De Angelis & Selinker 2001).

The students also mentioned several differences they perceived between the languages they know or are learning, as the following quote reveals:

(7) Differences? Yes, they do exist. As for example when you say 'I love you' in English and in German it is the same structure, but in Russian you say 'I you love' if you translate it literally (10G_5 - Jürgen).

This student seems to think consciously about the languages he knows by drawing comparisons between them. In this quote, he refers specifically to a distinction concerning word order and refers to a perceived difference concerning one specific sentence: 'I love you', which can be said in a different order in Russian 'I you love'. However, this does not necessarily mean that he is aware of the more general differences/similarities between the two languages. In fact, like English, Russian assumes a base SVO word order. His statement only indicates that he is actively engaged in comparing the languages he knows and possibly (or hopefully) in trying to make sense of these differences.

Our findings also revealed important factors influencing language transfer. The foreign-language effect described by Meisel (1983) was not found in the students' self-evaluation. They tend to use all their languages for transfer. Most of them, however, stated that they choose languages in which they feel more proficient to be supplier languages[7] for English:

(8) If you speak a language most of the time, then you also think about this language first (12_7 - Markus).

(9) Hence, I speak Turkish very well and much better than German for sure. And therefore I think in Turkish and all words that come to mind are Turkish (12_1 - Ali).

(10) I do basically everything in German, for example, when I study or so. Because this is difficult in Russian, as I can't remember things so well. The Russian words are difficult to pronounce and difficult to remember. And if I then try to translate, then it gets really difficult. German is easier for me (10G_3 - Tatjana).

In general, our findings have shown that most of the participant learners exhibit some aspects of cross-linguistic awareness. They are conscious of their linguistic choices, for instance by transferring skills from L1 or L2 to L3. They also seem to be actively engaged in trying to find out and understand the differences and similarities between the languages they know. These findings are in line with previous research showing that multilinguals browse through the lexicons of their different languages when reading, writing, listening to and speaking the target language (e.g. Gibson & Hufeisen 2003, Jessner 2006). In the next section, we discuss students' attitudes towards their multilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective.

4.2 Sociolinguistic Factors: Multilingualism and Social Identity

Our findings have shown that several students with a migration background stopped using their respective heritage languages outside their homes because they experienced rejection or a lack of interest from others. As one of the students pointed out:

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7 A language that supplies material for a learner's expression in L3 (Williams & Hammarberg 1998: 323).

(11) Because we're in Germany and everybody says that we have to speak in German. When-ever we speak Russian, they start yelling at us, the guys from my class at least (9G_1 - Stefan).

Our findings are thus similar to the findings of other studies from the German language context showing that multilingual students (especially those who speak minority languages) often experience that their multilingual identity stigmatizes them and leads to discrimination or even exclusion (e.g. Fürstenau & Gomolla 2011). These negative reactions to their heritage languages seemed to influence the multilinguals' linguistic behaviour when learning English. The following state-ments indicate that they were not usually encouraged to make active use of the whole range of their linguistic repertoire at school:

(12) First, I would translate from German to English. And Russian really does not help me for that. Because I started to learn English and German right here. They taught us in school to translate from German into English and the other way around (10G_2 - Alexander).

(13) Well, the problem actually is that we speak so much German in our English lessons. If I speak Russian it is only at home, and hence I usually only think in German at school (10E_2 - Albert).

Both students referred to the excessive use of German (the majority language) during the English lessons. Other languages do not seem to be given further notice and students do not seem to be encouraged to draw upon their L1s as linguistic resources when learning English. As pointed out earlier, this issue has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g. Gogolin 1994; Gogolin & Neumann 2009) and referred to as the 'monolingual habitus' in German foreign language classrooms.

Some teachers stated in the interviews that they occasionally mention the students' L1s (if different from German) in the EFL classroom. However, they report that their students refuse to speak their L1s in class, even when asked ex-plicitly. Interestingly, although most students insist that they do not use their L1 in school very often, they hardly appeared uneasy using their respective heritage languages in the context of the interviews (e.g. to give examples or say short sen-tences). It seems reasonable to conclude that the multilinguals do not feel uncom-fortable in speaking their L1s. It is possible that they are more likely aware of the group-building effect of languages and the possibility to exclude others when using their heritage languages at school. The research findings indicate that most students are able to adjust their choice of language to the respective situation, as the following description indicates:

(14) I hold German in one hand and Russian in the other one. This way you are able to balance out both of them (10G_2 - Alexander).

This learner seems to have some reflected knowledge of his own use of each of these languages. He reveals that he knows how to use both languages in different situations. In other parts of the interview, he also mentioned that he uses both languages at home. At school, however, he avoids using Russian.

The conscious choice of language in a particular setting can be observed in the following comment of another student:

> (15) If I do not know the word (in English), I ask my neighbour, actually in Russian. I do not want everybody to know that I do not know the word – this would be embarrassing, wouldn't it? (10G_4 - Andrej).

By using this strategy the student uses his multilingual competence as a useful resource in the EFL classroom. These findings confirm what has been pointed out in the literature (e.g. Jessner 2006) regarding enhanced language awareness, i.e. that multilinguals know that they can use different languages for different purposes and seem to possess the ability to assess the situation and choose their languages accordingly.

Our findings also indicate that, in spite of negative attitudes towards migration-based multilingualism in their social context, all investigated students deem their multilingual identity and feelings towards multilingualism as important. Even though they are not usually encouraged to make explicit links between the different languages they know in the classroom, they do exhibit some aspects of cross-linguistic awareness. The next two sections focus on learners' views towards potential positive or negative effects of multilingualism on the process of learning an additional language.

4.3 Learners' Perceptions Regarding Possible Negative Effects of Multilingualism on the Learning of Additional Languages

Although most students had positive attitudes towards their migration-based multilingualism in general, during the interviews they referred more often to its potentially negative effects on additional language learning than most teachers did. One issue mentioned concerns intellectual overload. One of the students seemed to imagine the brain as only being capable of coping with a limited number of languages at a time.

> (16) It could be possible at this point that you abandon another language. For example, if I started learning Japanese now and did not have any French lessons anymore, I know that I will certainly abandon French and learn Japanese instead. Simply because I cannot fit everything into my head (12_5 - Sandra).

Other students complain about a lack of knowledge in the one language they need the most: German. Some students believe that they need to learn one language 'perfectly' prior to learning an additional language. One of the students stated:

> (17) Maybe knowing many languages makes it even worse. For example, I speak only Russian at home – and this might keep me from improving my German (9G_1 - Stefan).

This statement demonstrates the student's fear of becoming, or staying, semi-lingual (Hansegård 1968). The quote above reveals the student's belief that the amount of exposure to a language greatly influences the proficiency in this language. Consequently, the more languages a multilingual is exposed to, the less time may be dedicated to their respective use. In the student's opinion, this could be one disadvantage of multilingualism.

Another aspect referred to by different students is negative transfer from their L1 into English. In the following quotations, two students describe their experiences: The first one refers to a phonological aspect. He mentioned that the pronunciation in the L1 may be very different from the English pronunciation, which might cause him to face additional challenges in comparison to monolingual speakers of German:

> (18) Maybe you can tell from the accent or similar things, for example pronouncing the English <r> in a Russian way even though you don't want to (9G_3 - Anton).

In this sequence, he mentioned the unconsciousness of such cross linguistic interference. The student, however, did not seem to be aware of the fact that German speakers of English also experience negative transfer in pronunciation. Another student pointed out that his L1 (Turkish) has a different word order structure in comparison to English, which often leads to negative transfer:

> (19) It is possible that there are disadvantages such as making mistakes in the sentence construction of a language – this is where I have trouble for example. Whenever I write English texts, I do not get the right order of subject, verb and object. It is exactly the same structure as in German. But I do not know how it is in Turkish … let me think a second … Right: It is different in Turkish and maybe that is why, since my thoughts are Turkish I change the sentence structure (12_1 - Ali).

This student described the different word order in his L1 (Turkish) which he transfers to written English. A final drawback mentioned by several students was the fear of confusing and blending languages:

> (20) For me, negative transfer often was a problem even in French, because my thoughts were in Italian, which sounds very similar. It often occurred that I maybe made numerous mistakes when transferring words, because I had wrong ideas since, although they may sound similar or equal, they have a completely different meaning (12_9 - Adam).

This student highlights the problems possibly caused by languages of the same family. Learning two Romance languages such as Italian and French led to negative transfer. This issue has also been discussed in the literature. Research has shown that closely perceived languages lead to more positive transfer, but too closely perceived languages may lead to confusion (Gibson & Hufeisen 2003). The same pupil described his tendency to blend different languages into a sort of 'individual language':

> (21) It happens to me from time to time that I mix various languages within one sentence – I kind of develop my own language by blending languages (laughs). But you usually notice what's happening by yourself (12_9 - Adam).

However, he did not seem to see this language practice as a problem, since he also stated that multilinguals usually notice the code-switching between the languages by themselves. It appears as if this pupil rather considers the blending of languages and the invention of a new language as something creative and fun.

One of the disadvantages usually associated with multilingualism is the fear of not being able to establish a successful multilingual identity (Oppenrieder & Thurmair 2003). Additionally, multilingualism due to migration from a less developed country is often considered a determinant of educational failure in the public sphere in the German context. None of these drawbacks were mentioned by the students themselves, who were not explicitly asked about the topic. The teachers, however, very often pointed to the socio-economic situation of multilingual families with a migration background as a predictor of educational failure.

4.4 Learners' Perceptions Regarding Potential Advantages of Multilingualism for Learning Additional Languages

During the interviews, the students were asked to evaluate which learning strategies they make use of when learning a new language. In the following quote, the student referred to the enhanced linguistic experiences of multilinguals and their experiences with developing language learning strategies in general:

> (22) You know how to deal with it, how to keep it in your mind, hence I believe that it certainly helps to know different languages when you want to learn a new one (12_5 - Sandra).

The students also named various strategies which may also be used by monolinguals, such as memory strategies, compensation strategies and so on. It is also possible to infer from previous comments that they make linguistic comparisons and think about language use in multilingual contexts. For instance, as shown earlier

in this article, one pupil stated that she talked to her mother about the word *Flughafen* in different languages she speaks (4). Another student reported that she compared her L1 to French and found similarities:

(23) I once compared Kurdish with French and the pronunciation and so on is really similar (12_8 - Susanne).

The fact that these pupils compare their languages without external prompting indicates some level of cross-linguistic awareness. Several of the interviewees pointed out that multilinguals tend to develop a different and more sensitive feel for languages in general. As one student pointed out:

(24) If you speak or listen to many languages from birth on, you develop a different feel for it. Therefore, you can remember things better, hence you may also handle other languages totally differently. (…) Therefore, I would claim that the 'foreigners' also learn other languages much easier (12_9 - Adam).

This student referred to the natural exposure to language also mentioned by Cenoz & Valencia (1994). As these authors point out, multilinguals differ from monolinguals in that monolinguals will never achieve the same natural exposure to linguistic diversity.

In spite of demonstrating some level of cross-linguistic awareness, most students in this study do not seem to be fully aware of the advantages that their multilingual competence can bring to the task of learning an additional language. In general, the teachers identified more beneficial aspects than the multilinguals themselves. For instance, when asked about the multilinguals' advantages for developing specific language skills, a number of teachers referred to their observations of increased listening and reading skills in terms of achieving global understanding. None of the participant students seemed to notice this advantage. These findings are in line with previous research showing that students will not always make the connections between their previous language learning – which may have been acquired at an early age – and their current language learning (Jessner 2006).

Several participant teachers agree that multilingual students could improve their repertoire of language learning strategies if they received further instructions from teachers. They also emphasised the importance of supporting these learners in the process of developing transferring skills between similarly perceived languages. However, they also mentioned their lack of knowledge of existing approaches to accomplish such a complex task.

In the following section, we draw on the teachers' insights to discuss pedagogical recommendations for the teaching of English in a multilingual context.

4.5 Implications for the EFL Classroom

As pointed out earlier, the investigated teachers demonstrated insufficient knowledge on approaches and strategies for exploiting learners' multilingual resources. They also admitted that their limited expertise on this topic prevented them from implementing practically the theoretical recommendations proposed in this article. However, during the interviews they reflected on potential ideas for using migration-based multilingualism as a resource in the EFL classroom. Some teachers, for instance, advocated a more balanced focus on the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). One teacher pointed out:

> (25) The advantage [of multilinguals] is probably evident in their communicative competence. However, this competence is not particularly relevant in the educational context. Performance in the classroom is based on writing and on results from written exams (T6).

This teacher states that in her specific teaching context language learning tends to focus more strongly on reading, writing and grammar instruction, and communicative skills are often not given equal attention. Consequently, multilinguals are not given the opportunity to exploit their communicative strategies as resources in the language learning process.

Another key aspect mentioned by the teachers concerns their own attitudes towards pupils' heritage languages. Some teachers highlighted the importance of becoming aware of the various home languages represented in their classrooms:

> (26) I think this problem can only be solved on individual terms for each student. I have to take a look at each student's language learning biography, the level of meta-linguistic awareness, their level of competence in the mother tongue and in German (T6).

Investigating the language learning biography of each individual student in a classroom, as this teacher suggests, seems to be a rather complex task, since most teachers teach a large number of students. However, the literature has provided teachers with examples of pedagogical activities, methods, and materials, which can help them learn about students' multilingualism and their attitudes towards it. The *European Language Portfolio* (available for learners in different age groups and with accredited versions for different countries) for example, offers a 'language biography' section, where learners can reflect on the languages they speak, use self-assessment grids and checklists to evaluate their language skills, and document those skills, as well as intercultural experiences, language certificates and products in a so-called 'language passport' (for an overview see Council of Europe 2016).

As discussed earlier, our study has also shown that the use of the multilinguals' heritage languages in school was often not supported by their monolingual peers. As discussed earlier, several authors (e.g. Hélot & de Mejia 2008) have pointed

out that this kind of attitude towards migration-based multilingualism is caused by the fact that in many European schools the languages of immigrant children are envisaged as a problem rather than as a resource. In our study, the participant teachers also expressed concern towards these issues and suggested a stronger integration of migrant children's knowledge background into school activities. The following teacher, for example, pointed out the option of including different languages in theatre plays that have an international background:

(27) At this point I thought: 'What a pity! If we had some students with a Russian migration background in our group, we could ask them to act in Russian once as well' (T1).

Another teacher emphasized the importance of a positive attitude towards minority languages and their integration into the lessons in order to support the development of pupils' intercultural competences.

(28) We should try to show it in a positive light and integrate it into the lessons (T2).

(29) And maybe even encourage the students, tell them that they have the opportunity to grow up bilingually due to their family and that they should use it. That you tell them as a teacher, 'I accept that and I even respect and admire it that you are good at languages' (T1).

Gardner and Lambert (1972: 141) mention the central role played by teachers in the process of making minority languages more visible and valuable in majority settings. They state that

the need to systematically modify these (negative) images, distorted as they certainly are, becomes very evident, since negative stereotypes of this sort, if accepted by a majority of students, could sabotage any educational effort to teach the language of the group in question.

Let us now turn to what Jessner (2006: 120) calls "one of the key factors of multilingual proficiency": Linguistic and metalinguistic awareness of multilinguals. As explained earlier, an important aim of our study was to find out whether the participant teachers encouraged the development of cross-linguistic awareness in their English lessons. Although all teachers were asked, only one teacher stated that she made explicit cross-linguistic references in the EFL classroom:

(30) Yes, there are some links, if the teacher has some sort of sensitivity for that, since the pupil already comes here with lots of knowledge, although it's about other languages, but one can make this knowledge useful for the lesson (T3).

In this sequence, the interviewee suggested that those teachers who are sensitive to cross-linguistic links could make good use of the students' prior knowledge and skills to enhance the learning of English as an additional language. In another interview sequence, T3 proposed concrete teaching activities:

(31) You (the teacher) could carry out some form of reflection about language, something like: 'yes, how can it be possible that different languages sometimes use the same

words?' etc…, so basically to develop this sensitivity, so that they (the learners) can learn faster, ….maybe you could take an (unknown) English word and then say, 'if you speak German (or Turkish or Russian), is there a related (similar) word in this language'? So that you can help them to develop strategies to deal with foreign words… something in this direction (T3).

The suggestions proposed by this teacher are in line with the literature recommendations proposed in section 2. Jessner (2006), for instance, emphasizes that comparing different languages is a natural behaviour, however ignored by many English teachers who hence miss out on much potential to help learners build on their prior language knowledge. It has also been pointed out in the literature that, in order to understand and enhance students' use of transfer and metalinguistic abilities, teachers would certainly benefit from a basic knowledge of the students' mother tongues represented in their EFL classroom. In fact, this was an issue mentioned by one of the participant teachers in our study, as can be seen in the following quote:

(32) But the teachers that would do this, they would also need to be able to establish a connection with the mother tongue, so it would be a good thing if they knew a bit Turkish or Russian, or they should at least include these other languages or something (T6).

As pointed out by several authors (e.g. Haukås 2016), having a basic knowledge of the pupils' mother tongues can help teachers understand the language problems faced by their students, and assist them in error correction strategies. Furthermore, teachers can also use this information to activate those students' knowledge of their own languages and their similarities and differences to the English language.

Our findings have shown that, opposed to previous research in the German context (e.g. Hu 2003), the teachers investigated are aware of the potential advantages that multilinguals bring into the task of learning an additional language, for instance, their general increased language awareness and comprehension skills. However, they also acknowledge their special role in allowing this potential to be fully realised. As one of the teachers pointed out:

(33) They might have an advantage, but they need support to become really proficient in their languages. And if they get this support, then it is definitely positive, they could focus on language and have a certain benefit. And they could transfer this from one language to another. (...) Then you can focus on children that have a supposed advantage and turn it into a real one. This is also the way I see it (T3).

Even though these teachers were able to provide a few general ideas of how to tap into pupils' familiarity with multiple languages to advance further language learning, our findings also indicate their limited knowledge and skills on how to implement approaches that are systematic and integrated into the curriculum. As pointed out by Ziegler (2013: 13), "multilingualism is highly available in discourses, but is still in its infancy from a methodological and applied viewpoint". In accord with Jakisch's (2015) findings, the teachers in our research also referred to several

practical concerns that often hinder the implementation of a plurilingual approach. Some examples discussed in this section were: necessary modifications to the goals of the subject (e.g. a more balanced focus on the four skills) and the need to acquire new skills (e.g. developing some basic knowledge of students' heritage languages).

5. Conclusion

This article gives insight into the perspectives of multilingual students and teachers concerning the impact of multilingualism on the learning of English as an additional language. In line with previous research showing that multilinguals have an increased language intuition and greater metalinguistic knowledge (e.g. Schroeder & Stölting 2005; Jessner 2006;) our data indicate that these multilingual learners exhibit some aspects of cross-linguistic awareness. For instance, they use effective transfer skills, they seem to be actively engaged in trying to discover and understand the differences and similarities between the languages they know, and some students seem to have already developed intuitive strategies to exploit their linguistic repertoires as resources while learning English as a third language. However, our findings also indicate that many students are not fully aware of the advantages that their multilingual competence can bring to learning an additional language, and several of them perceive their migration-based multilingualism more as an obstacle for additional language learning than as a resource. For instance, they fear an intellectual overload when acquiring several languages, they perceive double semilingualism as a danger for weak students, and they mention specific problems with negative transfer in terms of pronunciation or grammatical structures. These findings indicate the importance of making multilingual learners aware of their own metacognitive knowledge and of helping them to reflect and draw on their rich store of language information and skills. This may encourage them to value their multilingualism and better exploit their linguistic repertoires for additional language learning, i.e. to develop their plurilingual competence. As discussed in our introduction, several researchers (e.g. Hu 2003; Jessner 2006) have pointed towards the key role that multilingual learners' perceptions play in allowing their potential to be fully realized.

Regarding the teachers' perspectives, our findings confirm recent research findings showing the need for investment in teacher education in this area (e.g. De Angelis 2011; Ziegler 2013). In general, the participant teachers identified more advantages of multilingualism for further foreign language learning than the multilingual learners themselves. They referred, for instance, to multilinguals' increased listening and reading skills and enhanced meta-linguistic awareness. However, regarding the second research question, the data indicate that the teachers

seldom used migration-based multilingualism as a resource in the EFL classroom. Most of them cited their limited expertise on this topic as the main reason for not implementing practically the theoretical recommendations proposed in this article.

Teachers' and learners' perceptions also provided insights that allowed us to draw tentative implications for the teaching of English in a multilingual context. This article has especially highlighted the importance of a) creating and supporting positive attitudes towards pupils' home languages, b) fostering a more balanced use of the four skills in the EFL classroom so that multilinguals are able to exploit their communicative strategies as resources in the language learning process, c) supporting the development of pupils' cross-linguistic, metalinguistic and intercultural awareness through the implementation of language and culture awareness-raising activities and d) integrating migrant children's knowledge background into school activities. This paper has mentioned a few pedagogical proposals incorporating all or some of these elements (e.g. Candelier, 2008; Corcoll, 2013; Jakisch 2015). However, to this date, such proposals are still scarce in the literature. Therefore, there is a strong need for further research to develop and evaluate pedagogical materials that can assist teachers in exploiting the cognitive and meta-cognitive skills that multilinguals bring into the task of learning an additional language.

The scope of this study does not allow us to make conclusive statements about the issues investigated, since only a limited number of students and teachers were interviewed, all within the same school context. Therefore, larger scale research needs to be conducted on this topic so that a more general picture of learners' and teachers' perceptions can be provided. This type of research is especially valuable for identifying underlying beliefs that shape teachers' behaviour and pedagogical gaps that need to be addressed in language teacher education.

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