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Multilingualism in contexts: the relativity of time and space

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This chapter is concerned with contexts: historical, geographical, societal, educational, technological and linguistic. It argues that multilingualism as a European political objective cannot be taken for granted, and that higher education policies designed to promote multilingualism must take into account evolving contextual particularities, and build on relevant research.

0 The historical context – a local connection

Since my principal theme is that migration and especially multilingualism relate to specific contexts, I begin with some reflections on the conference location and the English version of its title: ‘Migration and multilingualism: the influence of one’s mother tongue on the acquisition of foreign languages: implications for didactics’. The autumn 2007 conference was the occasion of my first visit to Brixen-Bressanone, but the town’s reputation dates back several centuries. The celebrated French essayist Michel de Montaigne visited Brixen on his travels through Italy, arriving at just the same time of year, on 26 October 1580. It is clear from the diary he dictated to his secretary that he liked the town:

Nous vinsmes souper d’une traite à *Brix*, quatre lieues, très belle petite ville, au travers de laquelle passe cette rivière [la rivière d’Eysoc], sous un pont de bois : c’est un évesché. Nous y vismes deus très belles eglises, et fumes logés à l’Aigle, beau logis.

Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage en Italie*,
édition de la Pléiade, 1962, p.1170.

[After an unbroken journey of four leagues, at supper time we reached Brixen, a very fine little town, with a wooden bridge over the Eisack River; it is a bishopric. We saw two fine churches, and stayed at the Eagle, a fine hostelry. *Author's translation.*]

I can confirm that Brixen's *Goldener Adler* remains a fine hostelry, but for language professionals the interest of Montaigne's visit is not merely touristic:

M. de Montaigne disoit :

<< Qu'il s'etoit toute sa vie mesfié du jugement d'autrui sur le discours des commodités des païs estrangers, chacun ne sçachant gouster que selon l'ordonnance de sa coutume et de l'usage de son village; et avoit faict fort peu d'estat des avertissemans que les voiageurs lui donnoit: mais en ce lieu, il s'esmerveilloit encore plus de leur bestise, aiant et notamment en ce voiage, ouï dire que l'entredeus des Alpes en cest endroit estoit plein de difficultés, les meurs des homes estranges, chemins inaccessibles, logis sauvages, l'air insupportable.>>

[M. de Montaigne said 'that all his life he had been cautious of the judgments of others on what foreign countries have to offer, since everyone can appreciate things only according to the dictates of their own culture, and the customs of their own village; and he had taken little account of the warnings received from travellers; but in this place, he was even more amazed at their stupidity, since he had – especially on this journey – been told that the passage between the Alps at this point was extremely difficult, men's behaviour strange, the paths inaccessible, the accommodation dreadful and the air unbreathable.']

In other words, Brixen triggered a reflection by one outstanding individual on the jingoistic narrow-mindedness of local and national cultures. Today, when multilingualism and multiculturalism are widely spoken of, it is worth recalling that it has not always been so. Having read all three books of Montaigne's *Essais* in the original French (possibly one of very few Britons to have done so), I am aware how exceptional he was in his time. While his European contemporaries treated the *cannibales*, the native

inhabitants of newly discovered South America, as sub-human, Montaigne uniquely adopted a relativist view, recognising that their culture was different from but not necessarily inferior to that of Europe. Acknowledging and rejecting the temptations of nationalism, ethnocentrism and hostile cultural stereotypes – as the above reflections on Brixen show – he strove to earn the Socratic title of ‘citizen of the world’. Setting off to discover Italy, he took the trouble to learn Italian, often using it to dictate his travel journal. His rigorous and objective observations testify to ethnographic skills, while his non-judgmental adaptation to and adoption of local customs show the inter-personal, social and diplomatic skills which made him a valued international negotiator, capable of functioning effectively in new linguistic and cultural environments. If we want to be convinced that intercultural communicative competence is a recent label but an old concept, we need look no further for a model than Michel de Montaigne.

In some respects, then, the *Weltanschauung* which promotes multilingualism and multiculturalism is not new, even if it is more widespread in twenty-first century Europe than in the late sixteenth century. But the conference title, in English ‘Migration and Multilingualism: the influence of the mother tongue on the acquisition of foreign languages; implications for didactics’, reflects still more changes from the Western Europe of Montaigne’s day.

In 1580, it was rare for people ever to leave the village or district in which they were born. International travel required exceptional personal and material resources. Migration was driven only by the strongest forces – famine, conquest, conflict and spiritual pilgrimage. Today, with cheap and easy travel, migration for touristic, economic, commercial, political, and climatic reasons is accelerating exponentially. The United Nations counted 191 million migrants in 2005, one-third of them hosted in Europe. As Vivian Cook’s paper¹ mentioned, the United Kingdom remains predominantly monolingual, but with a silent and growing multilingualism thanks largely to (im)migration. In Southampton, the nearest city to my home in Hampshire, more than one in ten of the population has Polish as a mother tongue. The *brassage* of populations encouraged by the globalisation of commerce and of conflicts has led, as Werner Wiater

¹ Vivian Cook’s Paper “L2 Users and Native Speakers” at the Conference “Migration and Multilingualism – The influence of the mother tongue on the acquisition of foreign languages. Implications for didactics.”, Bressanone/Brixen, 30th – 31st of October 2007.

makes clear in the present volume, to a wealth of individual language biographies – also known as intercultural narratives (Beaven 2007) or, in Alice Kaplan's term taken up by Claire Kramsch (2005), language memoirs. A recent study of foreign language learners in English schools (Coleman et al. 2007:255) noted that 'in 2006 approximately 12.5% of primary students and 9.5 % of secondary students had English as an additional language, and that the proportion is rising'. The dissimilarity of learners' linguistic backgrounds should make us wary of generalisations about 'language learners': we are dealing with individuals, and quantitative research surveys risk obscuring important differences unless balanced by qualitative, in-depth studies.

Historical contexts can also throw light on the status of languages within multilingual societies. Although my own mother tongue is English, I was brought up in Cardiff, the capital of Wales. At age 14, I passed an examination which led to the award of a General Certificate of Education at Ordinary Level in 'Welsh (foreign language)' (*sic!*). Such an anecdote reminds us of the importance of both the geographical and the historical context of language learning: not only do today's equivalent certificates refer correctly to 'second language', but the number of certificates is growing as more and more children and adults learn Welsh. Welsh is internationally cited as a model for breathing new life into threatened languages, and as it is recognised that, far from being a threat to economic and political success, the use of a national or regional language is a crucial element of personal and social identity, and that bilingualism and multilingualism are the rule and not the exception. This message needs no reinforcement in a Ladin-speaking area and in a university whose students have to sit exams in three different languages, but in the UK, where a century ago using Welsh at school routinely led to humiliating punishment, the lesson bears repeating.

Multilingualism is itself a current topic for academic linguists. 'Multilingualism: Challenges and opportunities' is the theme of the August 2008 World Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA). Even in the UK, the word 'multilingual' figures in the title of two conferences taking place in June 2008: 'Integration and Achievement in a Multilingual Europe' (Leeds) and 'Multilingual Transnational Neighbourhoods' (Southampton). 'Language Learning for a Multilingual Europe' was the focus for a British Council conference in Berlin, February 2008, although participants here shared

the preoccupations I expound below, since they focused on motivation and how to encourage students to take up languages other than English.

A final remark on the conference title focuses on the word ‘didactics’. *Glottodidattica*, *Fremdsprachendidaktik*, *la didactique des langues* – in most European languages the title of our research field is similar. Yet in British (or American) English, ‘didactic’ is an adjective and carries an overtone of disapproval. The original title of my Brixen presentation, ‘Effective learning and teaching strategies in modern languages’, echoed my recent book, *Effective Learning and Teaching in Modern Languages* (Coleman and Klapper 2005) in referring instead to ‘learning and teaching’; my professional title is ‘Professor of Language Learning and Teaching’; the new disciplinary journal from Multilingual Matters is *Innovations in Language Learning and Teaching*. ‘Didactics’ is an example of the growing disparity between native-speaker English and what Barbara Seidlhofer and others call ELF or English as a *lingua franca*. It has become commonplace throughout the world to move the native speaker from the privileged position s/he once occupied in SLA. But as Vivian Cook (cf. cited paper), David Graddol (1997, 2006) and Alan Davies (2003) among many others have noted as they contemplated the differently-sized concentric circles of Kachru’s model of English speakers, English no longer belongs to native speakers. There are more second language speakers of English in China alone than native speakers in the whole world. English is not mine, but, dear reader, yours. So ‘didactics’ is fine.

The word didactics also illustrates a further related theme, namely the time-and-space-related technological context and the impact of new technologies on learning and knowledge. When I was a student in the late 1960s, the university library was a central building whose contents, accessed laboriously through printed catalogues, supplemented the transmission of knowledge which was then seen as the principal function of university teaching. Today, knowledge is instantly available through two ubiquitous instruments, neither of which is yet ten years old, and each of which refers to didactics.

Google (launched 1998) finds 474,000 instances of ‘didactics’, but 3,620,000 of ‘didactic’ – an approximate corpus analysis which nevertheless indicates the comparative rarity of the plural noun. Wikipedia (launched 2001 and now celebrating its ten millionth

entry) confirms the restricted use of ‘didactics’: ‘Slight variations on the term are widely used in many cultures, but rarely used in English-speaking cultures’.

1 Language learning and teaching

If today there is fairly wide agreement on the fundamentals of language didactics, it is thanks to half a century of research in applied linguistics, and to centuries of reflection on the practice of language teaching – reflection which started during Montaigne’s lifetime, with the publication of the first dictionaries and the pioneering practical manuals such as the excellent *French Littleton* of Claudius Holyband (Claude de Sainliens). Manuals for teachers share headings and terminology: for example, my recent chapter summarising research into language teaching (Coleman and Klapper 2005:31-43) covered the following:

- Learner errors and interlanguage
- Curriculum and teachability
- Cognitive and socio-cultural approaches to SLA
- Universal Grammar
- Input and output
- Communicative language teaching
- Form-focused instruction
- Task-based language learning
- Individual differences – biographical
- Individual differences – cognitive
 - aptitude, learning styles, learner strategies, personality
- Individual differences – affective
 - anxiety, motivation, willingness to communicate
- Social interaction.

But if the themes are common to language teachers everywhere, their application depends very much on the social, historical and geographical context, and on the motivation of the individual learners.

2 The British context for multilingualism

The long-standing commitment of the European Union and Council of Europe to plurilingualism was most recently reiterated in the Maalouf report, published in 2008, the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. And in most of Europe, multilingualism is both an agreed goal and an everyday reality. But this is not true in every member state or in every domain of activity. The United Kingdom and Ireland, as predominantly English-speaking countries, regrettably distinguish themselves from the rest of Europe in this respect. The impact of context on motivation, in particular, defines the challenges facing language teachers or policy-makers whose goal is multilingualism. In some contexts, multilingualism cannot be taken for granted.

The successive *Language Trends* reports produced since 2003 by the UK's National Centre for Languages with the support of the Association for Language Learning and the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (CILT 2007) trace a depressing picture for those of us who want young people to become, like Montaigne, citizens of the world. In England, in the 1990s, studying two foreign languages was exceptional, but one foreign language was compulsory for all pupils at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14, years 7-9, i.e. the first three years of secondary education) and at Key Stage 4 (ages 14-16, years 10-11 leading to certification and the end of compulsory schooling).

Faced with a shortage of foreign language teachers, a narrowly nationalistic press, and a widespread but misguided impression that 'English is enough', the Government had to choose between increasing the supply of teachers or reducing the demand for their services, and opted to make even one foreign language optional at Key Stage 4. Even before the policy was officially adopted, schools began to remove the obligation to study a foreign language, and teenagers gladly dropped out. The objective of seeing every English pupil taking a language examination (General Certificate of Secondary Education

or GCSE) at age 16 had never been wholly achieved, but the proportion fell dramatically from 78% in 2001 to 46% in 2007. In state schools, fewer than one in four now has a 'language for all' policy after age 14. With the Government's policy to introduce an 'entitlement' to a foreign language in primary schools not yet properly in place, and reductions in both the range of languages on offer and weekly lesson time at Key Stage 3, this means that English children may receive less than 300 hours of foreign language instruction in their entire lifetime. The changes are also socially divisive: the fall in language learning is sharpest in low-achieving state schools in low-income areas of the North and West, and least marked in fee-paying independent schools in the wealthy South-East and London.

Within British higher education, too, foreign languages have become a subject studied by the most socially privileged. The take-up of specialist language degree programmes has fallen from a peak in 1992, and the decline has seen the disappearance of more than half the language departments in UK universities. Only the Russell Group of twenty research-intensive universities, whose reputation enhances their graduates' employability, can now attract viable numbers of specialist language students (Coleman 2004), although courses for specialists in other disciplines, typically delivered by a university's Language Centre, are holding up well: over 40,000 students opted for accredited language modules and over 33,000 non-accredited modules in 2006/07 (Byrne 2008).

89 per cent of adults in the UK have English as a mother tongue, down from 94% in 1999 (Dutton and Meyer 2007). Four per cent are currently learning a language (down from five per cent in 1999, equivalent to half a million fewer people), and a quarter of these are in fact learning English. Adults who take up another European language are most likely to be young, white, and from a more privileged socio-economic background. Language courses for adults have also been damaged by changes in Government funding, first to Further and Adult/Continuing Education, and most recently through withdrawal of funding for students taking courses leading to Equal or Lower Qualifications (ELQ). Until now, universities have received both fees and Government funding for all students, but students who already have a university degree – however long ago and in whatever subject – will no longer be supported for topping up their skills in ICT, languages or science. This policy completely contradicts the 'skills agenda' and the UK Government's

professed commitment to lifelong learning, and will have a major financial impact on the Open University, the UK's largest university language department which currently teaches 8,000 language students a year.

British adults are already the least multilingual in Europe, with the exception of Ireland which has 66% of monolinguals compared to the UK's 62% (Eurobarometer, 2006). While 81% of Britons claim to think foreign languages useful, only 18% have undertaken any language learning in the past two years. A 2007 BBC poll of 3,000 adults suggested that on average each remembers only seven words of the language they learnt at school: 40% could order a beer, but only 3% can say sorry and 2% ask for a toilet. Although it is estimated that more than one million Britons go abroad for their companies each year, with the average relocation period between two and five years, and that 5.5 million British citizens actually live abroad, nine out of ten will be influenced in their choice of holiday destination by whether English is spoken.

Europhobia, euphemistically dignified as 'euroscepticism', is widespread in the UK. A *Guardian/ICM* poll published on 26 January 2008 (N = 1009, see <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/eu/story/0,,2247319,00.html>) suggests that while 58% think Britain's EU membership is a good thing, 67% think British identity is being lost, 64% think we have warmer relations with the US, and 52% find the EU undemocratic. And a recent (March 2008) attitude survey of all EU countries with regard to the European Parliament (*Special Barometer* 288, see http://www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_288_en.pdf) showed, like most of its predecessors, that Britons are consistently both the most hostile to the EU and the most ignorant of it.

The influence on education of a climate so indifferent to language skills emerges from a recent school study (Coleman et al. 2007). The questionnaire study, involving 10,440 pupils in Key Stage 3 of English secondary schools, opened with a survey of relevant research findings since the 1980s. Depressingly, the literature shows that languages are consistently pupils' least favourite subject, perceived as difficult, irrelevant and useless by pupils who – surprisingly – have little expectation of international travel and contacts. An early start (in primary school, Key Stage 2, ages 9-11) can lead to reduced motivation because of disruption caused by the move from primary to secondary, while a later start

(in secondary school, Key Stage 3, age 11) can subsequently lead to reduced motivation because in comparison with subjects begun earlier, progress appears slower. Studies typically conclude that, while success can enhance motivation, pupils' enthusiasm for languages is hard to maintain.

Such was also the conclusion of our own study. Figure 1 shows the mean overall motivation of pupils in the first three years of English secondary education (Years 7, 8 and 9) in three types of school: Specialist Language Colleges have a particular mission to develop pupils' foreign language skills, whilst Asset Languages Pilot Centres are schools which have adopted a new approach to assessment and reward, linked to the Common European Framework. The study confirmed earlier findings in showing that, while motivation for languages remains just about positive (> 2.5 on a 1-to-4 scale), and while a supportive context can marginally enhance motivation, it falls sharply once the novelty wears off, and thereafter continues to decline.

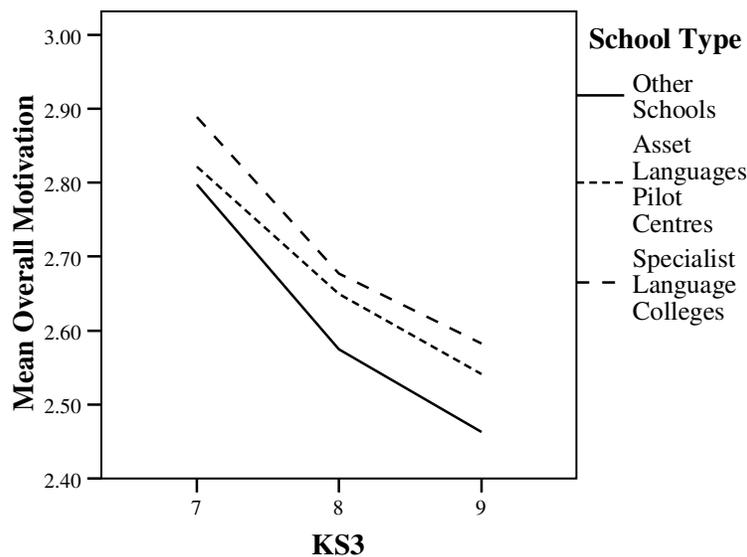


Figure 1: Mean overall motivation of UK school pupils towards language learning

Further evidence of what a difficult terrain for multilingualism the UK represents is found in the numbers of university students participating in the ERASMUS student exchange scheme. At its launch in 1987/88, the UK was the largest contributor of students with 28.5% of the total. The successful expansion of the scheme was always bound to reduce this share. Nonetheless, it is disappointing to find that the UK is now only the sixth largest contributor of students with just 4.67% of the total. Still more alarming are the diverging trends for the scheme as a whole and for the United Kingdom's participation in it (Figure 2).

	00/01-01/02	01/02-02/03	02/03-03/04	03/04-04/05	04/05-05/06
Total	+4.52%	+6.79%	+8.61%	+6.23%	+7.21%
UK	-6.08%	-6.16%	-5.25%	-4.30%	-1.15%

Figure 2: Divergent trends in ERASMUS student numbers since 2000/01

The consistent expansion of the scheme as a whole contrasts sadly with the trend in the UK for ever fewer students to undertake part of their university study in another European country. Within British language degrees, where residence abroad was until recently a compulsory part, it is now frequently optional. Still more worrying, given the decline in specialist language study at UK universities and the collapse of language learning at school, with its inevitable impact on higher education in a few years' time, is the fact that the proportion of language specialists among outgoing UK ERASMUS students is more than twice the European average, and rising (UK 38.14% 2003/04, 41.1% 2004/05, 41.6% 2005/06 against total 15.61%, 15.28%, 15.5%) , making UK participation still more vulnerable to a downturn in applications for language degrees.

A country which perceives itself as monolingual will be at best apathetic and at worst hostile to the acquisition and use of other tongues. The UK is not alone – a similarly damaging autostereotype exists in other English-speaking countries, for example in New Zealand (McLauchlan 2007).

3 The global higher education context

Other contextual factors affect the higher education sector in particular. Two of these are marketisation and the Englishisation of teaching and research. Globally, governments are recognising the clear correlation between national economic growth and the percentage of young people in higher education. Successive reports from the OECD and other organisations show a constant expansion in the numbers of school leavers opting for a university degree. At the same time, whilst higher education is of benefit to the national economy, it also benefits the individual, whose lifetime earnings go up in correlation with her/his educational level. Since there comes a point at which state funds from general taxation are insufficient to finance a continued expansion of the higher education sector, there is also a consistent trend, within Europe and beyond, for governments to demand more of the costs from individuals, through registration/tuition fees and through repayable loans. This is changing the nature of higher education, as the power moves from the supplier (universities) to the consumer (students). The shift to a regulated market is evidenced, *inter alia*, by improved quality assurance mechanisms, the heightened importance of brands, national and international ranking tables, and an increase in complaints from students. Among the criteria which has gained in significance for potential students is the employability of graduates: data is increasingly incorporated into comparative tables such as the TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION rankings (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/>). In this climate of students as customers, Universities such as Bozen-Bolzano will clearly benefit from the enhanced employability which their flexible linguistic and intercultural skills guarantee for their multilingual graduates: employability is thus a factor promoting multilingualism in higher education.

Of course, the higher education market is not only national, but increasingly international. Every country has its own recruiting organisation for international students, and the grouping of European marketing organisations, the Academic Cooperation Association, is most assiduous in analysing trends and promoting the European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Process of harmonising higher degrees across Europe and beyond is today driven more by the economically determined Lisbon agenda than by any academic idealism: the European Higher Education Area student targets the global customer rather than the global citizen. The fact that there are now 46 signatories to Bologna indicates

more than a merely political interest: the principal motivation is access to the lucrative market in international students, a market on which the financial survival of many universities, especially in the UK, crucially depends.

One aspect of shaping the product to the new global market is the use of English as a medium for teaching. In tracing the development of the trend to Englishisation (Coleman 2006b), I noted that the initial objective of participating in international student exchanges had been overtaken by the need to recruit mobile, fee-paying international students in order to finance national higher education systems. It is ironic that a shift triggered by student exchanges should now be undermining those very exchanges by diluting the linguistic immersion which is one of their principal *raison d'être*. English-medium university teaching in France, for example, has received a substantial double boost already in 2008, both from the wide-ranging Attali Report (Commission pour la libération de la croissance française, decision 26, see <http://www.liberationdelacroissance.fr/files/rapports/RapportCLCF.pdf>) and from Valérie Pécresse, Minister of Higher Education and Research, who, in a speech on 25 February, advocated intensive English study for all French students to help them reach effective bilingualism, and an extension of courses taught through English. The most recent Europe-wide survey (Wächter and Maiworm 2008) confirms that, whilst in southern Europe English-medium courses are a marginal phenomenon, this is not the case in northern Europe. The number of English-taught programmes has tripled since 2002, and two out of three students on them are foreigners in the country of study.

I undertook my own earlier survey of Englishisation not principally as an English specialist or a sociolinguist, but as a teacher of French with mother tongue English, concerned by the spread of English as an international language and by the accusations of linguistic imperialism, 'killer language' and '*Tyrannosaurus Rex*' levelled at English and its native speakers. I was in some respects comforted to find a shared conclusion across sociolinguists and language economists, best expressed by De Swaan (2001), that the whole world is heading towards diglossia, with a local identity language and a global transactional language, which we will use much as today we use a bicycle for local journeys and a plane for international ones. Vivian Cook mentions that English native speakers do not accommodate well to non-native English speakers, and the same finding

applies to university courses taught through the medium of English: the problems of understanding are most severe not between non-native speakers of different origins, but for L1 English students who have difficulty in comprehending non-native teachers, and non-native students comprehending their native-speaker fellow-students. There is some personal satisfaction in recognising that English native speakers, arrogantly occupying for so long a privileged position as their language went global, will increasingly be unable to rely on their native tongue and will be obliged to master international English too. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that the Englishisation of university teaching worldwide is a threat to multilingualism.

That threat is today accentuated by national research assessment. Research is, alongside teaching, the second great mission of universities, but, like teaching, national Governments have increasingly sought accountability and value for money from university research. In the UK, I am involved in the Research Assessment Exercise (www.rae.ac.uk), the sixth such systematic peer evaluation of research quality. The exercise determines £1.4 billion of annual funding. Success ensures rewards, while failure can mean a change of direction for individual careers and the closure of whole departments. Research assessment contributes to the higher education market as a key factor in the rankings which are themselves crucial to the choices of future international students.

While sociolinguists have been aware of a tendency for more and more journals to publish exclusively in English, and for English to dominate academic conferences, the link between research assessment and multilingualism has only recently become explicit. National Governments, since peer research assessment is costly, complex and subjective, are seeking to move to automated systems relying on objective, quantitative data;

- external research income
- research degrees and studentships awarded
- above all, citation indices.

The new Australian Government is the latest to move in this direction (December 2007). In the UK, the Research Assessment Exercise is to be replaced by a Research Excellence Framework, based on citation indices and relying on databases which favour publication in English (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/assessment/reform/>). The Anglo-American

dominance of research publication and citation is such that, as an authoritative Dutch scoping study, commissioned to inform the change, states: “The non-English publications ‘dilute’, as it were, the measured impact.” Researchers wishing to promote their own careers will be advised to publish only in English. More worryingly still, universities wishing to advance their own reputation and to climb the international rankings (and thereby attract more international fee-paying students) may actually *forbid* academics from publishing in languages other than English.

French academics, too, are becoming aware of the threat which quantitative research assessment poses to academic publishing in languages other than English, and an online petition launched in February 2008 – ‘Les scientifiques doivent-ils continuer à écrire en français ?’ (<http://petition.hermespublishing.com>) – gathered nearly 10,000 signatures in two months. A related email which I posted on an international discussion list brought messages from across the world. From Scandinavia to Thailand, academic multilingualism is threatened as English becomes the exclusive language of international academic publishing. Having myself published in French and German as well as English, and in translation in Spanish, Italian and Hungarian, I personally value multilingualism in publishing, and I would hate to think that books like the present one might become no more than historical curiosities.

4 Space and technologies

A final contextual factor in multilingualism in the twenty-first century is the changing nature of space. Travel is easier and cheaper, so that in motivation studies a desire to travel cannot be clearly classified as either an integrative or an instrumental orientation. Mass tourism has become a packaged experience, ‘consuming the exotic’, and the culture shock of direct experience of foreignness has everywhere been tamed and commercialised. The superficial likeness brought by globalisation allows travellers to enjoy the picturesque differences of food and landscape without the challenge of adapting to cultural and linguistic difference. Is there a danger that monoculturalism may flourish in a multicultural world, just as monolingualism thrives in multilingual Britain?

Space has also been diminished by *technologies* which have permeated society and the world inhabited by our students and by ourselves as teachers and researchers. Technology has rapidly, irresistibly, and irreversibly altered the nature of the interactions by which languages are acquired and for which they evolved in the first place. Today's world – both educational and everyday contexts is suffused and saturated by technology. Technological development is characterised by democratisation, globally standard but ephemeral platforms, enhanced capacity and mobility, and convergence of devices. Each year, the gadget in our pocket performs more functions, is cheaper, more mobile, more powerful and more ubiquitous. And it is changing the way we live. Europeans now spend more time on the internet than they do watching television. News media have been revolutionised by the advent of the internet and by user-generated content. The population of Second Life (an online virtual world) is larger than that of the majority of individual EU member states. Second Life has 250 real universities. The most popular video on YouTube has been viewed more than 900 million times. The social network Facebook (launched 2004) has 63 million registered members, of whom 15 million visit daily. MySpace has nearer 30 million daily users, and about 200 million members.

In the past decade alone, technologies have transformed financial and sexual crime through phishing and grooming, and transformed driving through speed and congestion sensors and GPS. Technology is changing the languages we use: we all google, my children facebook each other but skype with their parents. Over ninety per cent of written communication in western societies is electronic. Change is rapid, cultural and unpredictable – who would have guessed that a younger generation would abandon email for social networking? Yet an Australian contributor to a summer 2007 conference reported widespread student views that 'email is for old people'.

Because of the rapidity of social, technical and educational change, technology in language teaching – technological didactics – is a very challenging research area, made still more complex by the theoretical shift away from cognitive to sociocultural models of second language acquisition. Accounts of different aspects of computers in language learning and teaching do exist (Levy 1997, Warschauer and Kern 2000, Chappelle 2001, Beatty 2003, Jung 2005, Levy and Stockwell 2006, Chun 2007, Lamy and Hampel 2007). But the confrontation of physical and virtual contexts poses new questions about accepted

cultures and analyses. Anonymity, affect, silence, identity, communication are not the same online as they are face to face. Given the complexity of investigating multimodal virtual environments, it is unsurprising that technology-enhanced pedagogies have been somewhat marginalised in language teaching and research (Coleman 2005). But since good pedagogy depends on good research, the field is one which we at the UK Open University see as essential to the future of university language teaching, and which we have chosen to make our own. With 23 colleagues and 4 research students publishing in the broad area of technology-enhanced language learning since my appointment in 2001, the Open University represents one of the most active research groups in this domain.

I find it convenient to distinguish four modes of CALL (computer assisted language learning):

- computer as tutor (stand-alone)
- computer as resource (input)
- computer as publisher (output)
- computer as medium (CMC or computer-mediated communication).

CMC, whether synchronous or asynchronous, and whatever the affordances of the particular environment (text, audio, video, graphics, multimodal...) perhaps offers the greatest potential, and much work has already been done on email, tandem, online forums, chat, blogs, wikis, audio- and video-conferences and virtual worlds. It suggests that CMC can be good in that it provides increased opportunity for target language communication, increased motivation to communicate, lower anxiety, a learning community, and higher-level learning, yet CMC can be bad in that it encourages a bizarre language variety neither wholly written nor spoken, requires acquisition of a new culture which is neither the C1 nor the C2, remains at present text-dominated, often lacks the paralinguistic signs which help comprehensibility, can trigger negative affect (technophobia, frustration), and is susceptible to technology-driven pedagogy.

Since the Open University's 230,000 students are all part-time and distance-taught (see Coleman 2006a for a fuller description), my colleagues are at the forefront of language teaching using online and blended approaches, and robust quantitative and qualitative research is facilitated by the large numbers and cross-linguistic comparisons. Particular foci have been the development of audiographic conferencing (Hampel and Hauck 2004,

Hauck and Hampel 2005), the role of the tutor and of professional development (Hampel 2003, Hampel and Stickler 2005, Hauck and Stickler 2006), learner autonomy (Hurd 2005, Murphy 2005a, 2007, 2008), task design (Duensing *et al.* 2006, Hampel 2006, Lamy 2006), learner beliefs (Murphy 2005b, Hurd 2006), affect and metacognitive strategies (Hauck 2005, Hauck and Hurd 2005, Hurd 2007a, 2007b, Murphy 2008), the nature of online interactions (Hampel *et al.* 2005, Heins *et al.* 2007, Lamy 2004), multimodality (Hampel and Hauck 2006, Lamy 2006). In 2007, we hosted a webcast conference on Spoken Online Learning Events, at which one plenary speaker, Dorothy Chun from California, was present, but the three others were live from New Zealand, Australia and Japan respectively, and the live audience participated from across Europe and North America.

CMC research requires new methods, but we have been able to show that it is possible to achieve the same learning outcomes through online as through face-to-face language learning – although the process and hence the pedagogy (or didactics!) are very different. With the European Centre for Modern Languages, we are now working on training modules to disseminate expertise in online teaching – the DOTS (Developing Online Teaching Skills) project. It is my view that, as professional linguists with an interest in multilingualism, we cannot ignore the changes technology is bringing both to social contexts and to the educational process. And while the British public may tend to the monolingual, it is satisfying to note that ‘languages teachers in UK Higher Education are technologically very literate’, according to a 2008 study (Barr *et al.* 2008).

5 Conclusion

This review of historical, geographical, social and educational contexts, with their changing motivations and technologies, suggests forcefully that nothing can be taken for granted. There are global pressures on universities to adopt ELF, not least the need to recruit international students in order to fund national expansion of higher education. While multilingualism appears to offer enhanced employability, there is little evidence that this subsequently translates into a higher salary, so we may need to rely on social

attitudes, legislation at national and European levels, and personal satisfactions to motivate continued commitment to the multilingualism which many of us see as a prerequisite to becoming, like Socrates or Michel de Montaigne, a citizen of the world. We must, as Montaigne did, anticipate change without being certain what it will bring. But as academic linguists, by acting according to the findings of research and the good practices in pedagogy, and by monitoring and where possible influencing policy in domains such as English-medium teaching and citation-based research assessment, we are privileged to be able to play a small part in the ongoing promotion of multilingualism.

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