MULTIPLE LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: CONTRIBUTING NEW ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Multilingualism/multiple language learning/multilingual acquisition/third language acquisition (TLA)/L3-learning¹ are terms to describe the process of the learning of languages after having acquired a first foreign language (L2). During the last two decades, studies on multiple language learning have grown at an exponential rate. Numerous studies with different research approaches and methods provided support for the hypothesis that TLA differs from second language acquisition (SLA) as it is significantly more complex and more linguistic and external factors are involved in TLA. Hence, this situation has implications for teachers, curriculum planners, language policy planners, researchers and the multilingual classroom, in particular in multilingual environments like Malaysia. In view of this it becomes obvious, that a) research within the SLA paradigm fails to explain processes of multiple language learning, and b) that models of language teaching have to be restructured in order to meet the facts of the multilingual reality of teaching environments in the 21st century. It is assumed that an efficient and successful language teaching and learning should consider these multilingual realities, which does not necessarily mean re-inventing the wheel but constantly monitoring developments in research and using the best possible approaches of language teaching. This is the only way that more recent findings of research can be communicated in a sustainable way to teachers and learners.

KEYWORDS: MULTILINGUALISM, MULTIPLE LANGUAGE LEARNING, TLA, GERMAN L3 AFTER ENGLISH L2, MULTILINGUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Introduction

One of the basic conditions in the 21st century is that multilingualism on societal and individual level is the norm in most parts of the world, creating a 'new linguistic world order' (Maurais, 2003). Aronin and Singleton (2008) showed that multilingualism correlates with politico-economic aspects of globalization and mobility, and multilingualism is the "dominant world paradigm" (Hufeisen 2005, p. 34). Globalisation processes cause continuously economic, social and political changes in all societies. Parallel to this, linguistic diversity becomes a typical standard situation which affects almost all areas of life. Needless to say, that language learning environments change accordingly, as the multilingual classroom is the norm and not a linguistic static unit. Following up these lines of

¹I will use the terms interchangeably.

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thoughts, namely that multilingualism is the norm in the new millennium, language planners, education-policy makers, curriculum planners, language material developers, educators and researchers cannot ignore the global discourse further on.

Research on foreign language acquisition has inspired generations of language teachers and language pedagogy as well as research approaches, in particular Chomsky's² (1965) model of the ideal native speaker. The model of an ideal speaker is increasingly being critically examined and powerful arguments against Chomsky's innate hypothesis have been expressed by a growing number of researchers (Tomasello & Bates, 2001; Davies, 2003; Sampson, 2005; Butzkamm, 2010; Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). Along these lines but from another point of view, researchers who study multilingualism do not refer to competence and performance, but to multilingual language proficiency which shows particular specifics and the influence of multifaceted internal and external factors, which determine language acquisition processes. In contrast to early research on bilingualism, where bilingualism is considered as 'double-monolingualism', recent research supports the idea of 'multi-competence', as multilinguals possess different linguistic competencies compared to monolinguals. The term was introduced by Cook who described this phenomenon as follows: "L2 learners are not failed monolinguals but people in their own right" (Cook 1996, p. 65; 2002). Languages are no stable systems, they change over times, and multilingual competence is not the sum of two or more monolingual competences (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998).

If one puts together current global networking and integration of people from diverse countries into these networks, it becomes quite clear that there is a pressing need for new directions in language education.

Why a different perspective?

With respect to the fact that human beings are multilingual by nature (Wandruszka, 1979), and that "multilingualism is the normal state of linguistic competence" (Hammarberg 2009, p. 2, italics in original), one can see that the orientation of the major research fields in applied linguistics has shifted to some extent. Research on multilingualism has become an up-and-coming field of research in its own right. For a comprehensive overview, see Aronin & Hufeisen (2009) and Kärchner-Ober (2011, with a special focus on South-East Asia). One of the most important points are issues of multilingualism/multiple language learning is how education and language pedagogy can benefit from research on multilingualism.

Multilingualism as target

"Linguistic ideologies (based on standard monolingualism)", so Heller (2007 p. 90), are losing [sic!] their legitimacy." The question nowadays is how we can adapt these new linguistic realities. In the European context, the central task of education has become to enable European citizens to possess a functional command of three languages in order to be able to participate in economical, cultural,

²Chomsky's theories are philosophically oriented and not based on empirical studies. Chomsky considers language as a biological phenomenon, which is neither influenced by social nor by cultural parameters. Though not having language pedagogy in his mind, research and language teaching pedagogy was dominated by Chomskyan theories.

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scientific and political discourses. The core elements of European language programmes can be summarized as follows:

1. Loyalty to one's own native language, but no rejection of multilingualism
2. A credible and lasting language policy
3. Recognition of multilingualism in one's own country
4. Life-long language learning
5. Quality of teacher training as a prerequisite
6. Transparent language policy

A linguistic monoculture has negative effects for any society in the area of globalization, be it economically or politically. The Council of Europe (Draft, 2002: 17) states:

The pursuit of diversity and plurilingualism [...] requires a political will and action to counteract economic factors and popular misconceptions, which will otherwise lead to reduction and homogenization in general with the plurilingualism of individuals only existing among social elites.

In addition, we have to realize that English has been embraced as lingua franca which has also implications on language learning pedagogy.

Remarks on terminological issues

Bi- or multilingualism has been associated with "perfect mastery" of two or more languages for decades. In the 21st century, the concept of a perfect command of language is no longer supportable. Characteristic for new concepts of multilingualism is that learners do not start from scratch when learning a third language, that the existing language repertoire of the learner is extended, and that levels of competency may vary; e.g. a high level of reading comprehension in language X, a medium level of speaking competency in language Y, and some basic competency in language Z could be a possible linguistic goal for an individual. Potentially, a basic knowledge of another script will be acquired to be able to read signs in a country where known scripts are not used, on the other side, one aims to achieve a high competency in a language to join the diplomatic service.

The terminology used in research on second language acquisition follows a linear numbering to a great extent. L1 means usually mother tongue/first language, L2 second language, the term L3 or third language was virtually never used in research studies. It seems to be clear from the points mentioned above, that a linear numbering causes problems. An individual can possess more than one L1 or L2, the languages can be acquired at different stages in the individual's life, an L1 can become an L2 and vice versa, a foreign language can become a second language, the proficiency of language(s) may change over time, additional languages are learned, language loss or language attrition may occur, and individuals may not be literate in one of their languages they speak. Languages are embedded in societies, and the individual has to adapt his/her language repertoire accordingly. The problematic nature to precisely define what multilingualism means has been discussed in the literature (De Angelis 2007; Hammarberg, 2009; Kemp, 2009). Thus, it is important that researchers clearly define the phenomenon according to the goals of their respective studies. In the European context, the term plurilingualism denotes individual multilingualism; the term multilingualism is used to describe societal polyglottism. The term third language (L3) is widely used

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to describe the acquisition of a second foreign language. Herdina & Jessner (2002 p.55-58) prefer the term multilingual proficiency in order to describe the individual multilingualism, and Hufeisen (2005) feels that multilingualism can be defined as functional proficiency and language use in more than two languages. With respect to individual multilingual abilities, Aronin & Ó Laoire (2004) coined the term. Terminological consistency across publications and studies is not yet available.

In this paper, I describe a multilingual as an individual who possesses a command of more than two languages, regardless of proficiency or literacy, and who is able to use more than two languages in different domains and for different purposes. I will use the term L3 in order to distinguish between L2-learning processes and L3-learning in institutional contexts. For the purpose of this paper, no distinction is made between acquisition and learning.³

Theoretical approaches

The increasing interest in multiple language learning is reflected in a rapid growing number of scholars who examined various aspects of tertiary language acquisition (TLA)/multiple language learning from different angles (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998; Gibson & Hufeisen, 2003; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Mißler, 1999; Cenoz, 2000; Meißner, 2003; Cenoz & Hufeisen & Jessner, 2001, 2003; Hufeisen, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005; Marx, 2005; Jessner, 1999, 2006; De Angelis, 2007; Ringbom, 2007; Kärchner-Ober, 2007, 2009; Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009). Early research on tertiary language acquisition gave us indications that learning a first foreign language (L2) differed from acquiring a second foreign language (L3). Many following studies have given weight to the significance of the differences. It became quite clear, that common theories of SLA could not explain language learning processes where more than two languages were involved.

The research field of TLA has established itself and contributed to a better understanding of language learning processes where more than two languages are involved. At the beginning of the 21st century, intense and far more comprehensive research activities took place and research on multiple language learning became a significant area of research within studies on foreign language learning. Based on the results of studies on multiple language learning, theoretical frameworks and models of multiple language learning have been developed (Williams & Hammarberg, 1998; Herdina & Jessner, 2002; Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner, 2003; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Hufeisen, 2005), and didactical concepts were brought into existence, identifying and problematizing crucial issues related to multilingual pedagogy and curricula (Klein & Stegmann, 2000; Hufeisen, 2005; Meißner, 2004; Hufeisen & Marx, 2005). Results gained in research on multilingualism are transformed into a tertiary language didactics, and conceptions of a tertiary language didactics have already been implemented in several textbooks and teaching material.

Research on tertiary language acquisition

In the beginning of the 1990s researchers examined the dynamics of multiple language acquisition, this includes, among other research niches, psycholinguistic domains (Hufeisen 1991, Jessner 2006), sociolinguistics (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000; Aronin, 2006), applied linguistics (Hufeisen & Marx, 2007),

³It should also be noted that the differentiation between these terms is not as strict and dogmatic than previously believed.

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multiple language learning/didactical approaches (Hufeisen, 1994), and suggestions for a common curriculum (Krumm, 2004; Hufeisen & Lutjeharms, 2005). Theories and models of TLA have been developed (Hufeisen, 2003; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Herdina & Jessner, 2000; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998). Numerous empirical studies have been carried out⁴ and they did not only offer interesting insights of language learning processes of multilinguals but also provided evidence for the unique traits of tertiary language learning.

German is a typical L3, as it is widely taught as second foreign language in many countries. Methodic-didactic concepts of learning German as L3 after English L2 have been developed (*DaFmE*⁵ = German as foreign language after English), and research studies revealed that English exerts an influence on German, either positively or negatively (Marx, 2005; Kärchner-Ober, 2009). It should be noted, however, that research on multiple language learning has been mainly carried out in Western contexts, as well as the development of theories and models of multiple language learning. In the following section, I will briefly discuss current models and theories of multiple language learning.

Critical analysis of SLA within the context of multilingualism

The complexity and characteristics of multilingualism cannot be explained through theoretical models of SLA. Research carried out within the framework of SLA dominated the research field, but did not take into account the learners' previous language contacts. Bearing in mind, that many individuals have experience with more than one language during their lifetime, and taking into account that multilinguals are multicompetent speakers in their own right (Cook, 1991, 2002), I agree with researchers who work in the field of multilingualism to separate bilingualism from multilingualism (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009, p. 157). It is argued, that subsuming third language acquisition under second language acquisition is not accurate, as the term second does not represent the characteristics of multiple language acquisition. As the concepts of SLA cover only the second or foreign language against the background of the native language, no differences have been made whether the learners were bi- or multilingual. Bi- and multilinguals are not deficient speakers of their languages, and language competence should not be measured against a monolingual background. Language learning is an ongoing process, which does not follow a straight line, it is complex, dynamic, fluid, an endless number of varieties, mixes, hybrids and fusions exist, and competencies may vary over time, language attrition may occur, languages mix or influence each other, and languages interact in many ways (Herdina & Jessner, 2000; Hufeisen, 2003, 2005; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004; Shohamy, 2006; Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009).

Current theories of TLA

Given the fact that multiple language learning/TLA differs from SLA, different theories and models of multilingualism have been developed. All models attempt to describe factors involved in TLA. Despite their different approaches they do not contradict but complement each other.

⁴ A full account of these studies cannot be offered here, I refer to the literature mentioned in the sections above.

⁵ *DaFmE* = *Deutsch als Fremdsprache nach Englisch*.

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Ecological model of multilinguality– Aronin & Ó Laoire (2004)

The main focus of the Ecological Model is a sociolinguistic one. Multilingualism is reviewed as a product of the multilingual landscape and the learning environment. The set of languages that a multilingual individual possesses may vary, new languages may appear and the level of mastery in the already existing languages may change more often than in the used and better-maintained languages. The languages, skills and knowledge from various language systems overlap, fluctuate and interchange. Not only language and knowledge fluctuate, but also and primarily the personality of the multilingual – the essence of the multilinguality fluctuates and changes depending on the changes in his or her life (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004, p. 21). The formula 'environment-language-speaker' (Aronin, 2006, p. 144) describes the specific aspects of multilingualism. This model does not emphasize the role of any L2 but mainly the influence of a certain (educational) context.

Dynamic model of multilingualism (DMM) – Herdina & Jessner (2002)

Maybe the most complex model is represented by the DMM. It is based on the theoretical framework of the chaos-theory and is a psycholinguistic model. It concentrates on the dynamic development of all languages and also focuses on language loss, language attrition and fossilization. Multilingualism is not regarded as the sum of its mere parts. Language learning is a dynamic process and does not take place linear, various components steadily change and synthesize in a multilingual reality. Characteristics of effective communicative needs and perceived communicative needs (Herdina & Jessner, 2002, p.136) are described as follows:

- the number of communicative exchange with speakers of language L1 and speakers of language L2,
- the duration of the exchange and
- the intensity of the exchange, which can be determined as the closeness of the individual with whom the exchange has taken place .

Concerning the role and status of languages, the DMM also look at these factors as influential ones. The DMM does not highlight the role of the L2 in particular but on the every-dynamic fluidity of all languages.

Factor model – Hufeisen (2005)

The factor model is a linguistic model and describes individual factors chronologically. In contrast to other models, it mainly focuses on the situation of instructed teaching and learning and assumes a difference in the learning of a first foreign language, and a second foreign language and emphasizes the important role of the L2. What makes the difference between learning and L2 and L3? When children start to learn a first foreign language, they already have developed their cognitive abilities and a certain life experience, they know about their strategies (Müller-Lancé, 2003; Jessner, 2006; Neuner-Anfindsen, 2005; de Angelis, 2007; Hammarberg, 2009), they have dealt with factors such as anxiety, motivation and have made assumptions about how a language is learned. Furthermore, they try to incorporate certain strategies and try into their learning of a new language. When they start to learn a second foreign language, they are usually older and have already made the experience of what it means to learn a foreign language. They know about the difficulties, they might have experienced

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not understanding everything; they have developed strategies or know how to use a dictionary and developed their own learning style.

Though all models presented from different points of view, they do not contradict but complement each other. While Hufeisen's factor model concentrates on linguistic and learning factors, the DMM emphasizes the dynamic processes of language learning, while Aronin and Ó Laoire consider the socio-cultural environment.

Learning third languages: key issues

On the basis of results of various studies in TLA it can be argued, that bilinguals possibly have an advantage in learning subsequent languages. They possess larger metacognitive skills, they know how to use a variety of learning strategies and use their knowledge of the L2, especially when the L2 is a related language to L3 and the L1 a typologically distant language. The figure below schematically represents the different stages in which learning an L1, L2 and L3 takes place and which factors come into play:

Figure 1: Stages of language learning

The main principles of L3-learning are further described by Gibson, Hufeisen & Libben (2001, p. 138):

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The factors which affect learning a L3 have not only become more complex, but they are also qualitatively different from L2 learning. These learners will have a broader depth and range not only of general language learning strategies, but also of specific experiences and strategies to foreign language learning, as well as a greater metalinguistic knowledge of how languages are structured in general.

Teaching third languages

In the literature it is reported that teaching a third language (L3) should incorporate previous language learning experiences to facilitate the learning process (Hufeisen, 2005; Marx, 2005), especially when L2 and L3 are typologically related languages. The findings of multilingual language research indicate that L3-learners are experienced in making use of their prior acquired knowledge and are able to organize their learning more effectively. In establishing objectives for an efficient tertiary language teaching, the following basic principles are suggested:

- Learners should become aware of their whole linguistic repertoire
- Near-nativeness in all languages not as a major goal
- Developing of various competencies in different languages
- Using different languages for a variety of purposes (functional command)
- Communicative proficiency in more than two languages
- Development of sub-competencies
- Receptive multilingualism (as practiced in Scandinavian countries)
- Not striving for perfection in all areas of language skills (this is even not possible in native tongues)

A word of caution: To abandon the aim of near-nativeness does not under any circumstances imply to envisage an insufficient command of any language. Third language teaching demands a high degree of awareness and expertise, and teachers should consider the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the learners. The main objective of a plurilingual didactics is always to enable learners to make use of their prior acquired languages, in particular if the L2 is related to an L3 and L1 and L3 are non-related.

Guidelines of conceptions of a multiple language didactics

In the framework of multiple language learning, different focal points of a specific multilingualism didactics have emerged:

1. Studies of semi-communication in Scandinavia (Braumüller & Zevaert, 2001). Main area: receptive communication. Speakers of different languages speak their own language, but are able to understand each other.
2. Models of intercomprehension/EuroCom-models (Klein & Stegmann, 2000; Hufeisen & Marx, 2007). Main area: broadening the concepts of the term transfer, language learning awareness, and receptive skills (activation of interlingual transfer bases). The aim is to sensitise learners to make use of prior acquired linguistic resources, focus on positive transfer.

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3. Tertiary language didactics (Hufeisen & Neuner, 2005). Main area: learning German L3 after English L2 (DaF/E). English and German are typologically closely related, positive effects if learners are trained to recognise similarities/dissimilarities between languages.
4. Common language curriculum (Lüdi, 2003; Hufeisen & Lutjeharms, 2005). Main area: integrative language concepts, bilingual education, CLIL (parallel learning of subject content and language).

Though having different focal areas, concepts of a multiple language didactics, the main principle of all approaches is the same, namely to teach languages not separately, but joining them together. Insights from research on neurobiology and language learning made very clear that languages are not stored in single compartments in the brain but are interconnected (Müller-Lancé, 2003; Hufeisen & Gibson, 2003; Meißner, 2004). Language learning is neither linear nor consecutive.

In the following sections I would like to offer the reader a few practical examples of multilingual didactics.

Intercomprehensive approaches

EuroCom - models (cf. Klein & Stegmann, 2000), which include the intercomprehensive approach, teach transfer-based deduction strategies to enable multilingual receptive competence among Europeans by making optimum usage of the limited time available for learning languages. EuroCom uses the 'seven sevens' to extract so much familiar material from languages which are related yet seemingly unknown to the learner that the traditional limitation to one language in European language training appears uneconomic. The EuroCom method progressively supports the acquisition of language-learning competence.

The main concepts can be summarized as follows:

- To promote language learning awareness, to show the learner what he already knows and to foster recognition effects such as focus on cognates, similar syntactical structures between all languages
- To enhance abilities to autonomous learning as one of the key concepts in view of demands of the job market
- To sensitize learner to organise their spontaneous grammar, to initiate comparing all languages, to foster metalinguistic awareness, to make the learner aware of learning strategies and autonomous learning and to motivate learners.

Traditional foreign language teaching is organised in a linear fashion and distributed evenly. Each foreign language starts with almost the same basic principles. Table 1 displays a scheme of competency levels and the distribution.⁶

⁶ Cf. Meißner, 2005 p. 133

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Table 1: Traditional progression of foreign language teaching

Level	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
	Breakthrough	Waystage	Threshold	Vantage	Effective Proficiency	Mastery
Reading						
Listening						
Writing						
Speaking						

Based on principles of an intercomprehension model with a strong focus to develop fast receptive skills, the productive skills will be developed later.

Table 2: Intercomprehension principles

Level	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
	Breakthrough	Waystage	Threshold	Vantage	Effective Proficiency	Mastery
Reading						
Listening						
Writing						
Speaking						

Reading skills will be developed very fast, listening comprehension is based on reading skills and productive skills can be improved.

Tertiary language didactics: L3 (German) and L2 (English)

English and German belong to the same Germanic language family and share a lot of common features in vocabulary and grammar. However, there are a lot of differences as well. As one of the major goals of multilingualism didactics is to develop the learners' language awareness, the teacher can take steps to make the learners aware of similarities or dissimilarities between the languages. A conscious activation of prior knowledge facilitates the access to a new language. Whenever possible, the L1 should be included. It cannot be avoided that learners refer to their L1.

Word recognition and phonological decoding are essential skills in acquiring a new language. An activation of the mental multilingual lexicon could facilitate learning processes. Stimuli are cognates/internationalism, as it can be assumed, that lexical items are stored in one system. A comparison of lexical items as shown below helps learners to better understand common features and differences in various languages.

Table 3: Cognates

L1 Bahasa Malaysia	L2 English	L3 German
Polis	police	Polizei
Kualiti	quality	Qualität
Muzik	music	Musik

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L1 Bahasa Malaysia	L2 English	L3 German
komputer	computer	Computer
Teksi	taxi	Taxi
Januari, februari...	January, February...	Januar, Februar....
Filem	film	Film

As Butzkamm (2010, p. 3) points out, grammar is widely taught by giving explanations as follows: "If there is no question word in the direct question, we use if or whether in the indirect question." In line with teachers who adhere to principles of a tertiary language didactics, he favours to compare languages as shown in table 3:

Table 4: Comparison between languages (cf. Butzkamm, 2010, p. 6)

English	German	French
He wants to know if ...	Er will wissen, ob...	Il veut savoir si...

To understand principles of language structures, a sample as shown in table 4 may give an idea how learners can be encouraged to make use of their linguistic repertoire:

Table 5: Structures (cf. Butzkamm 2010, p. 6)

Chinese	English	German
guì bù guì? 贵不贵?	Is it expensive? <i>*Expensive, not expensive?</i>	Ist es teuer?
yuǎn bù yuǎn? 远不远?	Is it far? <i>*Far, not far?</i>	Ist es weit?

Another example is presented in table 6:

Table 6: Syntax

BM	Possible	Englisch	Possible	German	Possible
Kucing makan ikan.	YES	The cat eats the fish.	YES	Die Katze isst den Fisch.	YES
Ikan makan kucing.	NO	The fish eats the cat.	NO	Den Fisch isst die Katze.	YES

Learners may quickly detect similarities or dissimilarities of grammatical units if material is presented as displayed in table 7:

Table 7: Similarities and dissimilarities

Grammar	German		English		L1(native tongue)		German
Infinitive with "zu": most verbs in	Ich <u>hoffe zu gewinnen</u> .	☺ ☺	I <u>hope to win</u> .				Ich <u>hoffe zu gewinnen</u> .

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Grammar	German		English		L1(native tongue)	German
combination with another verb	Er hat <u>versucht zu lernen</u> . Ich <u>freue mich zu kommen</u> .	P	He <u>tried to learn</u> . I <u>am looking forward to coming</u> .			Er hat <u>versucht zu lernen</u> . Ich <u>freue mich zu kommen</u> .
Forms of perfect tense. Most verbs build the perfect tense with haben + past participle	Ich habe gespielt. Ich habe gegessen. Ich habe studiert.	☺ ☺ ☺	I have played. I have eaten I have studied.		(Saya) sudah main Saya sudah makan Saya sudah belajar	Ich habe gespielt. Ich habe gegessen. Ich habe studiert.
sein +past participle	Ich bin gereist.	P	I have travelled.		Saya sudah melancung	Ich bin gereist.

The starting point begins with the question how can we build “language bridges” between L1, L2 and L3. Shifting away from the traditional paradigm to avoid mistakes under any circumstances, and an orientation towards possible positive transfer bridges, the learning processes become less stressful. In the context of tertiary language didactics, transfer means to address specific parameters as for example language learning experience, learning strategies, learning techniques, and view these parameters from as many angles as possible. A further aim is to enable learners to become more autonomous in their language learning processes. However, it should be remembered that language learning always requires effort and is not easy per se.

Concluding remarks and outlook

The impact of globalization, increasing mobility, new economy in multilingualism creates a new scenario within educational environments in all parts of the world. In this paper, I addressed theoretical and practical issues of multilingualism and multiple language learning. I attempted to outline the potential usefulness of effective didactical approaches and multilingual education, as multilingual language education is increasingly being regarded as a significant factor in the context of globalization. The existence of multilingual societies challenges changes of perspectives with regard to language educational issues. Alongside with lively debates what languages should be taught in educational settings and what should be the language of instruction, language policy makers, researchers and educators have to take into account the multilingual reality in our contemporary world. The close ties between research and teaching in TLA provides an increasingly solid basis for future directions in teaching and learning of multiple languages.

The rising interest in research on multiple language learning is supported by the linguistic realities in the 21st century, this falls in line with further developments in studies on multilingualism, be it a

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critical discourse on language rights (Skutnabb-Kanggas *et al.*, 2009), theory of language management (Spolsky, 2009), the role of English education (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008), mother-tongue education (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009), multilingual literacies (Hornberger, 2002), citizenship and identity (Clark, 2009), and economics of multilingual workplaces (Grin Sfreddo & Vaillancourt, 2010).

Given the fact that Malaysia is a multilingual country and foreign language learning takes place on the individuals' plurilingual linguistic constellations, it is important for educators, parents, language planners and language policy makers to be aware of the latest results of research on multiple language learning. As a matter of fact, the wheel must not be re-invented, and re-inventing language teaching seems to be illusionary. But the time has come to change old paradigms of language teaching and learning as multilingual classrooms are an expanding phenomenon in the global context and regionalisation and internationalisation have become complementary entities. New perspectives in the discipline of research on multilingualism will further expand and it is hoped, that awareness-raising processes related to multilingual issues are triggered, and benefits of linguistic diversity are regarded as a major assets.

The present paper is a contribution in that direction, to pay further attention to new developments on pedagogical approaches to multiple language learning/L3-learning. In conclusion, therefore, I hope this paper will encourage more research on TLA within the Malaysian context, as data from non-Western contexts are still rare.

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