

Chapter 7

Multilingualism in Minority Groups: A Comparison Study of Monolingual and Multilingual Individuals

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ABSTRACT

Multilingualism, defined as the ability of speaking two or more languages, is a phenomenon gaining importance each passing day. Accordingly, there is a growing interest in how multilingual individuals make use of their linguistic repertoires in the language learning process. This chapter aims to explore the crosslinguistic interaction of multilingual English language learners living in Mardin in their writing tasks and thinking processes. The results yielded that bi/multilingual individuals actively use their previously learned languages flexibly. There was also evidence translanguaging across all languages with the dominance role of Turkish. The findings propose that proficiency of learners in their L1 and L2 should not be underestimated in evaluating proficiency in L3 as multilingual individuals use different resources of different languages all together for effective communication, and there are no 'boundaries' across their languages as proposed by Canagarajah.

INTRODUCTION

Multilingual individuals' use of their language repertoires has been an important area of study in the foreign language teaching area. The term multilingualism has recently gained importance as a result of globalization and the international mobility of individuals although it is not a new phenomenon (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015). This is a natural result of the fact that there are nearly 7000 languages and 200 independent countries all over the world (Lewis, 2009 as cited in Cenoz, 2013b). This fact yields the result

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that many people need to speak the official language of the country that they live in to pursue their daily lives. Multilingual individuals acquire at least one language during their childhood which is called first language (L1) without formal education. Language acquisition, which is usually called first language acquisition (FLA), is concerned with infants' acquisition of their native language. On the other hand, it can also be called bilingual first language acquisition, which deals with the acquisition of two native languages simultaneously (Bergman, 1976). In some cases, children may acquire two languages during their childhood which makes them simultaneous bilinguals. Bi/multilingual individuals are found out to be more successful in learning additional languages than the monolingual ones (Kaushanskaya & Marian, 2009). Therefore, it is important to raise awareness to those individuals in order to achieve a more successful language teaching policy, and Turkey hosts high number of multilingual individuals due to its historically, culturally and linguistically rich heritage

Turkey has had a complex linguistic identity over the history as a result of its location between Asia and Europe. In addition to that complexity, the educational policy of language learning allows individuals to learn English as a foreign language in a formal educational context or other elective languages. These elective language courses can be chosen by the learners, and the elected courses are often either German or French (Thompson & Khawaja, 2016). When the minority population in major areas of Turkey is evaluated, the presence of greater diversity as a result of multilingualism is evident. Therefore, it can be claimed that the medium of instruction at school generally is not the same with the language that learners speak at home or in their social environment. The Institution of Population in Turkey conducted a census in 1935 and 1965 at Hacettepe University and results revealed that 13,1% of the population speak another first language other than Turkish (Türkdogan, 1999; p.187-188 as cited in Karahan, 2005). Those results show that nearly one-fifth of the Turkish population do not learn Turkish as their mother tongue but they learn another language. Additionally, they learn foreign languages at schools such as English, German, and French which counts for the third language of the learners. They learn Turkish as their second language either by formal instruction or in their social context (Karahan, 2005). Mardin is one these example contexts in which individuals acquire additional languages.

Mardin is selected as the research site for having a population from different cultures, religions, and languages within the context of this research study. Mardin, a city located in the southeast of Turkey, is one of the examples of multilingual areas of Turkey with a multi-ethnic population. The population of the city is composed of Turks, Muslim Arabs and Kurds, Syriac Christians and the Ezidis (Isik, 2011). Because of its cultural and religious dimension and the harmony of all those differences, Mardin is generally called as "the city of languages and religions". Thanks to its richness of culture, languages, and religions, Mardin was accepted to the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). The observation of linguistic use of the multilingual individuals living in Turkey, being one of the multilingual and multicultural countries, needs to be examined in detail from different perspectives such as language use, teaching and learning strategies. Considering the issues explained above, it is obvious that many English language teachers in Turkey have students in their classrooms coming from different linguistic backgrounds. This fact may yield advantages and disadvantages for pedagogic implications for both teachers and the students. Hence, it is crucial to get a deeper understanding about language learning processes of bi/multilingual learners in Turkey. As language teaching and classroom practices are generally challenging for language teachers and language learners' profiles differ in each region of Turkey, the present study will examine the case of multilingual individuals and their use of linguistic repertoires as creative problem solvers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether multilingual learners of English in Mardin make use of their linguistic repertoire in writing activities. The main focus

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