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FROM MULTILINGUALISM TO PLURILINGUALISM: COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

In contrast to the classical bi-/multilingual concept, which treats language proficiency as the sum of their components, in the context of polylingualism it constitutes a single, dynamic linguistic repertoire. Languages are viewed as complex adaptive systems that are formed through situational practices. As a result, the emphasis shifts from linguistic aspects to the individual's activity in the process of interaction between different languages (Lüdi, 2021). Polylinguals are not only those people who are proficient in all their languages, they are also those who actively use more than one language, regardless of their level of proficiency. Thus, polylinguals can switch between languages when necessary, speak one language while understanding another, and act as mediators between people who do not share a common language (Council of Europe, 2018). An individual's communication skills are enhanced by knowledge of several languages and an understanding of various emotional and sociocultural contexts. These skills help multilinguals navigate ambiguous situations arising from cultural differences (Piccardo, 2021).

Multilingual competence encompasses an understanding of the phenomena of bilingualism, multilingualism, and polylingualism, as well as an appreciation of the linguistic and cognitive benefits of multilingualism. This knowledge is declarative and plays an important role in the acquisition of competence, as it clarifies the very essence of the phenomenon of multilingualism, which increases intrinsic motivation for learning a foreign language and makes the process more effective (Hambrick & Mainz, 2011). Another important declarative knowledge is the concept of xenoglossophobia, a state of fear, anxiety, and worry associated with various aspects of foreign language learning (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020). Anxiety can accompany both productive skills (speaking

and writing) and receptive skills (reading and listening). Understanding the nature of this fear makes it easier for people learning a new language to overcome it. This same knowledge helps teachers structure instruction effectively and psychologically comfortably. Procedural knowledge of multilingual competence is metalinguistic awareness (Chomsky, 1968), mastery of information about language at the phonemic, morphemic, lexical, and syntactic levels.

The first aspect of multilingual competence is the intrinsic motivation for learning a foreign language in multilinguals. This motivation stems from the fact that multilingualism is a system of relationships between languages that underlies linguistic mechanisms and cultural connotations. This determines an individual's personal, linguistic, and cultural development, as well as their personal attitude toward linguistic diversity, including openness, curiosity, and flexibility (Piccardo, 2017). An important characteristic of multilingual competence is tolerance of ambiguity, a personality trait associated with creative behavior (Zenasni, Besançon, & Lubart, 2008) and suggesting a tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable. Proficiency in multiple languages has been found to be associated with tolerance of ambiguity (Dewaele & Wei, 2013).

Cognitive flexibility is a significant characteristic of individuals with multilingual competence. This trait allows a person to find different points of view, switch from one perspective to another, and think outside the box. Cognitive flexibility provides the ability to transcend the conceptual boundaries of a standard category. Modern research confirms that both bilingual children and adults perform better on non-linguistic tasks that require cognitive flexibility (Adi-Japha, Berberich-Artzi & Libnawi, 2010; Costa, Hernandez & Sebastián-Gallés, 2008). Confidence in using a foreign language also distinguishes people with multilingual competence. Thus, even in the presence of language anxiety, multilingual individuals demonstrate higher self-confidence compared to people who speak only one language (Bensalem & Thompson, 2022). The

next component of this category is self-control and volition, which allows an individual to focus on achieving a goal and resist the urge to be distracted by secondary activities. Existing research confirms that sustained and long-term multilingual experience positively influences the development of an individual's self-control, which is due to their need to monitor and switch between languages in cross-linguistic interactions (Poarch, 2018). Important components of multilingual competence include attitudes toward the acceptance of one's native and foreign languages, as well as the acceptance of non-native speakers. The ability to communicate in different languages ensures depth and flexibility in mutual understanding between representatives of different cultures by creating a common conceptual base, which positively influences the overall individual communicative culture. In the process of learning foreign languages and communicating in different languages, people also master different cultures, making them more tolerant and open to different contexts of interaction.

Based on the description of multilingual competence given above, it presupposes not only knowledge of languages, but the interaction of linguistic and cultural factors accompanying multilingual communication. Thus, the phenomenon of multilingualism is inseparable from the phenomenon of multiculturalism. This interconnection manifests itself in the ability of individuals to navigate diverse cultural contexts, interpret meanings beyond literal translation, and adapt their communicative behavior according to social norms, values, and traditions of different communities. Multilingual speakers often act as cultural mediators, bridging gaps between groups and fostering mutual understanding, which highlights that effective multilingual competence involves not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and flexibility in communication.

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