

ECER KEYNOTE

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Europe: a challenge for educational research and practice

INGRID GOGOLIN

University of Hamburg, Germany

ABSTRACT Diversity of languages and cultural backgrounds is a common reality in European societies. But European educational systems do not adapt very well to this reality. It can be observed that a linguistic and cultural background different from the respective national one serves as a means of exclusion, of prevention from equal access. The contribution offers reflections about the question, if and how the traditional notion of nation contributes to the – in a democratic society – unwelcome stratification effects for children from immigrant minorities in Europe.

About one-third of the European population under the age of 35 years has an immigrant background. This is an important, but is not the only, cause of linguistic and cultural diversity in the European educational systems. Unfortunately, these systems did not in the past adapt very well to diversity among their populations. In all European school systems, pupils with immigrant backgrounds are severely disadvantaged.

In the first part of my contribution, I will illustrate actual diversity in European urban areas with a practical example: the linguistic and cultural composition of an average inner-city school which could be located in any European city (in fact it is located in Hamburg, Germany). Secondly, I present some reflections on the traditional linguistic and cultural identity of European education systems: does this contribute – and how – to the persistent exclusion of pupils with an immigrant background from equal success? Approximate answers to this question stem from international comparative educational research. Finally, I present the example of a comparative study, aiming to illustrate the fruitful discoveries about education and education systems if educational research takes diversity into account.

Actual Diversity in European Urban Areas

Let me present a totally normal, ordinary German school to you. It is a small primary school with roughly 200 children, located in the inner city of Hamburg. In this school, nearly 50% of the children have a monolingual background. They come from families with long ancestral lines in Germany. The other half represents more than 15 nationalities, about 20 different home languages. Many of these children speak more than two languages.

For all the children in this school, multilingualism and diversity of cultural heritages and lifestyles form part of their daily experience. The German language plays the role of *lingua franca* for everybody in the school. Nevertheless, it is anything but the only language there. Alongside German, it has become commonplace for the children to use other languages actively: during games one child counts in Turkish, another gives greetings or thanks in Italian, others know Portuguese tongue-twisters or Polish ‘choosing-rhymes’, and one swears fluently in many languages. The diversity of languages and cultural experiences is an important aspect for all children in that school, no matter if they themselves grow up mono- or multilingual. Independent of whether or not the school pays attention to it, diversity of languages and cultural backgrounds is a common element of the socialisation of all children in European urban areas, as Europe is an attractive target for migrants. In fact, all European societies are – and will remain – immigration societies (see, for example, International Organisation for Migration, 2000).

In the microcosm of our model school, the cultural and linguistic reality of today’s European nation states is mirrored. For the moment, certainly, this applies more to urban areas than to rural areas; but it is expected that the urbanisation of Europe will rapidly grow, and consequently, an expanding part of the European population will face linguistic and cultural diversity in their everyday life. Elements of the linguistic composition of European urban areas can be described as follows – again by the example of schools in Hamburg.

The linguistic situation we live in is composed of languages with more or less legitimacy, higher or lower status, larger or smaller numbers of users, and other aspects of difference. Legitimate languages, according to Pierre Bourdieu (see 1991), are the best recognised language variations, i.e. the variations which receive unquestioned respect by everybody and which are connected to the highest amount of ‘symbolic power’. In European traditions, the official national languages in their standard form pass for legitimate, but also other languages or variations which receive public recognition, e.g. by being taught as ‘foreign languages’ in the official school system.

As highest in the hierarchy, we find German in our model school: the most privileged language. Everybody uses German – more or less proficiently. It is accepted by everybody as functioning in nearly every communicative situation; it is the language of education and literacy, the language of the public sphere, indubitably legitimate.

The next language in the hierarchy in the given case is English. This language is represented by some children; in most cases this is due to the fact

that they, or (one of) their parents, are immigrants: some are refugees from African states; others are immigrants from Great Britain, North America or Australasian states. In fact, English in a wide range of varieties is a living language at Hamburg schools, as it is the home language of many children. As well, it is the preferred language of pop culture, which all children meet in the media every day. And moreover, another variety – or most certainly some other varieties – of English serves as the first ‘foreign language’ for all children in Hamburg, taught from year three of primary school on. Without a doubt, English is the second legitimate language in Hamburg.

Another important, but much less legitimate, language in the case of Hamburg is Turkish. It is the home language of the second largest group of pupils – following the German-speakers. In terms of power and public esteem, the Turkish language has an ambiguous status. As we know from research, Turkish enjoys rather high prestige among the children and youth themselves. It is frequently used by many young people, including also those with a non-Turkish background: it functions as a peer group vernacular (cf. Auer & Dirim, 2000; see also Hewitt, 1990; Rampton, 1995; Franchescini, 1998; Holmen & Jørgensen, 2000 for descriptions of this phenomenon in minority languages among youth in other European urban areas). Beyond that, Turkish has received what could be named semi-legitimacy in the German school system, as it is taught in many areas as so-called mother-tongue-teaching for immigrants. Until recently, in many areas still, only children with a Turkish background – understood as bearers of a Turkish passport – could benefit from this offer. This restricts the legitimacy of Turkish in Germany, but nevertheless contributes to the approach of its ‘inauguration’ as legitimate, which is, among other factors, bound to its being accepted to serve as ‘cultural capital’. One necessary prerequisite for this is an official proof of competence or abilities, which is usually provided by a school certificate (see Bourdieu, 1981, 1983). The elusive, and at the same time colourful and lively, character of Turkish in Germany results from the fact that it is the family language of the largest group of immigrants. This is, on the one hand, the group which is often identified as the prototype of ‘foreigner’ in Germany, typifying low socio-economic status, and receiving little respect. But, on the other hand, this group represents a vast part of the German population, and its contribution to demographic stability and national economy cannot be ignored.

Other languages of immigrants in Germany have the same ambiguous functions and status as Turkish, as they are spoken by large, very intensely networking groups and have received elements of public recognition, for example, by being given the possibility of serving as ‘cultural capital’, whether the schooling that therefore becomes necessary is provided in the official school system or in the private sector. In any case, these languages are being valued as less important or of low status according to the status of their speakers.

Besides those already mentioned, we find another class of languages among the children in Hamburg schools. These are again immigrants’

languages, now those with the least range of power and respect. They are spoken only by a few people, sometimes by minorities in their former home countries. Very often, the legal status of their speakers is uncertain, as they are refugees or even illegal immigrants. The speakers of these languages rarely find any possibility of becoming literate in their home languages; there is no schooling provided, hardly any media production available – and so on. These languages, obviously, play the role of illegitimate languages (that is, they have no recognised cultural capital) in Germany.

These ‘layers’ of languages that have been described make up the linguistic environment of children who grow up in Hamburg. Dependent on where they move on to in their school career, they will certainly meet some more: those considered to be foreign languages, functioning as a regular element of secondary schooling. Approximately two-thirds of the German school population learns more than one foreign language during their school career – and we are lucky that the linguistic and cultural complexity of our example comes to an end now, as Hamburg does not belong to the areas of strong dialect in Germany; thus, the ‘intra-German’ complexity is quite low in this area.

Hamburg is a beautiful city – I invite readers with pleasure to come and visit the place. But in terms of diversity, Hamburg is nothing special; it is an ordinary example for linguistic and cultural reality in European urban areas today, a reality which is of utmost complexity (see Extra & Gorter, 2001). All the cultural heritages, languages and varieties of the kinds mentioned exist at the same time in the same space. There is in fact a hierarchical situation in terms of the officially legitimated languages and their value in the ‘linguistic market’ (Bourdieu, 1991). But we have to consider that in modern European societies there is probably more than one linguistic market in existence. Low-status languages – like Turkish in Germany – are at the same time high-status languages for certain groups of speakers, in certain, everyday situations. Imagine that there is no crossing of boundaries necessary to step from one linguistic market (this could be an average street in the city of Hamburg) into the other (which could be a shop situated in that street, owned by a greengrocer with an immigrant background, with customers representing many languages, one of which – but certainly not the most important – could be German).[1] The cultural heritages, languages and varieties altogether construct what I would call the cultural and linguistic part of a ‘multiple public sphere’ (Fraser, 1994). Multilingualism and cultural diversity in Europe is not limited to the co-existence of different national cultures and languages, languages of certain groups or functional fields. It has to be described as a continuous process of border crossing between all these dimensions – and some more.

Monolingual, Monocultural Habitus in Schools

Given the cultural and linguistic reality in Europe as shown above, it is obvious that it influences the field of education and literacy – in theory as well as in practical aspects.

Linguistic and cultural plurality has always been a reality in Europe – as everywhere else in the world. But in most European regions, after the rise of the idea of the nation state, diversity was no longer considered a ‘normal’ feature of a national society. The classical, i.e. the European, nation state is ideologically based on the notion of cultural and linguistic homogeneity of a people (see Hobsbawm, 1991). There is no doubt that differences on the surface level of concrete historical phenomena can be found, but independent of these, the self-conception of homogeneity is a common element of the European nation state. Thus, the fundamental myth of uniformity of language and culture among a people also permeates the structures, forms and contents of European school systems. It can also be shown that it is of larger impact on the theory and methodology of educational research (cf. Gogolin [1994] for the German; Vermes [1998] for the French; and Kroon & Vallen [1994] for the Dutch example).

The classical concept of the nation state has obviously become dysfunctional in many of its fundamental components. What other reason is there for the invention of border crossing institutions like the European Union itself? One of the strategies being used in the ongoing process of ‘modernisation’, of transforming the classical European nation state to a nation of states is the revival of its own traditional practices of creating homogeneity – only within a larger territory. This strategy can at best be observed around the creation of the ‘Euro’. In this process, the arguments used in favour of it are the same as those which were used when national currencies were introduced some centuries ago. One of these is the rhetorical figure, that shared symbols like a common currency are essential for the creation of a sense of community and solidarity within a society – only now it is not a national, but a supranational one. At the same time, the public debates accompanying the implementation of the new currency for a broader ‘nation state’ clearly show that the traditional strategies turn out to be inadequate in more complex sociocultural contexts. The resistance of Europeans to the implementation of the new currency indicates that the ‘mere argument’ is of less importance for the individual and institutional notion of nation than the basic, deep-seated beliefs and self-conceptions, functioning beneath the level of explicitness and conscious choice. One of these is the conviction that monolingualism and cultural homogeneity in a society, and particularly in the school system, is the only legitimate normality – is a characteristic of nation as such. The notion of nation in Europe includes a monolingual and monocultural habitus (see Gogolin, 1994).

There is no doubt that linguistic and cultural plurality, that is to say, complexity within a society, is in practice ambivalent. On one hand, it creates objective as well as subjective impediments for communication and everyday

life. On the other hand, it is the ultimate proof of human creativity, ability and potential, a source of joy and beauty. Independent of its ambivalence and the individual point of view about its implications, it is time to come to terms with the fact that it is inevitable, irreversible.

Because of this, the sector of education and literacy in Europe should long since have set up and implemented strategies which allow a balance between the positive and the negative connotations and consequences of multilingualism and cultural plurality. But in the history of European school systems, just the opposite happened and still regulates the systems today. In fact, the negative connotations of diversity are the result of strategies used in the process of nation building itself. It was only this process that led to the assumption and self-conception that living under linguistically and culturally plural circumstances is a difficulty, that learning in foreign languages or of foreign languages is complicated, that bi- or multilingualism too early in childhood may be dangerous for the linguistic as well as the cognitive development of the individual – and more of such beliefs. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century strategy of reducing actual linguistic and cultural complexity was in fact most successful in creating a negative climate, individual rejection or precariousness towards cultural diversity, towards multilingualism and language learning. It was less successful in creating a stable ‘reality’; this is obvious at the moment when frontiers between nations change or become dysfunctional as a means of regulating lives, because balances of power change or mobility is requested and technical possibilities permit unlimited communication.

Thus, the crucial and at the same time most promising point of departure for a change in the European education systems will be to promote a linguistic self-conception different from today’s: not a ‘monolingual’, ‘monocultural’ but a ‘multilingual habitus’ among European individuals and institutions (see Kramsch, 2002). In the end, this means not only to observe and recognise that a cultural and linguistic multiple public sphere exists already, but also to accept its potential and legitimacy.

Monolingual, Monocultural Habitus in Educational Research

Until today, educational research has not contributed much to this demand – neither in the sense that it helps to understand the consequences of diversity for a society in general and for education especially, nor in the sense that it supports the development of practical solutions for the education systems and their task to give children equal access – irrespective of their individual background. In fact, educational theory, research and practice are widely inhabited by a monocultural, monolingual habitus.

There are, however, exceptions which prove the rule: for example, in the large-scale international school evaluation studies which have become more and more popular in recent years, not only in Germany; I refer to the ‘Third International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS’ and the ‘Programme for International Student Assessment – PISA’. Until recently, these studies

assumed the existence of differences between national education systems, and at the same time far-reaching homogeneity of the school populations within nation states. Difference within the national school populations was considered with reference to socio-economic aspects, including indications of cultural capital; no attention was paid to linguistic or cultural diversity. PISA took this into consideration for the first time, in that background information about the family language and birthplace of the test persons and their parents was included in the questionnaire.

Indeed, socio-economic factors are of utmost importance for the explanation of school success, but they are certainly not the only explanatory factors. As recent investigations show, there are three major impact factors on the probability of good or low school success for an individual: First are socio-economic aspects, including the cultural capital of the family; second is the aspect of region; and third is the linguistic and cultural background of a student. Before PISA, the second and third impact factors were not seriously taken into consideration. If anything, the nationality of the students was taken into account. If this factor was integrated in the analysis, the result was always the same: to a large extent, it explains differences between schools. Very roughly, we can say that non-indigenous students score lowest in all school subjects which are language based. The PISA results for the first time go beyond the mere description of discrepancy between bearers of different passports within a school system. They show that students with immigrant backgrounds are less successful readers than indigenous students, and this predicts their lower school success, as literacy deficits proved also to have cumulative negative effects on competencies in 'Mathematical Literacy' and 'Scientific Literacy' (see Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001; see also German first results: <http://www.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/pisa>).

PISA is a good first example for a change of perspective in educational research, moving away from a 'monolingual', 'monocultural habitus' – but it is a very rare example. As a rule, only specialists in the field of migration and minorities, i.e. a minority of researchers, respect diversity of languages and cultures in their research designs; in Germany, their field is called 'Interkulturelle Erziehungswissenschaft' (intercultural/multicultural educational research).[2] In most mainstream research, if anything, the nationality of the students is taken into account. The reduction of diversity to the aspect of nationality or citizenship is one example of the helplessness towards the problem of plurality within national education systems. It is not very comforting that this happens not only in educational research but also in other social sciences.

Frankly speaking, data on nationality or citizenship hardly refers to relevant information for education, and for several reasons it is unsuitable for statements about linguistic or cultural plurality: Firstly (and trivially), the equation of 'nation state' and 'language' is absurd. Secondly, a growing number of immigrants take up citizenship of the country they live in (be they

immigrants with the legal status 'Aussiedler' in Germany, i.e. immigrants with German ancestors, be they immigrants from former colonised areas, be they naturalised immigrants or citizens of the country they live in, as they are – according to the 'ius solis' – born in that country, but grow up in an immigrant family). Obviously, data on nationality or citizenship gives us only very weak pointers to linguistic and cultural diversity.

For a longer period it was politically, as well as in educational research and practice, assumed that linguistic and cultural diversity would not continue to matter to the national school systems, as the process of integration to the host society was equated with transfer to the 'new' language and culture. It was assumed that the adaptation to the majority language and culture was quasi synonymous with the renunciation of linguistic and cultural heritage. These perspectives on migration processes turned out to be inadequate for the recent development of individual mobility, not only in Europe. As can be proved by international research, immigrant minorities do not give up their languages of origin or their cultural backgrounds. On the contrary, they develop innovative cultural-linguistic practices in which their traditions and heritages and the new demands of the area they live in are integrated, complement each other in innovative communication and lifestyles. In recent research, the existence and growth of 'transnational linguistic, cultural and social spheres' can be observed (see Pries, 2000; Kivisto, 2001). In short, this means that immigrants arrange their life relatively independently from the actual area they live in; they network intensely with people of the same (former) origin, no matter where they live, keep up contact with individuals and institutions in the areas they (or their ancestors) came from and leave open the prospect of their 'final' settlement. This is by no means a new phenomenon, but its dynamic and extension grows due to the new technical and technological possibilities for individual mobility and to other developments, not least of the economic sphere. The consequence of these developments is that linguistic and cultural diversity will be a durable feature of modern societies, be they organised as nation states or by supranational agencies.

International Comparative Research on Diversity as Potential for Innovative Approaches in Educational Research

From my point of view, the monolingual and monocultural (or in the broader sense national) perspective of educational research belongs to the area of missed chances for theoretical and methodological progress in our discipline. If diversity were taken into consideration, educational research – in particular, international comparative research – would lead to most relevant discoveries about the operation of teaching and learning processes in general, and about their institutional and structural prerequisites. Let me illustrate this hypothesis by an example, taken from my own research experience.

As indicated, teaching in multilingual and multicultural constellations is a common feature for most European school systems, as all European countries face immigration. Therefore the question of if and how schools have up to now adapted to diversity in their actual teaching practice is interesting in theoretical as well as practical respects. In a series of international comparative projects, a research consortium which I am a member of connected the concept of 'monolingual and monocultural habitus' with this question. It was transferred to the *tertium comparationis* – the theoretical guideline of the comparison – for the research projects, legitimised by the empirical fact of linguistic and cultural diversity among the pupils of all the schools which were to be examined.

The intention to use a theoretical concept as *tertium comparationis* in comparative educational research is first of all based on a methodological principle. To grasp at understanding the complex processes of practical teaching is – as is well known – the more difficult, the further away the research question's distance from the relatively secure terrain of organisational or other external features of schooling or education processes. It is relatively easy to observe organisational aspects of schools and teaching, for example, the time being dedicated to a subject. But the more research is interested in discovering the 'inner sphere' of classrooms, i.e. implicit, underlying agendas of practical teaching and learning processes, the more difficult it becomes to operationalise, to understand what happens beyond the surface of easy observable phenomena. In an ethnographical concept of international comparative research on actual teaching practice, three levels approximating to the inner sphere of teaching and learning processes are offered (see Herrlitz & Sturm, 1994).

The first level concerns the field structure of teaching. On this level, for instance, attempts are made to draw distinct borders between subject areas or areas of teaching within various national contexts. The second is the level of structuring interaction in the lessons observed. On this level, patterns of interaction and activity are compared, for example, repetitive patterns such as '(teacher) question–(student) answer–evaluation'. The third level refers to the metonymical structures in practical classroom activities. With this, the *pars-pro-toto* principle of interaction in classrooms is addressed. The image of an iceberg can illustrate this principle: what is visible or observable by researchers is only the smallest part of classroom interaction, the summit of the iceberg. When we catch sight of the summit – the part which represents the whole – we know that there is much material 'under water', but we do not know its contents, colour or shape. The same applies to classroom observation: we can see the activities at the surface level, but most of the relevant events – e.g. all motives, considerations, reasons for the activity – remain 'under water', hidden from easy observation as well as from easy interpretation and definition. To this level belong numerous imponderables which, by chance, co-govern teaching situations: from the teacher's anger before breakfast to the inattention of the children due to the comic books under their desks. To this

level also belongs every comprehensive type of experience, previous knowledge and routine activities, which all participants in the lesson, teacher and students, have access to – each in their own way. The search for moments that systematically determine the interaction and teaching or learning process is the most difficult aspect of empirical research on actual teaching, be it comparative or not.

Comparative research on levels one and two primarily aims at and allows the discovery of differences between national school systems, whereas research on level three can lead to the discovery of similarities between the systems – and thus show fundamental aspects of mechanisms which regulate teaching and learning as such, independent of superficial differences of the instructional arrangements.

The comparative project I refer to was carried out in four European cities: Hamburg, London and two big cities in Belgium and the Netherlands. The theoretical concept of ‘monolingual, monocultural habitus’ turned out to be useful in the attempt to describe a relevant part of the ‘underwater’ occurrences in the lessons observed. The theoretical concept of ‘monolingual, monocultural habitus’ refers to beliefs, basic concepts, common-sense patterns as elements of the practical professional knowledge or the practical professional behaviour of teachers. The concept of ‘monolingual, monocultural habitus’ has to be introduced briefly. It is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as a *modus* generating dynamic changes in human activity (see Bourdieu, 1981). Bourdieu’s theory attempts to describe the dynamic relationship between the structural conditions of an individual existence, the individual’s activities as a product of socialisation under these conditions and, as a third field of influence, the endless and at the same time strictly limited capacity of the individual to act. In the socialisation process, a system of permanent dispositions is created by the individual, including susceptibility as a prerequisite for personal development. This system of dispositions is necessary for successful social activity, which also means that a person does not need to reflect and decide consciously upon his or her normal daily activities. That is to say, a habitus is the necessary precondition for an individual to act routinely.

Bourdieu emphasises the circularity between structure, habitus and practice. Habitus, which functions as awareness matrix, action matrix and thought matrix, is acquired under certain social conditions, ‘objective structures’. To these belong the existential requirements which characterise and define a social class. Habitus defines and generates the activities of its constituents, who themselves influence, create and recreate their living conditions. As habitus makes routine activity possible, it also enables one to deal with unexpected, new situations without reacting to them with paralysis. Implicit in the concept of habitus is a tendency towards self-stabilisation – in case an individual encounters radically new situations. The socialisation process is not completed until death; new experiences are integrated in a habitus. Thus, individuals develop constantly changing forms of their habitus,

which, as such, however, remains stable as a comprehensive system at a higher level.

Job typical attitudes, activities and products can be regarded as 'professional habitus' if they can be identified as products of the activity of identical schemata which carry a systematic character and are therefore systematically differentiated from the constituent forms of activity of a different profession. This is effective for the occupation of teacher, as educational and training conditions, as well as social status and working environment, are relatively standardised. Based on historical analysis of the teaching profession, I formulated the hypothesis that a monolingual, monocultural orientation of teachers is an intrinsic element of their professional habitus as members of a nation state school system (see Gogolin, 1994; also Gogolin [Ed.] 1997). Consequently, it is part of the teachers' profession to traditionalise monolingualism in the official national language and a self-conception of linguistic and cultural homogeneity. The monolingual habitus was built and secured by the traditions of the educational system itself; the less conscious the individual teacher is about its existence, the more effectively it operates.

The following incident – an excerpt from classroom observations – shows an example of a monolingual, monocultural habitus directing teaching practice. The observation protocol shows a teacher in a Dutch classroom who intends to deal with the linguistic diversity among her pupils. The intention of the lesson was to reflect upon the historical fact of mutual contact and influence between languages. The class was asked to reflect on the problem of how words wander from one language into another. In the first part of the lesson, the class had to think about 'exotic' words which were incorporated into Dutch (e.g. the word 'sugar', deriving from India). In the second part, their task was to think about the reverse: why did Dutch words invade other languages? The examples discussed were *bâbord*, *tribord*, *yacht*. The following excerpt from the observation protocol shows how the lesson fails:

Teacher: 'So, what does the word bâbord mean?' The pupils are mixed up at first: 'I don't know'. 'What?' But one answers: 'Port'. The teacher is satisfied: 'Port, good, port, very good. And 'tribord' means ...?' Pupil: 'Starboard'. The teacher agrees. Then she wants to know: 'Why do you think that these words are used in French?' Silence. The teacher goes on asking: 'They come from Dutch. Why do you think that it happened?' Again: silence – no reaction. So she explains: 'Of course you know that these are the two sides of a ship, don't you? One doesn't talk about left and right, rather of port and starboard. Now, why do you think that the words are there in other languages?' Again, no reaction from the pupils. After some minutes of stubborn silence, the teacher presents the answer: 'Because Holland is very important in shipping and so many words from here were taken over by others'.

The teaching goes on; another attempt with the word yacht. As the pupils do not offer the expected solution, the teacher explains again: 'That is again the same,

yacht also has something to do with shipping, and we have done much in this area and that's why we have so many words about it'. The pupils seem puzzled. One asks: 'But why did they come into the other language?' The answer: 'For the same reason. Because Holland developed so much in that area and for that reason we have a lot of words about it. So now let's look at Matjesherring'. Again she asks – unsuccessfully – in the same way. Finally she realises that something seems to go wrong, and reacts to this impression when a pupil says, 'Miss, I don't follow'. The teacher's answer: 'Yes, if you would participate normally then it wouldn't be a problem, but if you don't do that then it's rather difficult' (cf. Gogolin & Kroon, 2000, pp. 10 ff.)

The participants in this lesson consisted of eight Surinami, two Turkish, three Moroccan, one Portuguese and six Dutch pupils. The teacher who was observed acted with the best motives; it was her declared intent to present the theme of language diversity to her multilingual class. The dilemma that she ran into was – according to our theory – the result of her monolingual habitus. The key indication for this is the observation that even when ethnic and language diversity are obvious to the teacher, giving her the reason to choose the theme of the exercise, her behaviour is more strongly determined by a belief of 'assumed similarity' (Max Weber), even identity, than by the explicit plan that she had prepared for this lesson. This deep-seated belief becomes obvious in her use of the word 'we' in the lesson, for example: 'Yacht also has something to do with shipping, and we have done much in this area and that's why we have so many words about it'. In face of the linguistic and cultural composition of the class, it would be interesting to know who exactly was meant by 'we'.

There is another indication for the effectiveness of a monolingual, monocultural habitus in this classroom situation. Even when the strategy to elicit the 'correct' answer to her question with an appeal to the 'we' proves to be dysfunctional, this strategy is not questioned by the teacher. She does not suspect her own assumption about the pupils' relationship to language to be the problem, but manages the situation by using a routine interpretation of it: her impression of uncooperativeness of the pupils who do not follow the aims of the lesson. She says, 'Yes, if you would participate normally then it wouldn't be a problem, but if you don't do that ...' The security and steadfastness which protect the teacher from being irritated indicate that habitual routines rather than explicit plans direct her activity in the lesson observed.

The concept of monolingual, monocultural habitus turned out to be a most fruitful tool when used as *tertium comparationis* in the comparative study I refer to. It served as a useful guideline through our data – tape-recordings of one week of schooling in every school, observation protocols, field notes and interviews with teachers (see, for methodological details, Gogolin & Kroon, 2000) – which were analysed with reference to the question, which aspects of routine teacher activity in a classroom were related to a particular national tradition of teaching, and which aspects could be attributed to general elements of the professional habitus of teachers as such, relatively

independent of different traditions on the surface level. One example from our data may illustrate this.

We observed and recorded that a frequently used teaching routine in lessons on the national language, no matter in which of the four countries they took place, was to introduce an orthographic rule in that the children were told formulas like: 'Listen carefully; if you only listen well enough, then you'll hear how one spells'. As perfectly literate adults, we know what teachers mean by that. They refer to historical conventions, existing for every standardised language in the world, about the relations between sounds and graphics. If a person is literate, ergo, knows explicitly or commands routinely the specific conventions of a certain language, he or she will indeed be able to 'hear' how a word is spelt. For those in the beginning stages of literacy, the advice is completely useless; moreover, it is misleading for children whose home languages differ from the language taught. Language acquisition research results establish the reasons for this; the most important is that only when an individual develops his or her habits of language perception in a monolingual context and in the variant of language in which the written text was developed, is there any chance at all to actually 'hear' a graphical convention for a sound or a combination of sounds. Thus, a beginner, all the more one who developed his or her language perception in a language or variant different from the one which is taught – be it because he or she has grown up in a multilingual atmosphere or in an environment marked by strong sociolect or dialect – hears sounds with no or weak relations to a graphical convention. The directive to 'hear how you spell', when it is meant to support a learning process, will occasionally work if children grow up in close connection to the variation taught and to literacy in the family. All other beginners with different language experience and living conditions are excluded by this teaching method (see the outline of an alternative approach: Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

By classroom observations like these, our research team was led onto the track of the habitual expectation of teachers in general – at least in the four European contexts which were examined – that the children in their classes are provided with a natural and identical resource: an instinctive command of the language taught, which is imported to school from their life outside school. This implicit notion of a linguistically homogeneous classroom was uncovered in our data, and it could be proved that this unspoken assumption guided teaching practices, despite the fact that the teachers concerned were very well informed about the linguistic diversity in their classroom, and that they explicitly intended to take this precondition for the learning process into account. So a part of the 'underwater occurrences' in the classrooms observed was exposed; the assumption of language homogeneity as the 'normal' and 'usual' point of departure in teaching belongs to the general elements of the habitus of teachers as such – at least in the education systems based on the traditions of European nation states.

I am convinced that the most important value of international comparison in educational research can be gained when structural or textual

similarities between the different school systems are investigated. These similarities can help us uncover what governs professional education processes below the surface of explicitness, of rhetorical routines in discourses about education. This is in the end what should be tried in educational research, because – again referring to Pierre Bourdieu's theory – only consciousness helps to conquer habitual practices. From my point of view, this is one of the most important aims of our discipline: to contribute to future education systems, in which amateur teaching practice is the exception, and professional teaching is the rule. We should coordinate our efforts to encourage methodically complex, triangulated and international comparative educational research about the ways in which culturally and linguistically complex living conditions can be mastered. Thus, we would contribute to the creation of adequate school systems for the future modern, plural and complex societies of Europe.

Notes

- [1] Migration is a very important, but not the only, source for expanding the linguistic complexity within modern European societies. I can only indicate this here; most powerful contributions derive from the mass and electronic media, which accelerate the dynamics of linguistic and cultural diversity.
- [2] In the case of Germany, the term 'intercultural' refers to international plurality; in parts of the English-speaking world, the corresponding term would be 'multicultural'.

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INGRID GOGOLIN is Professor of Research in Education at the University of Hamburg (Intercultural and International Comparative Education) and

Ingrid Gogolin

chairperson of the research group 'Interkulturelle Bildung/Multicultural Studies' in the Faculty of Education. She was President of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (DGfE; German Educational Research Association GERA in 1998-2002). *Correspondence:* Professor Dr Ingrid Gogolin, Faculty of Education, University of Hamburg, Von-Melle-Park 8, D-20146 Hamburg, Germany (gogolin@erzwiss.uni-hamburg.de).