

AIMS OF THE JOURNAL

The *MJES* is a biannual refereed international journal with a regional focus. It features educational research carried out in Mediterranean countries, as well as educational studies related to the diaspora of Mediterranean people world-wide. The journal offers a forum for theoretical debate, historical and comparative studies, research and project reports, thus facilitating dialogue in a region which has strong and varied educational traditions. There is a strong international dimension to this dialogue, given the profile of the Mediterranean in the configuration of the new world order, and the presence of Mediterranean peoples in Europe, North America and elsewhere. The *MJES* is of interest to scholars, researchers and practitioners in the following fields: comparative education, foundation disciplines in education, education policy analysis, Mediterranean studies, cultural and post-colonial studies, Southern European and area studies, intercultural education, peace education, and migrant studies.

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Special issue:
Multilingualism and Education

Editors:
Rima Bahous and Ingo Thonhauser

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

MULTILINGUALISM AND EDUCATION AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN

RIMA BAHOUS
INGO THONHAUSER

Multilingualism is part of daily life in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean. This is a diverse phenomenon, which can be studied from many different angles and across disciplines. The main purpose though of this special issue is to gain a better understanding of the complex relationship between multilingualism and education. Particular attention is paid to the role of English as an increasingly dominant language in this context. How are school- or university curricula shaped and/or changed by the challenges of a multilingual reality? What does that mean for teachers and students in the classroom? What are the social consequences, with reference to such issues as language and identity, or perceptions of the native language?

The contributions we present in the special issue section are an attempt to bring together linguistic and educational research in countries around the Mediterranean. With the exception of the first two articles, the papers were originally presented at a conference on 'Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Lebanon: Conflict or Opportunity', held at the Lebanese American University on 3 December 1999. The common feature of all contributions is their focus on the classroom and the languages of instruction used around the Mediterranean. The main areas of discussion are: language and identity, language proficiency and multilingualism, multiliteracies and language learning.

Two papers explore the linguistic and educational implications of multilingual classrooms: Antoinette Camilleri Grima views the language classroom as a microcosm of local society in Malta and explores the role of code-switching and how discursive and literacy events reflect societal values. Mohamed Miliani deals with the issue of French and English as competing languages of instruction in Algeria from the perspective of educational policy making in this North African country and focuses on recommendations for future decision makers.

Martin Cortazzi examines shifts in public literacy and resulting educational implications in multilingual countries with special attention to Lebanon. This is continued in Ingo Thonhauser's paper, which studies the impact of multilingualism and diglossia on language learning and the question of language and identity at university level in Lebanon.

Paul Portmann-Tselikas explores the concept of cognitive-academic language proficiency in bilingual instruction and sheds new light on Cummins' threshold hypothesis. Reflecting the outcome of the first four years of a joint project between the University of Graz (Austria) and the University of Shkoder (Albania), he demonstrates the way in which cognitive-academic language proficiency contributes to success or failure in language learning at university level.

Finally, a report of a number of research projects that have recently—or are currently—being implemented by practitioners in Lebanese schools and universities is presented. We consider this research report as an essential contribution to our overall goals for this volume, given that it shows what is happening on the ground.

It is our hope that this special issue of the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* is a beginning and will encourage renewed co-operation and exchange of ideas and experiences across the countries around the Mediterranean.

Beirut and Baghdad, January 2001

THE MALTESE BILINGUAL CLASSROOM: A MICROCOSM OF LOCAL SOCIETY

ANTOINETTE CAMILLERI GRIMA

Abstract – *This paper examines the relationship between language use in the Maltese bilingual classroom on the one hand, and in the societal context within which the classroom is embedded, on the other. The use of Maltese and English as media of instruction is a reflection of the functions of each language in society. At the same time, their functional distribution in the school context continues to shape the linguistic practices of Maltese students and adults. The employment of code-switching in the classroom is largely caused and shaped by factors like textbooks and technical terminology in English within a Maltese-speaking environment. It, in turn, continues to condition at least one type of bilingual behaviour in society: terminology switching. The other major distinction in the functional allocation of the two languages is the spoken-written contrast that often corresponds to the Maltese-English distribution respectively, both in the classroom and in most other domains. The analyses of bilingual classroom practices illustrate, in fact, how the discursive and literacy events taking place are a reflection of societal values and identities. Simultaneously, they continue to elaborate both the linguistic repertoire of Maltese bilinguals, and the relationships symbolized by each language, and by code switching itself.*

Introduction

Malta presents an interesting case of societal and educational bilingualism. The Maltese nation can be described, by and large, as a mono-ethnic and mono-cultural community that operates in two languages: Maltese and English. Maltese is the first language of about 98% of the population (Borg *et al.*, 1992) for whom it functions as the means of everyday communication. Maltese is designated as the national language in the Constitution of the Republic of Malta; it is the official language of Parliament, of the Law Courts and of the Church. English, on the other hand, is spoken as a home language by a minority, and simultaneously used for a variety of purposes by everyone: in public administration and industry, for written communication, by the mass media, and in education.

Historical background

Maltese is a mixed language of Semitic origin. It has been spoken by the people inhabiting the Maltese Islands for many centuries. Unfortunately, little is