

Widdowson when he echoes Labov: 'The central problem in discourse analysis . . . is inferring what is done from what is said' (p. 111). This problem is related to critical discourse analysis (CDA) in the Chapter 7 ('Critical Analysis') Survey and Readings. Though Widdowson has well-known reservations about the practice of CDA, if not the aims, the chapter is even-handedly written. He highlights the importance of co-textual information in making any assessment of language as being ideologically problematic, as betraying a particular bias, etc. The chapter is valuable for students, since some popular introductions to CDA rather gloss over the difficulty of inferring ideologically laden meanings from text.

On courses, Widdowson's book would make a perfect companion (especially given its size) for an introductory text on the practice of (critical) discourse analysis. Ideally his book should be taught first. I say this because students' reading of the practically oriented book would then enter the interrogation chamber of Widdowson's *Discourse Analysis*. Teachers may well find that such a strategy accelerates confidence and independent thinking in the discipline since, with this fine instrument, conceptual muddles are likely to reveal their true nature.

References

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Child multilingualism at home and in school

A comment on David Deterding's review of *Three is a Crowd?* (Multilingual Matters, 2006), published in *IJAL* 17(2), 248–50 (2007)

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This comment stems from *IJAL*'s kind invitation to respond to this review of my book. I want to start by thanking David Deterding for a very fair review. It is gratifying to find that colleagues' comments strive to do justice to the spirit of one's work, as is the case here. In what follows, I cannot develop all the thoughts aroused by David Deterding's many cogent observations contained in the review, but I gratefully take this opportunity to highlight, through a few of these observations, a sample of issues that I deemed might be of core interest to *IJAL* readers. Review quotations and my comments are interspersed here, organised under three headings.

Multilingualism at home

is this kind of strict OPOL policy applicable in cultures where multiple switching between a range of languages is the norm? (p. 249)

some questions remain about whether such a policy is really appropriate for all families. (p. 250)

In no way do I advocate OPOL ('one person–one language') across the board. The book discusses the ways in which this language policy, which only makes sense for monolingual parents, has come to be misinterpreted as 'the' language policy for successful multilingualism (see in particular pp. 233–7 in the book). What became known as 'OPOL' simply happens to be what came naturally to the parents in this study – at least in their own judgement. The book includes several examples of the parents' flouting of their own language enforcement rules. The apparently neat diagramming of languages used by whom to whom (p. 234 in the book) is a necessarily reductionist version of what in fact goes on: the 'one language' part of the equation turns out to be a 'default' use of language, where the language in question is used when there is no reason to use another.

David Deterding rightly points out that where multilingualism is the rule, for children and adults alike in a linguistic community, 'attempts by a speaker to stick to a single language would often seem rather unnatural' (p. 249), 'unnatural' being the key word here.

I should add that strict enforcement of OPOL completely fails to provide children with what its endorsers claim it is meant to achieve, namely, child multilingualism. It is clear that being consistently exposed to one single language from the same person, and being expected to respond in kind, cannot provide a proper model of fluent multilingualism. Mixed-language policies do provide the required model. That OPOL also scores in nurturing child multilingualism is a credit not so much to the policy itself as to children's ability to make sense of what is required of them in order to become fully-fledged members of their communities.

the parents were adamant that their children should also become fluent speakers of both Portuguese and Swedish, partly so that they could communicate effectively with grandparents and cousins on visits back to Portugal and Sweden but also so that they could develop an empathy for both sides of their rich cultural heritage. (p. 249)

This is one of the review's comments that resonates most with me. Raising multilingual children means raising multicultural children too, not least to thrive among their extended families. Language policies make little sense if their enforcement excludes family members, and thereby the opportunities they afford to nurture cultural traits and issues of identity associated with different languages.

Multilingualism in school

One wonders how many parents would have the strength, the confidence and also the depth of knowledge to dismiss this advice from a so-called 'expert' and persist with the trilingual language development of their children. [...] One imagines that most parents in such situations, especially those without a PhD in linguistics, would follow the advice of teachers and abandon the attempts at encouraging multilingual ability in their children. (p. 250)

There is no need to imagine. Blind faith in misguided advice of this kind, and compliance with it, is sadly the rule, judging from the (presumably) few families who do think about asking before implementing and/or amending language policies at home. Several examples are found, among other places, in the Ask-a-Linguist archives of the Linguist List.

This episode (Chapter 9 in the book) is one of the most lasting, unpleasant experiences for the family, and it is indeed lucky that the parents in this study knew a little better. As I say in the book, an urgent survey is needed on the results of such counselling practices among multilingual families. It is also my hope that other parents who are told similar nonsense may choose information before belief.

it is somewhat scary to read about the abject failure of the children to learn French when it was taught in school as a foreign language (p. 223), despite their usual delight and enthusiasm at learning new languages. It is quite shocking to be reminded how bad second language instruction in school can be. [...] the book provides a few stark reminders about the limitations of the kind of education and expert advice that are sometimes offered in schools. (p. 250)

Both French and Mandarin had the same abject fate, until the children came to realise that these were languages which could be used as such, not school subjects. As I say in the book, it is even scarier to note that the exact same language instruction methods were used with the children as with their parents, almost 40 years before.

It was indeed an eye-opener to see how educational authorities paradoxically enforced school-bound methods of 'learning' languages at the same time as doing all in their power to stifle the children's natural multilingualism.

The typicality of case studies

But is this outgoing, aggressively inquisitive behaviour found in all infants? It seems that at least some children would [...] avoid having to

deal with the new language. [...] It seems likely that many children might instead fight against this and tend towards the use of a single language as soon as they realised that both parents could understand it perfectly well. (p. 249)

Children, like the rest of us, are expert practitioners of the Law of Least Effort. I don't believe that languages are a special case of this law, because I don't believe that learning language, or learning several languages, is a special case of anything. It's a matter of survival, i.e. of adequate adaptation to one's environment. Children will use one language with both parents in a mixed family, just as they will call both mum and dad 'daddy' (as was also the case for two of the children in this study), if they find that they can get away with it.

But it is also true that children are naturally compliant, for the simple reason that they know no rules: they are in the process of learning them, from the role models that are (made) available to them. Children's shyness or reluctance to comply with what needs to be done may often stem from parental anguish. Granted, the parents in this study had a rather seasoned attitude towards new countries and new languages, in that they had had extensive experience of both before they became parents. I take both points: that this may not be the rule among multilingual families (although I have no data to support or refute this claim), and that the children in this study are from the same family, besides being very close to one another in age.

Despite awareness of the inherent limitations of case studies, my conviction remains that if patterns can be found in the linguistic behaviour of all three children, particularly concerning language-learning strategies in a multilingual context (as is the book's main research goal), then such patterns should be made public. They may help monolingual parents and teachers of multilingual children identify similar patterns in the children's behaviour, instead of focusing uniquely on what the children appear to 'lack', from often hasty and unwarranted comparisons with facts about monolingual development. Many parents and teachers thereby fail to notice and nurture multilingual children's (naturally) multilingual behaviour, which is necessarily different from monolingual behaviour. And they may also help researchers deepen their understanding of multilingual acquisition, against the backdrop of research paradigms which persist in approaching multilingualism through monolingual mindsets and analytical tools. They may, in sum, help us find clues to what (child) multilingualism is all about.

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