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Introduction: Contemporary issues in research on multilingualism

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This special issue aims at giving the reader an insight into various current research topics within third language (L3) acquisition and multilingualism. The topics were all addressed at the 9th *International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism*, which was hosted by the Department of modern languages at Uppsala University in June 2014. The papers' different perspectives are a proof of how the field of third language acquisition and multilingualism has developed since the first collection of papers from this conference series, which was published by Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner in 2001. At that time, a vast majority of the research focused on cross-linguistic influence, a research area which is certainly still central to the field. However, many other new areas within the L3 field have since then attracted the scholars' attention. Furthermore, the target languages involved in the early studies in the field were mainly English and German. The present issue represents the development that has taken place within the field, covering different phenomena and theories related to L3 acquisition and multilingualism, concerning both reception and production: transfer, attitudes to foreign languages, cross-linguistic similarity and questions of identity related to multilingualism. In addition, several target languages and language constellations are discussed, involving English, German, Swedish, Portuguese, Basque, Spanish and French. Moreover, the papers also concern various settings for acquisition/learning and use of three or more languages: Germany, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Finally, the participants in the empirical studies are both children and adult learners/users of multiple languages. All these aspects contribute to the theoretical, methodological and empirical richness that has developed within the field in recent years.

In the first paper, *Becoming multilingual: The macro and the micro time perspective*, Hammarberg discusses the characteristics of multilingualism from two points of view: the macro time perspective and the micro time perspective.

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The macro time perspective is defined as the development of a linguistic repertoire over time, whereas the micro time perspective refers to language use and acquisition in specific situations. Various concepts within SLA and TLA research are discussed and problematized in relation to the two perspectives. The paper finally proposes a new model of language use and acquisition in the micro perspective sense.

Vanhove and Berthele's contribution, *Interactions between formal distance and participant-related variables in receptive multilingualism*, is about recognizing cognates in a related but unknown language, which is an important issue in the research field of receptive multilingualism. Their data consist of 159 German-speaking participants' (aged ten to 86) written and spoken translations from Swedish into German. The results clearly show that the relationship between formal distance and recognition and cross-linguistic influence *per se*, differ in a systematic way as a function of participant-related variables.

In the next paper, *Drawing the plurilingual self: how children portray their plurilingual resources*, Melo-Pfeifer discusses which patterns multilingual children use to represent their linguistic repertoires through visual narratives. The results evince the dominance of traditional representations of plurilingual resources, that is to say as the sum of features from several clearly separated languages. Finally the author discusses epistemological issues related to the analysis of complex plurilingual practices as well as multimodal plurilingualism.

In the final paper, *Teacher students' attitudes towards English in a multilingual context. A longitudinal study*, Ipiña and Sagasta examine future teachers' language attitudes. More specifically, they study undergraduates', enrolled in a degree programme in trilingual Primary Teacher Education, attitudes towards English using longitudinal data. They also consider to what extent personal, contextual and educational factors influence language attitudes. The results indicate that the most important factors are those of self-perception of English competence level and areas of speciality. They further discuss how the language and educational policy is implemented in the multilingual setting.

We would like to dedicate this issue to the late Håkan Ringbom, one of the pioneers within the L3 field, who sadly passed away in 2015.