

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Multidialectism in the Multilingual Turn

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While the Multilingual Turn has critically shifted the field of Second Language Acquisition away from monolingual ideologies, it has often ignored the irreconcilability of the prescriptivist standard ideologies that devalue the diversity within named languages. This oversight perpetuates linguistic hierarchies, marginalizes non-standard variety speakers, and misrepresents the complex nature of real-world language use. The contributions to this special issue dismantle monocentric, native-speakerist, and prescriptivist standard language ideologies in second language education in order to explore the potentials of a multidialectal and multilingual approach. In so doing, they raise questions about social justice implications of dialect representation and erasure and showcase successful pedagogical applications of second language dialect instruction. By integrating multidialectal perspectives, this issue seeks to foster a more robust and inclusive Multilingual Turn that accurately reflects linguistic diversity both across and within languages, empowering learners to become adaptive users who can critically engage with and subvert power structures embedded in language variation. Collectively, these articles offer theoretical insights and practical implications for recognizing the vital role of within-language diversity in SLA.

While multilingual practices have been commonplace for millennia (Pavlenko, 2023), the creation of European nation states in the 19th century with their ideological underpinnings of a Herderian one-nation-one-language ideology have shaped the monolingual underpinnings of Western linguistic theory. A named language, within this line of reasoning, is seen as a static, closed system of rules and patterns located within a monolingual speaker's mind, represented uniformly across its native speakers. This theoretical orientation has informed the epistemologies of second language acquisition (SLA) as an emerging field, with significant ramifications for researchers and teachers who work under this hegemony: the language behaviors, linguistic knowledge, and acquisition of first and second languages were seen as cognitive processes that were to be measured against the competence of an idealized monolingual native speaker (Emilsen & Søfteland, 2020; Holliday, 2006; Trentman & Diao, 2021; Walter, 2023).

The "Social Turn" in SLA (Block, 2003) expanded the field's attention from a solely individual cognitive framework of language acquisition and learning towards its sociohistorically-situated nature. This shift has brought about native-speakerist critiques of the goals of second language education

(Holliday, 2006) along with a centering of learners' multilingualism as a resource in their second language development, rather than something that was to be tamed or—even worse—overcome.

The ensuing “Multilingual Turn” (May, 2013; Ortega, 2013) has since provided a critical lens to the monolingual and sometimes nationalistic ideologies that have shaped and continue to shape SLA research and second language pedagogy. This turn calls for a reassessment of who learners are and who they become as they learn (an) additional language(s), recognizing that driving students towards perceived monolingual native norms of the target language is not only unjust, as they will never become monolinguals in the language of study, but that this goal is not even representative of first language speakers as their own language behaviors could hardly be classified as homogenous. Approaches resulting from this multilingual framework, such as translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014), have highlighted the benefits of drawing on the multiple languages in learners' entire linguistic repertoires to enhance their understanding of their new named language(s), as well as normalizing multilingual behaviors and identities.

And while the Multilingual Turn has initiated an important shift of focus from the previous compartmentalization of named languages towards their interconnectedness in language users' real-world linguistic practices, one issue that has still received only marginal attention is how prescriptivist standard ideologies have perpetuated the limited notion of “language.” In SLA, research and pedagogy refer mostly to a codified standard variety. Some studies have indeed explored learners' multidialectism, i.e., a speaker's ability to switch between dialects of a named language, including the standard variety, as part of multilingualism (e.g. Nero, 2006), and discussions on pluricentric languages with multiple standards (e.g., French, Spanish, German, Arabic, Portuguese) have highlighted the need to represent the multiple standard varieties of a language in the classroom (Chapelle, 2020; Del Valle, 2014; Hägi, 2006; Koch & Reimann, 2019; Pöll, 2021; Ruck, 2020; Train, 2020; Trentman & Shiri, 2020; Wernicke, 2020). However, in practice, it is mostly the dominant standard variety that is construed as the most legitimate, while non-dominant standards and particularly non-standard varieties are seen as inferior and/or something with which second language learners need not concern themselves (Callies & Hehner, 2022; Ruck, 2020). In other words, while the Multilingual Turn has emphasized the cross-linguistic ecologies within which SLA is situated, a relevant part of language users' linguistic repertoires—that is, the many local and social varieties of a named language—remains largely excluded from scholarly discussions and pedagogical practices.

If we aim to capture multilingualism in its complex, real-world use, we argue that this can only be achieved by addressing the multilingual practices across *and within* named languages. After all, without a critical lens applied to who/what defines the standard(s) of a language, and a simultaneous complacency or even aversion to teaching non-standard varieties, we are complicit in the replication of linguistic and social hierarchies, the marginalization of non-standard variety speakers, and the ideological imagination of homogeneous monolingual nation states that ignores the central discursive, social, and identity functions of non-standard varieties. This approach ultimately misrepresents the nature of language. Without systematic attention to the sociolinguistic diversity that exists within each named language, the Multilingual Turn will inevitably fail in its goal to represent real-world language phenomena, and in doing so it will unfairly reduce the truly diverse and complex nature of semiotic systems to neat, monolithic, but ultimately incomplete languages. This would reinforce an oligarchical approach to the study of language, as those in positions of power, be they government officials, test developers, curriculum designers, or other authorities, will continue to define what does and does not belong to the study of a given language, rather than promoting an egalitarian, descriptive approach that is informed by actual language use reflecting the nature of language itself.

This special issue aims to expand the Multilingual Turn, which has often focused on the standard varieties of named languages, with multidialectalism, which centers within-named-language variation due to social and/or regional factors. The contributions in this special issue seek to dismantle

monocentric, native-speakerist, and prescriptivist standard language ideologies that have shaped second language education; discuss the potentials of a multidialectal and multilingual approach; raise questions of what representations and erasures of dialects and language varieties mean for social justice approaches in second language education; and showcase successful pedagogical applications of second language dialect instruction. If the goal of the Multilingual Turn is to dismantle long-standing, problematic notions of the idealized and homogeneous monolingual native speaker and replace it with the attainable goal of a plurilingual L2 self, then it necessitates that we, as a field, not only recognize the importance of, but advocate for more research on pedagogical approaches that take into account the multidialectal nature of real-world language use.

As a first step towards a more inclusive and reality-based multidialectal and multilingual turn, this issue brings together scholars who work in a variety of named languages to discuss the impact of dialectal variation within second language acquisition, both as a field and a learning process. The contributions in this special issue not only thematize the conflicts that arise as a result of tension between standard language and dialect use in settings that range from formal L2 education to study abroad settings and heritage language practices in family language policies, but they also provide pedagogical interventions that incorporate dialect instruction and their impact on second language learning.

In the first contribution to this issue, “Countering Negative Language Attitudes: Adopting a Multidialectal, Critical Approach to Language Teaching in a Multilingual World,” Kristen Kennedy Terry, Rebecca Pozzi, Chelsea Escalante, Tracy Quan, Farah Ali, and Xinye Zhang discuss how negative ideologies are embedded in world language education and the need for a critical multidialectal approach to language teaching. Drawing on research from language attitudes and language ideologies, the authors make a case for a Critical Language Awareness approach that examines sociopolitical aspects of languages and their varieties. They emphasize how monolingual, prescriptivist, monocentric, and standard language ideologies have framed the instruction of L2 Spanish, French, Arabic, and Chinese, laying out concrete pedagogical interventions for each of these four languages. In their article, the authors share not only concrete sources for linguistically-diverse instructional materials, but they also propose activities for centering descriptive perspectives, including structured critical reflections, examining relations of language and power, and drawing on students’ multidialectal backgrounds. This article not only lays out conceptual issues of a multidialectal approach to L2 education but also provides a structured pedagogical framework with concrete examples for multiple languages to foster L2 students’ critical language awareness.

In the second contribution, “Teacher Talk in Multidialectal Classrooms,” Emma Trentman brings us into the classroom to elaborate on the ways in which teachers lead discussions on sociolinguistic variation in Arabic within a multidialectal framework. While L2 Arabic education has largely shifted its focus towards the diglossic nature of the language and complemented the teaching of Modern Standard Arabic with different regional dialects, few studies actually delve into how the teaching of multiple dialects unfolds in classroom interactions. Through qualitative analysis of video and audio recordings from beginner-level high school and university Arabic classes, Trentman analyzes teachers’ interactional patterns in initiating, moderating, and evaluating sociolinguistic variation in Arabic. This study provides novel insights into the ways instructors and students co-construct knowledge about dialect variants in classroom discussions and adds important empirical evidence that multidialectal framework can meaningfully be employed even with novice-level learners to increase their meta-linguistic awareness and dismantle monoglossic standard language ideologies.

The third contribution, “Multidialectal Practices as a Missing Link for L2 Pragmatics Research: Methodological Insights from L2 Arabic” by Khaled Al Masaeed, shifts the focus from colonialist and hierarchical implications of dialect instruction onto tangible implications for L2 learners and the benefits that dialect instruction can bring to students’ eventual ability to use their language of study in

the real world. Al Masaeed analyses the deficits of existing methods of L2 pragmatics instructions that often assume native-speakerist norms as the benchmark for assessing L2 pragmatic appropriateness. Taking the case of Arabic as the focus of his study, he shows how the diglossic and regionally-dialectal diversity in Arabic raises issues with instructing and assessing pragmatic appropriateness. He ends his analysis with a proposal to adopt a multilingual and multidialectal translanguaging perspective that enhances learners' metalinguistic awareness of contextual and sociolinguistic factors to apply appropriate pragmatic resources.

The fourth contribution, "Multilingualism Meets Multidialectism in L2 Study Abroad" by Julia Ruck, Daniel Walter, and Sarah Lehrich, analyzes a study abroad cohort's reflections on the linguistic ecology of German during an 8-week summer program in Vienna, Austria and Freiburg, Germany. Through questionnaires collected before, during, and after the program, as well as regular diary entries written during the second program half in Freiburg, students make astute connections between the course topics of German dialects and multilingualism and their experiences with real-world German during the program. They engaged not only in a descriptive practice by documenting their observations, but also in-depth analysis of sociopolitical dimensions of language variation and multilingualism. Through their own observations and analyses, students were able to deconstruct ideologies of standardization and linguistic purity. It is also evident that each student in this program established integral connections between multilingualism and multidialectism, highlighting the impact that a course on multilingualism and language variation can have in sharpening students' observational and analytical skills towards developing critical language awareness.

And in the fifth and final contribution, "Contesting Standard Language Norms: A Study of Wuhanese Families' Language," Shi Li and Wenhao Diao use an ethnographic approach to explore how heritage language maintenance of the Wuhanese dialect of Mandarin conflicts with parents' ideological statements about the importance of Standard Mandarin. At the heart of this article is the time in which this takes place, namely, after the COVID-19 pandemic. The contentious political atmosphere in the US to Wuhan as a potential starting point for the virus likely played a major factor in the parents' views on their linguistic beliefs about the continued use of Wuhanese versus Standard Mandarin. Through home visits, the researchers showed that despite parents' stated beliefs, aspects of Wuhanese continued to exist in both their own and their children's Chinese: While some parents explicitly integrated Wuhanese into their family language policies, others transmitted their local dialect unconsciously. Through these findings, the authors raise important questions about the resilience of dialects in the performances of heritage language practices to construct family identity and cultural legitimacy in different social contexts. And they show the complex and sometimes conflicting nature of how language ideologies inform our linguistic practices.

Taken together, these articles provide both theoretical and practical implications for a more robust, inclusive Multilingual Turn that recognizes linguistic diversity not only across but also within languages. The importance of ensuring that dialects and multidialectism are included within the Multilingual Turn cannot be understated for the shift towards multilingualism in SLA to take hold. Without this recognition, the Multilingual Turn in SLA is open to the same critiques leveled against monolingual, prescriptivist, and native-speakerist approaches; specifically, that it does not reflect the reality of language use and that it disenfranchises certain, often minoritized populations. Just as the Multilingual Turn helped to formalize and coalesce critiques against the ideal native speaker and empower language learners to use all of their linguistic knowledge to enhance their language learning experience, so too it must recognize that the diversity within named languages themselves play a vital part in learners' ability to become competent, adaptive users of a language across time, place, and context. In so doing, learners not only develop realistic language behaviors and knowledge, but also vital skills in identifying and subverting the often-invisible power structures that reproduce false hierarchies between Standard and Non-Standard varieties and their speakers.

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