Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Developing Language Awareness Through a Pluralistic Approach:
The Case of the Baltic and Nordic Countries

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The Nordic and Baltic countries have long modelled various kinds of plurilingualism and the language awareness that comes with learning and speaking a language in this relative field. Yet there is currently a call for the reassessment of the position of language diversity in these countries: in fact, some languages are privileged over others, and hierarchies have emerged to include some languages, while excluding others.

Articles in this special issue of IJBIDE take up the question of language diversities and hierarchies both in theory and practice in the context of an educational approach that has been developed in European and international education. Depending on the context, this approach has been labelled "Awareness of Language" (Hawkins, 1984), "Language Awareness" (Donmall, 1985; Dagenais et al., 2009; Candelier, 2003b), in French "Éveil aux langues" (Candelier, 2003a, 2009; Balsiger et al., 2012; Bezault & Candelier, 2015) and translated into English as "Awakening to languages" (Candelier, 2008, 2016; Candelier et al., 2009). In this publication we introduce the term "Language Awareness Through a Pluralistic Approach" (short: LA approach). The concept specifies that language awareness can draw on both a singular approach, "in which the didactic approach takes account of only one language or particular culture, considered in isolation" (Candelier et al., 2009, p. 5), or on a pluralistic approach to languages, "using teaching/learning activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages" (ibid., see also Candelier et al., 2012; De Pietro & Gerber, 2015; Daryai-Hansen et al., 2015). The pitfall of language teaching is that it is often linked to a certain "culture" or nation state and that "culture" does not represent or include the different variations of the languages taught, but is limited to, for example, British lifestyle when teaching English. Furthermore, language teaching still focusses exclusively on one target language instead of opening to the language diversity that is part of the everyday life of pupils today and integrating other languages that normally are not are taught at school.

The linguistic landscape in the Nordic and Baltic schools is primarily marked, on the one hand, by the dominant position of English that influences the status of all other foreign languages, and by the status of minority and migrant languages on the other hand. Barfod concludes for the Nordic countries, referring to Haberland & Preisler (2015): "In the 'global era' (Coupland 2010), English has been widely accepted as lingua franca. This certainly seems true for the Nordic countries, where English is much more of a world language than in many other parts of Europe (Haberland & Preisler 2015:

17)" (Barfod, 2015, p. 1). As Daryai-Hansen, Meister & Tonello (2015) emphasize, according to the *Special Eurobarometer* 386, 70-86% of Nordic citizens declare to speak English on a conversational level. In comparison, the overall average in the EU context is 38% (European Commission, 2012). Also in the Baltic countries, where Russian still had the status of lingua franca in 2008, the English language is emphasised as being increasingly important in the educational context (Hogan-Brun et al., 2008). In the Eurobarometer, the Baltic countries rank slightly above the European average. Here, 38 to 50% of residents state that they speak English well enough to be able to have a conversation. Based on the acknowledgment of the strong language hierarchisation in the Nordic countries, a Nordic language cooperation was coordinated. This cooperation was formalised in 2006 in the "Deklaration om nordisk språkpolitik" (Nordiska Råd, 2007), focusing in particular on establishing a so-called parallel language strategy between English and the Nordic languages and promoting plurilingualism in the Nordic countries also by taking minority and migrant languages into account.

The LA approach, to our understanding, can make a significant contribution to the - in Axel Honneth's (2003) terminology - recognition of linguistic diversity. By this we mean integrating into the teaching/learning activities all sorts of languages and linguistic varieties, e.g. the language(s) of education, foreign languages, regional languages and dialects, minority languages and migrant languages, focussing on "languages that the school does not intend to teach (which may or may not be the mother tongues of some pupils)" (Candelier, 2003b, 2008, 2009). The LA approach encourages 1) student knowledge about the languages taught at school, the students' first languages and other languages, 2) their recognition of linguistic diversity and 3) their metalinguistic abilities. The approach looks at different language aspects such as the history of languages, similarities and differences between languages, links between language and culture, spoken and written language, verbal and nonverbal communication and language learning. The two other main pluralistic approaches to languages are more restrictive in terms of which languages they relate to: the integrated didactics approach establishes links between the languages taught at school (e.g. between English and German), and intercomprehension between related languages builds bridges between languages from the same language family, focusing on comprehension skills (e.g. learning to read Portuguese based on French).

The special issue will focus on the Nordic and Baltic context and presents result from the three-year project called "Developing the Language Awareness/Eveil aux langues Approach in the Nordic and Baltic countries" (DELA-NOBA, see Daryai-Hansen, Meister, & Tonello, 2015 and the project website delanoba.com) funded by Nordplus Horizontal from August 2013 to July 2016. The idea for the DELA-NOBA project has its roots in an acknowledgement of the limited attention that is paid to plurilingualism and to encounters with other languages than English in the specific context of the Nordic and Baltic countries and represents an attempt to integrate and further develop the LA approach in the Nordic/Baltic context.

The project activities involved 21 partners from seven participating Nordic/Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden) and one associate partner from Norway, and aimed at establishing cooperation between universities and primary and secondary schools. The project was based on the results from previous European projects: *Janua linguarum - The Gateway to Languages* (JaLing, Candelier, 2003b), *Eveil aux langues* (EVLANG, Candelier, 2003a) and *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA, Candelier et al., 2012).

In the DELA-NOBA project, three main phases can be distinguished: in the first phase, existing LA teaching materials were collected and integrated in the Nordic/Baltic context. Here, already existing teaching materials from a variety of previous LA projects were chosen and tried out in the participating project schools. As a result, nine teaching materials were selected for translation into the Nordic/Baltic languages. In the second phase, based on the experiences from the initial phase, the project group designed a set of LA teaching materials for the Nordic/Baltic context. In the third and last phase, the project results were collected and distributed. In parallel, the participating researchers collected teacher, student and parent data in order to investigate experiences with the LA approach.

Four features could be identified as common to the DELA-NOBA materials and specific for the further development of the approach that they aim at encouraging in the Nordic/Baltic context. First, all DELA-NOBA activities support an interdisciplinary approach, where the focus on a set of languages is combined with contents from other subjects. In the activity "Micro republics" (level Primary 1), for instance, pupils work with eight languages and different kinds of scripts at once, and at the same time specific topics within the subject of Social Sciences are addressed, for instance by considering questions such as "What is a constitution?", "What is a democracy?" (Jensen et al., 2015). Second, drawing on the results from the previously mentioned FREPA project, the objectives of the teaching activities are, as we will see, described in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills. Third, special attention is paid to the pupils' own choices of the languages they would like to work with. Besides resulting in an easier adaptation of the activities to different linguistic and cultural contexts, this also invites investigation into the choices of the pupils: which languages do they consider as interesting to explore and why? At the same time, teachers are asked to include languages in the activities that are relevant in their context, for instance languages represented in the classroom, including regional and minority languages. Fourth and finally, the teaching activities can be considered as representing a different approach than what pupils are accustomed to. The student evaluations of the project activities have the twofold function of letting pupil opinions be at the centre, while also making them reflect on the pluralistic approach proposed with the activities.

LANGUAGE AWARENESS THROUGH A PLURALISTIC APPROACH: AN EXAMPLE

In order to concretise the LA approach we will shortly present the LA teaching activity "A plurilingual mouse" (see Tonnar et al., 2010: 46-47 and FREPA database, n.d.). The activity is based on a short plurilingual story in nine different languages not commonly taught at schools (see Figure 1).

With this LA activity, the learner is essentially encouraged to work analytically, also and most importantly by establishing connections between different languages, to collaboratively discuss with others and finally also to reflect on the process of carrying out the deciphering task based on their common linguistic knowledge and skills.

In terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills, this activity contributes to e.g. an understanding of language diversity as well as of specific linguistic features, particularly of written language. The attention to diversity that the activity encourages is mirrored in the more open and interested attitude towards other languages enjoyed by learners and in a greater sense of familiarity with and confidence in linguistic diversity. Furthermore, with the activity learners are required to draw on their overall linguistic knowledge and their metalinguistic skills: they are asked to focus on different languages as well as on central strategies of language learning, including guessing strategies. To do so, the ability to pay attention to linguistic diversity and navigate in such diversity become essential learning objectives. Lastly, being able to analyse and to reflect on own learning processes represents a significant contribution to the knowledge of how to learn (learning to learn) and the awareness among pupils that one's linguistic knowledge can be applied in the learning of new languages.

Based on the FREPA descriptors of resources, the knowledge, attitudes and skills (Candelier et al., 2009) that are developed through this teaching activity are described in Tables 1-3:

THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS VOLUME

This new issue of IJBIDE represents a contribution to the field of plurilingual education conceptualising the LA approach from a theoretical, historical and empirical perspective, primarily through the lens of the Danish context. A second issue will appear with an emphasis on the Nordic-Baltic context and the work of the DELA-NOBA project.

Figure 1. LA teaching activity: A Plurilingual Mouse

Eng Mausgeschicht

This is a story of a …. in several languages, which you might not know.

1. Try to translate the story roughly into English (or another language you are familiar with).
2. If you can identify some of the languages, indicate their names between the brackets.

Work in small groups (of people knowing different languages)!

The story	*Another version of the same story*	*Your version of the story*
Eng Mausgeschicht (__) Mama mysz spaceruje ze swoim dzieckem w domu.(__) Op eemol héiere si eng Kaz (__). Miško se jako boji (__). Drufabe seit d Muetter zum Chlyne (__): "Não tenhas medo e ouve" (__). Ed a la surpraisa da sia pitschna cumenza ella a bublar (__): "Hav, hav, hav" (__). Il gatto riparte subito di corsa, impaurito (__). A onda majka govori mišku (__):"Gsehsch, äs isch gäbig zwöischsprachig z sy" (__).	**Una storia di topi (__)** Ä Muus spaziert mit ihrem Chlyne dür ds Huus (__). Od jednom oni čuju mašku (__). Yavru fare çok korktu (__). A mamã diz ao ratinho (__): "Häb nid Angscht u los" (__). I pred svojim začuđenim mališanom, ona počinje da laje (__): "Ham, ham, ham" (__). Elo huet d'Kaz Angscht a leeft séeier fort (__). A mamã diz então ao seu filinho (__):"Vidiš kako je potrebno biti dvojezičan!" (__).	

3. How did you go about this task? Discuss this question within your group.

Table 1. Knowledge

Knowledge
Knowledge about language diversity and plurilingualism.
Knowledge about similarities and differences between languages (especially related to written forms).
Knowledge that one can build on similarities between languages in order to learn languages.

Table 2. Attitudes

Attitudes
Attention to languages (especially related to written forms).
Sensitivity to the existence of other languages, and an attitude of curiosity/interest towards linguistic diversity.
Self-confidence and a feeling of familiarity: confidence in one's capacities of observation or analysis of little known or unknown languages. A feeling of familiarity linked to similarities or proximities between languages. Considering every language as "something" accessible.
Reflection and self-questioning on adapted or specific comprehension strategies used when faced with an unknown language or code.

The first article introduces some of the main theoretical frameworks for the LA approach. Anne Holmen presents in her contribution the concepts of additive language pedagogy and learner-centred approaches to teaching and based on these concepts critically discusses the current conditions for minority pupils in Danish schools.

Table 3. Skills

Skills
Can observe or analyse linguistic elements or cultural phenomena in languages or cultures which are more or less familiar (observation and analytical skills, making hypothesis, resorting to previous knowledge).
Can compare linguistic features of different languages or cultures (especially related to written language and lexical proximity). Can establish similarity and difference between languages from observation, analysis, identification or recognition of some of their components.
Can use knowledge and skills already mastered in one language in activities of comprehension or production in another language
Can gain from previously acquired knowledge about languages during learning.

In the second article, Michel Candelier and Martine Kervran provide an overview of the development of the LA or Awakening to Languages (AtL) approach. The authors present some main European projects within the last 20 years and draw parallels to the implementation of pluralistic approaches into curricula within different European educational systems.

The third article is entitled "Metalanguaging Matters: Multilingual Children Engaging with the Meta'". Drawing on newer social perspectives on metalanguage and social semiotics, the article discusses results from the ongoing longitudinal research project "Signs of Language". This project, awarded The European Language Label in Denmark, can be classified based on the definition given above as a LA project focussing on plurilingual literacy development in the multilingual classroom.

The fourth article put the theme of this issue of IJBIDE into perspective: Danièle Moore, Maureen Hoskyn and Jaqueline Mayo link in their contribution language awareness activities with content learning and discuss results from the Canadian context. The article presents a science centre as transformative learning environment, intertwining the development of multilingual kindergarten children's language awareness and scientific, multilingual literacies.

Through this collection of articles, this new issue of IJBIDE substantiates the concept of language awareness through a pluralistic approach both theoretically and empirically. The main focus is on primary and early secondary education in Denmark, however the issue also takes a broader view by integrating the European and Canadian contexts.

It is striking that the collection of articles is characterised by a somewhat optimistic stance. This may be rooted in the fact that the LA approach has potential to recognise languages that are marginalised in the schools and by language policies. All contributions are driven by the ambition to protect, acknowledge, promote and dehierarchise or re-hierarchise language and cultural diversity in and through education.

However, despite the relatively long history of the plurilingualism framework in the European context, we can still see the strong tendencies in the national language policies to favour national languages over home languages, especially from the perspective of immigrant children. In the Nordic countries alone minority languages such as Roma and Sami are in danger of dying out.

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IJBIDE

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