Receptive Multilingualism

Jan D. ten Thije - Universiteit Utrecht

The Multilingualism & Diversity Lectures (MUDILE) 2017
Hildesheim, 7 June 2017
Introducing Multilingualism

Current European Language policy:

- Standard languages in EU are equal
- ‘One plus two’ principle
- Maintenance of minority languages
- Common European Framework (CEFR) implies an “Additive concept of multilingualism”
- Native speaker is the norm
Introducing Receptive Multilingualism

Example from a Dutch television report on the German Knife factory in Solingen

20 januari 2010, 12.20 – 14.43

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VcEja1Ahq4
Receptive multilingualism in practice

The example shows different strategies for mutual understanding

- Developing expectations of what will be said (by the speaker) based on (common) presuppositions
- Non verbal behaviour
- Monitoring L2 competence of the other
- Negotiation of language choice
- Meta-communicative devices in order to assure understanding
Structure of the talk

1. Introduction
   - Occurences
   - Concepts
   - Conclusion on terminology

2. Research
   - Inherent receptive multilingualism
   - Acquired receptive multilingualism
   - Conclusion: factors for successful RM use

3. Applications
   - Language policy: Skills agenda of EU Commission
   - Academic curriculum: Humanities bachelor at Utrecht University
   - Awareness training in Brussels (DGT)

4. Conclusion
   - Integration in Inclusive Multilingualism
1.1 Occurrences of receptive multilingualism in Europe

- Border regions

- Governmental communication

- International workplaces, sales talk, meetings

- Media & digital discourse (e.g. blogs, tweets, television, websites, email, internet forums)

- Bilingual families

- Communication with and by migrants

- Educational settings; RM in academic education
1.1 RM at national election debate in Belgium

Reportage Lijsttrekkersdebat Belgische verkiezingen

Buitenland

Nationaal debat / débat national
1.1 Occurrence within and across language families

- Romance languages
- Germanic languages
- Slavic languages
- Finno-Ugric languages
- Turkic languages
- Indo-Iranian
- Semitic languages
- Basque, Albanian
1.2 Defining Receptive Multilingualism

• Interactants employ a language and/or language variety different from their partner’s.
• They understand each other without any additional *lingua franca*.
• The recipients activate knowledge of the language and/or variety of their interlocutor(s).
1.2 RM and related concepts

- Receptive bilingualism (Hockett, 1958)
- Mutual intelligibility of closely related languages (Wolff, 1959; Gooskens & Van Bezooijen 2013)

- Polyglot dialogue (Posner, 1991)
- Plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001)
- Pluri-lingual discourse (Clyne, 2003)
- Intercompréhension (Meissner, 2008)
- Plurilingual repertoire (Lüdi, 2007)
- Receptive multilingualism (Braunmüller, 2007)

- Lingua Receptiva (Rehbein, ten Thije & Verschik, 2012)
1.2 From formal to functional concepts

- Development of these concepts reflects the paradigmatic switch within linguistics from a formal paradigm (Chomsky, 1957) to a functional paradigm (Hymes, 1972).

- The formal concept investigates *intelligibility* among related languages or dialects due to *close genetic relationship*.

- The functional concept investigates language use in multilingual settings including exposure, proficiencies, language attitude, interaction strategies, ...
1.2 Theoretical orientations of concepts

- **Formal orientation**
  - Semi-communication
  - Receptive bilingualism
  - Mutual intelligibility of closely related languages

- **More functional orientation**
  - Polyglot dialogue
  - Plurilingualism
  - Pluri-lingual discourse
  - Intercompréhension
  - Plurilingual repertoire
  - Receptive multilingualism
  - Lingua Receptiva
1.2 Concepts and language families

- Concepts refer to the potential understanding between native speakers of typologically related languages.
- Other concepts also cover cases of understanding between speakers across language family borders.
1.2 Inherent or acquired

- Only within one language family: inherent understanding
  - mutual intelligibility,
  - receptive bilingualism,
  - semi-communication
  - receptive multilingualism (Braunmuller)

- Also between language families: acquired understanding
  - receptive multilingualism (Beerkens)
  - polyglot dialogue
  - plurilingualism
  - pluri-lingual discourse
  - plurilingual repertoire
  - lingua receptiva
1.3 Conclusion on Terminology

- Receptive multilingualism (RM) is a mode of interaction in which speakers with different linguistic backgrounds use their respective preferred languages while understanding the language of their interlocutor.

- The mechanisms and competences contributing to mutual understanding in this constellation are described by the concept of lingua receptiva (LaRa).
2. Research into ‘inherent’ versus ‘acquired’

- **Inherent RM** in case of close typological distance

- **Acquired RM** in case of great typological distance
2.1 Inherent Receptive Multilingualism
Beerkens 2010

- Which role does RM play in Dutch-German cross-linguistic discourse in civil societal - and in governmental organisations in Dutch-German border area?

- Online survey and case studies in governmental and civil societal organisations in Euregio
2.1 Internet documentary film by UU students in cooperation with Nederlandse Taalunie

Videofragment 5.50 – 7.48
2.1 Dutch – German border

Research area: first Euregio 1978
2.1 Online survey results
Beerkens 2010

Language choice at work in contact with German / Dutch people in %

![Bar chart showing language choice at work.](chart.png)
2.1 Native and non-natives utterances

Division of Dutch and German (native and non-native) utterances in the meeting (in %)
2.1 Speaker and hearer planning
Rehbein 2009; Kameyama 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Hearer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0) Action context</td>
<td>(0) Action context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-history</th>
<th>Hearer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) Evaluation of the situation (S)</td>
<td>(I) Assessment of the situation (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(II) Motivation</td>
<td>(II) (Formation of the) hearer’s expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(III) Reconstruction of aim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(IV) Formation of the speaker’s plan</td>
<td>(III) Perception of the ( S ) plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(IV) Formation of the pre-history of plan of ( S )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(V) Checking of the correspondence of stage (IV) with stage (II) and of stage (V) with (I)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Result (utterance)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-history</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(VII) Follow-up action</td>
<td>(VIII) Follow-up action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speaker and hearer’s plan (Rehbein 2009; Kameyama 2004)
### 2.1 Speaker and hearer planning in RML

Beerkens 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Hearer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-history</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action context</td>
<td>Action context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I)</td>
<td>(II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of the situation (S)</td>
<td>Assessment of S’s language skills in the native language of H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(I.1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(II)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of H’s language skills in the native language of S</td>
<td>(Formation of the) hearer’s expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(II)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(III)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction of aim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(IV)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation of the speaker’s plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Schema</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Entire plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(V)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Result (utterance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(VI)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-history</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post-history</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VII)</td>
<td>(VIII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up action</td>
<td>Follow-up action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adaptation of speaker & hearer plan by Beerkens 2010
2.2 Acquired Lingua Receptiva
Bahtina 2013

• How is LaRa possible in a interaction between people using languages that have great typological distance?

• Estonian (Finno-Ugric) versus Russian (East-Slavic)
  • No inherent congruent understanding
  • What is the minimum L2 proficiencies for LaRa?

• Skype conversation: 96 interlocutors (38 bilingual Estonian-Russian and 10 monolingual dyads)

• High – high (HH) // High – Low (HL) // Low – Low (LL) couples
2.2 Russian minority in Estonia
2.2 Set up of the skype Experiment

- Dialogue about a visual display between two participants
- Task - find follower on the map and guide them
- Instruction - use mother tongue
2.2 Meta-communicative devices

- Knowledge model of functional pragmatics (Ehlich and Rehbein 1986)
2.2 Meta-communicative devices

MCD 1: **P** – ensures the common understanding of action constellation and a presumed set of actions that are to be taken in order to reach communicative purposes.

MCD 2: **n** - aimed at securing common conceptual orientation system in the time and space given.

MCD 3: **p** - assures understanding of linguistic realisations within ongoing discourse. Determined by
  1. interactants’ plurilingual background and experiences
  2. speaker’s anticipation as to what the hearer would understand
  3. Hearer’s anticipation as to what would the speaker would aim at
2.2 Results

- LaRa couples and monolingual couples were both able to complete the task.
- L2 is not a strict prerequisite for creating mutual understanding.
- Exposure to similar situations and a positive attitude boost passive repertoires that are re-activated in LaRa communication.
- L2 level within the couple determines MCD choices: HH couples use MCD2 since this requires certain L2 proficiency.
2.3 Conclusion on factors determining the use

- Exposure
- Proficiency
- Common ground
- Attitude
- Location
- Language policy
- Status
- Age
3. Applications

- Language policy: Skills agenda of EU Commission
- Academic curriculum: RM in Humanities bachelors at Utrecht University
- Awareness training at the Directorate General Translation (DGT)
3.1 RM in EU Skills agenda

Purposes of skills agenda:

• Making skills more visible

• Learning in settings outside formal education

• Transversal skills for employees

• Appropriate training for new arrived migrants

• Promoting and intensifying learning mobility
3.1 RM in Skills agenda

- RM is a basic skill:
- Enhance the key competence “Communicating in and learning a foreign language” in Skills Guarantee
- Improve transparency of qualification: refine the European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- Strengthen the Europass
3.2 RM in academic curriculum in Utrecht

• Internationalisation at home
  • Target group: International and local students
  • Alternative for the policy of ‘English Only’

• Participation in Humanities seminars
  • 90 seminars are open for RM students
  • 15 students participated last year

• Aims
  • Increase of participation rate in course offer of the modern languages
  • Learning to cope with linguistic diversity and switching perspectives
  • [http://students.uu.nl/en/hum/lingua-receptiva](http://students.uu.nl/en/hum/lingua-receptiva)
3.3 Awareness training at DGT

- Decreasing translation and interpretation costs (EU Commission 2012)

- Interviews with professionals in Brussels with regard to their RM practices and attitudes

- Advice 2013 and Execution of Training in 2017

- Videofragment 21-77 - 22.26 Brussel
3.3 RM and language awareness

- Socio-cultural and institutional awareness of and commitment to RM
- Speaker’s communicative and linguistic abilities and attitudes
- Awareness of typological differences and similarities of languages involved
4. Conclusion

• RM is not the one and only solution for multilingualism

• RM should be integrated with other multilingual communicative modes
  • English as Lingua Franca
  • Regional Linguae Francae
  • Code Switching
  • (Non) professional interpreting

• Inclusive Multilingualism (Backus 2013 et al)

• The quintessence of RM and lingua receptiva is to be aware of their restrictions in order to know their potential
Selected literature


Danke schön für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit
2.2 Results - using MCD’s

L2 level within the couple determines MCD choices:

- HH couples use MCD2 since this requires certain L2 proficiency
- LL of HL couple use MCD3 that secure alignment of the linguistic level.
- MCD1 tends to lead to faster task completion