

Bilingualism and multilingualism: Transversal competencies, mobility, and well-being

Introduction

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Introduction

Bilingualism and multilingualism:

Transversal competencies, mobility, and well-being

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Welcome to this volume of selected papers from CCERBAL 2023!

This edition of the CCERBAL Conference took place on May 4–6, 2023, and focused on three distinct, yet interrelated themes: transversal skills, mobility, and well-being in bilingual and multilingual individuals or environments. The CCERBAL Conference takes place every two years and is the signature event of the Centre canadien d'études et de recherche en bilinguisme et aménagement linguistique (CCERBAL)/Canadian Centre for Studies and Research on Bilingualism and Language Planning (CCERBAL), an integral part of the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) at the University of Ottawa.


About the CCERBAL Conference

The overall objective of the conference is to gather diverse people with diverse perspectives for discussion and exchange of ideas, knowledge, and practical applications. Our calls are addressed to both established and young researchers, teaching practitioners, students, administrators, policy makers, and beyond. Our conference programs, although always thematically oriented, are inclusive and allow proposals on a wide array of topics from multi-disciplinary perspectives. The 2023 edition was no exception. It included presenters and audience members from four continents who

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enjoyed a three-day event packed with keynote speeches, thematic symposia, round tables, workshops, individual oral presentations, and posters, coupled with networking and social activities. While we accepted submissions in both French and English, Canada's two official languages, we also invited presenters to focus on (and use in their presentations) any other language relevant to their research, identity, and personal or professional context, as appropriate.

The 2023 conference themes

The three themes—transversal competences, mobility, and well-being—were naturally intertwined with one another, both in our pre-conference concept and in the actual contributions presented during the event. Transversal competences—often referred to as new competences, soft skills, 21st century skills, or even new literacies—are more than just a trendy term in discussions about language teaching, learning, and the use of language in society. The rationale behind transversality and the new research that is emerging on this topic has solid grounding in the idea of de-compartmentalizing languages, looking at them from new holistic perspectives, and placing them at the centre of learning, workplace interactions, sharing of knowledge, communicating effectively with others, or pursuing responsible citizenship and societal cohesion (European Centre for Modern Languages, 2022; Macianskiene, 2016; UNESCO, 2020; Voogt & Roblin, 2012). To put it simply, transversal skills are inextricably connected to language and thus fundamental to humans. While this perspective may seem obvious or even trivial, we must remember that, for a long time, language has been viewed in a different way. Focusing only on grammar or form—isolated from meaning in traditional teaching and learning—or focusing only on cognitive or linguistic aspects, or emphasizing only the communicative and social dimensions are just a few examples of language silos that the transversal language skills perspective has the potential of overcoming. The idea of transversality truly allows us to put language at the centre of human activity and accord it a prominent place on the 21st century global stage of fundamental skills and abilities that people use and receive training to use to succeed in professional domains and live in harmony along with others.

The mobility theme is also highly relevant to discussing the 21st century and globalisation. While we know that the world has witnessed large movements of people since ancient times (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015), the scale, complexity, multidirectionality, and intensity of people's mobility in our era is unprecedented. This, of course, creates or amplifies multiple questions related to linguistic competences necessary to succeed and thrive in such a context, making the field of language teaching and learning more relevant than

ever. The mobility theme also brings to the fore questions related to language, identity, policy, and power as well as the role of big lingua franca languages, such as English, versus the existence and survival of small, local languages in smaller or minority contexts. Global flows and exchanges of ideas, internationalized education, personal travel, transnational families, economic migration, as well as the experiences of people fleeing wars and persecution inject further impetus into our thinking of the role and place of language in our increasingly mobile world. Finally, our concept of mobility when writing the conference call was not limited to tangible phenomena only. We invited participants to explore mobility from multiple angles, including social mobility as well as digital mobility on a par with physical mobility, and to relate these to language teaching, learning, bilingualism, and multilingualism.

The well-being theme naturally intersects with the other two and brings positive psychology into the equation. While psychology is sometimes associated with personal issues and challenges that humans need to overcome, the advent of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2020) and its subsequent introduction into the domain of language teaching and learning has opened new horizons. Indeed, looking at how human beings flourish and thrive and relating that to language offers stimulating new avenues that have been explored in recent research and practice (e.g., De Houwer, 2020; MacIntyre et al. 2019; Oxford, 2016). Thinking of what propels us, what makes us happy, and what motivates us has powerful implications for language teaching and learning. Language teachers are no longer focused exclusively on creating appropriate communicative contexts for learners to acquire the necessary linguistic and sociocultural competencies. Instead, an increasing number of teachers are influenced by the idea of imbuing instruction with activities and strategies that are enjoyable, captivate learners' attention and motivation, lower language anxiety, and increase the amount of pleasure, satisfaction, and general well-being of the language learner (and the language teacher). Gamification, naturally, has a prominent place in such approaches to language teaching and learning, and so does digital technology, including generative AI (which started making world headlines just a few months before the conference took place).

The articles in this volume

Within the context of the above three themes, many of the conference contributions advanced the thinking and the exchange of ideas among different stakeholders. Below is a summary of each of the articles that was accepted through a peer review process for publication in this volume and that represents the diversity of people and perspectives that the conference audience benefited from.

In the keynote contribution by Lau, critical and decolonial perspectives

on intercultural reflexivity and global civic engagement are explored, showing how cross-linguistic and cross-curricular strategies in Quebec classrooms can nurture critical cultural awareness. This approach highlights how language education can actively promote civic responsibility, encouraging students to meaningfully engage across differences. Expanding on critical pedagogy, the study by Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng examines a pedagogy of care within higher education, illustrating how relationship-centered teaching that emphasizes students' well-being can build inclusive learning spaces and meet learners' emotional and social needs alongside academic goals.

Turning to identity, well-being, and linguistic security, Dankova investigates the complex dynamics of identity negotiation among multicultural polyglots, revealing how self-definition plays a central role in their experiences and well-being within multilingual contexts. In a complementary study on linguistic (in)security, Violette assesses the self-perceptions of young Acadian French speakers, noting that while linguistic security has improved, significant regional disparities remain, underscoring the enduring impact of linguistic identity on personal well-being. Focusing on Russian-French bilingual children, Tiulkova and colleagues find that balanced bilingualism is associated with positive social-emotional outcomes and language confidence, indicating that a supportive bilingual environment fosters well-being and socio-emotional competence.

In educational contexts, Maganaka examines the role of Canada's Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) program in supporting social integration, revealing how language training can aid immigrants in building essential connections and cultural understanding. Addressing digital inclusivity, Bangou and colleagues explore how digital tools can enhance language learning for plurilingual students, providing adaptive learning environments that support equitable access to language education. The study by Bacci introduces regional dialects and code-switching into Italian language classrooms, showcasing how exposure to linguistic diversity strengthens students' sociolinguistic awareness and motivation. This is followed by the contribution by Le Bouthillier and Garrett which highlights a strengths-based mentoring program for FSL teacher candidates, illustrating how relational support through mentorship fosters resilience and a solid foundation for future teaching careers.

Beyond educational settings, Parisot and Voghel address language accessibility for the Deaf community in Canada, examining how policy adherence, language choice, and Deaf expertise are essential to achieving equitable access to information. In a related social context, Stathopoulou and Melo-Pfeifer's study investigates cross-linguistic mediation tasks and their capacity to develop transversal skills, showing how these tasks foster intercultural understanding, teamwork, and digital literacy in diverse settings.

Next, Schick and Rohde present a Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport for students with developmental language disorders, revealing that structured linguistic risk-taking can bolster resilience and socio-emotional well-being, highlighting the benefits of supportive linguistic environments for diverse learners. The volume ends with a study by Varadi, which delves into transborder issues. The author focuses on Transcarpathia, a region in the west of Ukraine that is home to a Hungarian minority of approximately 150,000 people. He investigates the status and usage of Ukrainian and Russian loanwords by Hungarian speakers in a minority context.

Happy reading!

The volume co-editors

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