MULTILINGUALISM IN ANCIENT CONTEXTS

Perspectives from
Ancient Near Eastern
and Early Christian
Contexts

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BEYOND MULTILINGUALISM IN ANCIENT CONTEXTS

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16.1 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

As mentioned in the Introduction to this volume, the chapters presented here are the products of a collaboration of scholars who study various aspects and periods of the Ancient World. They convened in a multidisciplinary context at a colloquium that was held in Stellenbosch in September 2019. Part of this collaboration was also scholars from various contexts of linguistic and educational studies on multilingualism, who had the rare opportunity of interacting with scholars studying the same phenomenon as it played out in the Ancient World. The discourse between studies of multilingualism in the Ancient World, and those investigating the same in the Contemporary World, was rich and rewarding. It is therefore planned that a second volume will document those contributions from linguistics and education to facilitate this enriching discourse and continue in further intellectual contexts.

This volume opens with a theoretical reflection by Angelika Berlejung on how multilingualism and the strategies of language choice are witnessed in written sources from the Ancient Near East. She focuses particularly on the role of Aramaic in these ancient contexts, and on the factors that determined the preference for Aramaic in certain written documents, but the local vernaculars or imperial languages in others. According to Berlejung, language and script choice can be a strategy for creating identity performances in multilingual contexts, to define the in- and the out-group and to express a confession or a programme.

A speaker/writer opted for a certain language/script that symbolised the interests, messages, aims, rights, and obligations they wished to enforce in the communication situation and index the appropriate identities. By doing that, identity options can emerge and disperse, social distance can be created or bridged. Even if in some contexts, linguistic practices can be better understood in sociopolitical and economic terms rather than in terms of identity, identity options are seen in Berlejung's chapter as a relevant concept for the investigation of language use in multilingual settings.

Berlejung indicates that the sociolinguistic rules and strategies for language choice in the different text-types of the epigraphical corpus of the multilingual Ancient Near East is a topic whose study has just recently begun. Her chapter offers possible methods for locating identity options, and identity performances, within ancient languages and scripts, especially regarding epigraphical sources from 1st millennium BCE Palestine.

It is argued that the multilingual linguistic practices are highly context sensitive. The same is valid for discourses about identity options and identity performances (between individuals, families, groups, majority-minorities, elites and non-elites, institutions, rulers and ruled) which were subject of negotiation processes. Thus, for the historical

analysis of identity performances in ancient multilingual texts, it makes sense to take the text type, its materiality, and its full social and archaeological context, into consideration.

At the level of written language, multilingualism is tangible in various aspects, while the processes at the level of the spoken language can no longer be verified. This also means, that our knowledge about the strategies of language choice, shift or maintenance, intentional multilinguistic practices, or unintentional interferences, connected to identity options or not (e.g., being sometimes purely opportunistic), are to a large extent hidden in the past.

From Berlejung's theoretical reflection, the study moves to the context of ancient Anatolia and the Levant. Herbert Niehr focuses on Ugarit, which was an important trade and cultural harbour city on this coastline and explains the complicated linguistic landscape of this centre and its influence sphere. During excavations at Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit, approximately 5000 clay tablets bearing different languages and scripts were found. Nine languages (Ugaritic, Hurrian, Akkadian, Sumerian, Hittite, Luwian, Cypro-Minoan, Egyptian, and Phoenician) in five scripts (Ugaritic alphabetic cuneiform, Babylonian syllabic cuneiform, Hieroglyphic Luwian hieroglyphics, Cypro-Minoan, and Egyptian hieroglyphics) are attested.

While Ugaritic was the vernacular of the city and its kingdom, Hurrian and Akkadian were also spoken by a smaller part of the population. All the city and kingdom's internal affairs were addressed in the Ugaritic language and script. For cultic affairs, Ugaritic served as the main language, with Hurrian to a lesser degree. Several ritual texts display a mixture of Ugaritic and Hurrian. Akkadian served as a *lingua franca* for all matters of international affairs. This is demonstrated by the el-Amarna letters from Ugarit, by letters received from abroad, and from diplomatic and juridical documents.

These three spoken languages also display a degree of mutual influence, for example, Ugaritic affecting Hurrian or Akkadian by way of an Ugaritic substrate. Furthermore, there are Hurrian loan words in Ugaritic texts. Bilingual texts are also attested, for example, Ugaritic-Hurrian or Ugaritic-Akkadian. The other languages attested at Ugarit (Sumerian, Hittite, Luwian, Cypro-Minoan, Egyptian, and Phoenician) were only of minor importance. Some of these were only written on objects imported from abroad, or used for the purpose of scholarship, as in the case of Sumerian, this further being the case with some trilingual texts, e.g., Sumerian-Akkadian-Ugaritic.

Izak Cornelius, an iconographer, looks at visible multilingualism in 1st millennium BCE Anatolia and the Levant. He argues that in the study of multilingualism in the form of bilingual and trilingual inscriptions, the visible evidence should also receive

attention. These include the object and its medium (multimodality), its materiality, monumentality, and the context of where it was placed or functioned.

The Karatepe, Çineköy, Ivriz and Tell Fekheriye bilinguals, the İncirli trilinguals, and the Arslan Taş bilinguals and trilinguals are examined in this chapter with regard to discovery, and find contexts, objects themselves, the language of the inscriptions, and the material imagery of the object including some comparative material. In some cases, the relationship between inscription and object/image is more direct than with others. These are examples of visible multilingualism.

Laura Gonnermann's contribution considers inscriptions on Egyptian amulets found in the southern Levant from the perspective of multilingualism. The paradigms of contact linguistics are examined regarding their historical applicability in the linguistic contact between ancient Egypt and the region of the southern Levant. By the investigation of the archaeological contexts and Egyptian texts addressing the topic of magic, it is shown in this chapter that the amulets were used in a magic-medical domain. The magically effective hieroglyphics were used deliberately and were considered effective due to their pictorial character. The volume moves from ancient Egypt to the regions of Anatolia (part of modern-day Turkey) and the Levant (the coastal regions stretching southwards through the coastline of modern-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel).

Felix Hagemeyer's chapter moves further southwards to concentrate on the southern coastal plain of Israel/Palestine. For this area, the period from the 5th to the 4th century BCE represents an important pivotal age. This era is characterised, above all, by growing relations of the coastal cities with its direct neighbours (such as, Phoenicia, Judah, and Edom in particular) and the Achaemenid Empire. This development was accelerated by a great demographic and economic growth of these cities, which fully developed into trading centres. As the correlating processes have so far only been researched to a limited extent, this chapter presents a reconstruction of the regional development of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the cities of *ʿAsqalān*/Ashkelon, *Esdūd*/Ashdod and *Yafā*/Yafo. For this purpose, it evaluates the material culture and epigraphic finds from these cities and analyses a representative text from the Hebrew Bible (Neh 13:23-24).

Gideon Kotzé focuses on another textual corpus of the Hebrew Bible, namely Lamentations, to illustrate the multilingual context of early Judaism. He shows that the available resources for the cultural study of early Judaism indicate that its ideas, beliefs, worldviews, and values were transmitted in a complex multilingual context.

The cultural study of early Judaism therefore requires the cooperation of specialists in more than one area of research, including (but not limited to) linguistics and textual criticism. Kotzé's contribution focuses on the discipline of textual criticism and why it is important for its practitioners to avail themselves of information about the larger cultural, intellectual, and language environment in which the textual representatives they study circulated and co-existed. It takes a closer look at a case study from the Book of Lamentations, to illustrate the importance of information about the multilingual context of early Judaism for the practice and goal of textual criticism.

From Anatolia and the Levant, the volume moves to some Mesopotamian contexts. Renate Van Dijk-Coombes investigates the Akkadian period (ca. 2334–2150 BCE) which is the first empire in world history in the sense that the Akkadian rulers ruled over a relatively wide area with people of different religions, cultures, and languages.

The Akkadian Empire is also the first to employ two languages in its written culture. These are Sumerian, a language isolate, and east Semitic Akkadian. Her chapter investigates how these two languages were used by two groups of elites of the Akkadian Empire – the religious elite and the political, secular elite. This is done by focusing on the religious poetry and the royal inscriptions produced during this period. She indicates that the differences in how these two languages were used offers insight into language ideology during the Akkadian period.

Karen Radner, an Assyriologist, investigates the phenomenon of diglossia in the Neo-Assyrian Empire's Akkadian and Aramaic text production. The Neo-Assyrian period is the time from approximately 900–600 BCE, when the Middle East was politically and culturally dominated by the Assyrian Empire, whose heartland corresponds to modern-day northern Iraq. Given its expansive reach, that included regions in modern Iran, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan, it comes as no surprise that the Empire was a multilingual environment. The focus of Radner's chapter lies on the state administration, which ran a bilingual, digraphic administrative system by using two languages and two scripts. In imperial art, its workings were depicted as the pairing of a scribe with stylus and clay tablet or wax-covered writing board, and another with brush and leather scroll. The first records Akkadian in the traditional cuneiform while the latter writes Aramaic in the alphabetic script.

Importantly for the study, Radner shows that cuneiform writing was used to record three distinct forms of Akkadian. These are, on the one hand, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian, the vernacular language varieties as spoken in northern and southern Mesopotamia respectively and, on the other hand, "Standard Babylonian", a highly literary language modelled on an ancient form of Babylonian as used approximately

1500 BCE. The chapter highlights that the Empire's scribal production was not merely multilingual and polygraphic, but for Akkadian cuneiform also diglossic.

The contribution of Louis Jonker moves the discussion to Ancient Persia. He indicates that monolingualism, and the enforcement of a *lingua franca*, is often associated with asymmetrical power relations in imperial regimes, while multilingualism is generally associated with more liberal and inclusive expressions of political power.

In Achaemenid Persia (539–332 BCE), it seems as if these general assumptions were not true. Although Aramaic was a standardised *lingua franca* and a widespread administrative language in the vast expanses of the empire, imperial ideology was not expressed in Aramaic-and thus monolingually-but rather in trilingual inscriptions (in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian). This interesting relationship between imperial ideology and multilingualism is investigated in his discussion. From Ancient Persia, the discussion moves to Classical and Roman contexts. The first contribution in this section, that by Jeremy Punt, explores the value of bi- or multilingualism amidst notions of making sense of the Pauline letters contained in the New Testament.

Notwithstanding strong and diverse positions on the theme, the central role of the Roman Empire is acknowledged across the board. Even a brief consideration of the positions of hybridity, creolisation and multilingualism shows their importance for heuristic, contextual frameworks for the Pauline letters, especially in his engagement with the translated Hebrew Bible. This argument is briefly demonstrated by Punt with reference Paul's Galatians letter.

Marco Frenschkowski shows in his contribution that the Greek language used in the Sayings Source Q, recoverable from the New Testament gospels of Matthew and Luke, has some very strange linguistic features, that only now start to become a focus of research. The main result of these observations on the language of Q is that this lost book is not just a reconstructable relic of an early stratum of the Jewish Jesus movement on its eventual way to become a religion of its own. It is also a book showing clear features of an idiolect, and traces of the personality of its compiler.

The language of Q is a personal language, and it transmits the remembered (but translated) language of Jesus in a highly individual and idiosyncratic way. This is done by selecting certain traditions to put into writing, but also in the choice of words and phrases, loan words and metaphors. Latinisms and financial technical terms abound, as do subjects and metaphors taken from lending and giving back; buying and selling; tithing; possessions and poverty; the foolish trust in material goods and the paradoxical carefree lifestyle of the poor messengers of Jesus; debts to people and

debts to God; robbers and treasures; local authorities' out-of-court settlements (about money, of course)' small sums of money; large sums of money; real sums of money and imaginary sums of money; interest and the burying of money; faithful and disloyal servants; the administration of property; and making debts and cancelling debts.

Frenschkowski argues that all this is the social world from which Q originates and takes its metaphors. As other sources of the gospels Matthew and Luke (Mark, Special Matthew, Special Luke, older tradition in John) show, this is only a part of the early Jesus tradition, and though taken from remembering Jesus, it is also a focused and therefore selective work of a person deeply devoted to Jesus, but who is also deeply shaped by a special social world of his own.

Marius Nel continues the investigation into the gospel material of the New Testament. He highlights the importance of taking the multilayered, multilingual compositional context of Matthew into consideration in its interpretation. He takes Ong's definition of multilingualism "as a sociolinguistic phenomenon that may refer either to speakers' capabilities and competence, along a linguistic line, to the use of multiple languages (individual or personal multilingualism), or to the use of two or more languages within a community (societal multilingualism)" as point of departure.

It becomes clear in his brief survey that the influence of multilingualism on the composition and interpretation of the First Gospel cannot be ignored as it was written by a multilingual author ("Matthew") for readers living in the multilingual milieu of the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire in the 1st century CE. The relationship between the different multilingual contexts of its source material, of the protagonist and historical referent, and of the author and readers, is therefore important to take into consideration in its interpretation.

While the broad consensus about the historical Jesus' personal multilingualism remains that his principal vernacular was Aramaic, it is not impossible that he could have used Hebrew and Greek to interact with the various ethnically diversified social groups mentioned in the Gospels. He could even have had the ability to recognise some Latin words. The extent to which the historical Jesus can be considered to have been triglossic is, however, unclear. This makes it difficult to determine if Latin and Hebrew loan words, and Greek phrases, in Matthew, should be attributed to the author or to those who composed and transmitted the Jesus tradition.

The interpretive conundrum is that the linguistic evidence in Matthew (e.g., Matt 21:33-42) can be interpreted as either supporting the historical Jesus' personal multilingualism, if it is accepted as being his authentic words, or as being additions to the tradition, if it is assumed that the historical Jesus was not personally multilingual.

Two further chapters, both by theologians, move the discussion somewhat beyond the ancient world. Roderich Barth, a systematic theologian, shares some remarks on the philosophy and history of emotion. He indicates that research in multilingualism and the new interdisciplinary interest in emotions occurred nearly simultaneously at the end of last century. However, both paths have been pursued, until now, nearly without taking notice of each other. Barth's paper suggests that there are some open ends in each of both fields of research and that they could benefit mutually by combining their genuine methods and interests.

Towards this goal, one of the few exceptions to this general lack of interest in languages of emotion and the emotional role in sociolinguistic performances is sketched, namely Anna Wierzbicka's study on *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures* (1999). Subsequently, some critical considerations from the viewpoint of recent philosophy of emotion is developed, on the one hand, but in considering the conditions of bi- or multilingual societies within the approach of emotion history, on the other hand, a research project is proposed, building on Wierzbicka's deep insights in the role of languages and cultures in shaping emotional life.

Alexander Deeg, a specialist in Christian worship and liturgy, argues that Christian worship was a multilingual phenomenon from its very beginning. His chapter starts by describing the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic multilinguality of Christian worship in the 1st century CE, which can be observed in the New Testament, mirroring Christian worship's basic bilinguality in a Jewish-Christian context.

In the history of Christian worship, multilinguality remains a phenomenon and a challenge in different times and dimensions. Deeg briefly describes some constellations of liturgical multilinguality: the transformation of Latin to a Christian 'sacred language', Reformation's impulse to celebrate in the vernacular, the tension between vernacular and Hebrew in Jewish Reform cycles of the 19th and 20th century, the radical reduction of multilinguality in the liturgical 'reform' of the "Deutsche Christen" in Nazi Germany, the Catholic Liturgical Reform following the Second Vatican Council, and the question of inclusion and exclusion in current liturgical discussions. These observations are summarised by describing five dimensions of liturgical multilinguality: the basic Jewish-Christian bilinguality in its theological relevance, and the phenomenological, hermeneutical, ethical, and practical dimensions of liturgical multilinguality, all of which offer rich potential for further research.

16.2 CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

What insights can be gained from a study of multilingualism in ancient contexts? It provides insight regarding the construct of ‘language’, the conception of multilingualism, the role of *lingua francas*, language ideologies, and linguistic repertoires. Thus, the study of multilingualism in ancient contexts in this volume raises questions of ontological and epistemological nature, regarding the construct of language and the conception of multilingualism. The following subsections explain in more detail.

16.2.1 The Construct of ‘Language’

The construct of ‘language’ is central to any discussion of multilingualism. It is interesting to observe the perspectives and paradigms adopted by different authors in this volume to the construct of language. The authors seem to have been influenced by their language ideologies in their analytical choices or gazes of the construct of language.

Some authors have adopted a structuralist perspective to the construct of language in their sociohistorical analyses of multilingualism in the ancient Near Eastern world. This perspective is based on the view of languages as separate and discrete entities that can be named and counted. This perspective is based on code ideology. The term ‘code ideology’ refers to ontologies about language encapsulated in constructs such as code-switching, code mixing, truncated codes, and other closely related meta-terms.¹

The idea of a code ideology is evinced in the naming of languages, for example, Akkadian, Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Egyptian, and Latin. Thus, these authors continue to analyse languages as nameable, countable, empirically explorable entities. However, other authors like Berlejung, have criticised structuralist notions of language founded on ideas about languages as autonomous and discrete entities. In the last few decades, the structuralist conception of language based on code ideology has been the subject of much criticism.

Makoni and Pennycook² note that ‘languages’ as separate discrete entities, particularly the so-called standard language varieties, are inventions. Recently, there has been a shift from the structuralist conception of languages as ‘countable institutions’ to one which views languages as fluid, dynamic and socially constructed semiotic systems.³

1 Roy Harris, “Implicit and Explicit Language Teaching”, in *Language Teaching. Integrational Linguistic Approaches*, ed. Michael Toolan (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), 24-46.

2 Sinfree Makoni & Alastair Pennycook, eds. *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages* (Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2007).

3 Monica Heller, ed. *Bilingualism: A Social Approach* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007);

In this sense, a language can be described as a social practice rather than a normative linguistic system.⁴ Scholars such as Canagarajah,⁵ Blommaert⁶ and Blommaert, and Backus⁷ further argue for the need to conceptualise language as emergent rather than as something that exists *a priori*.

Thus, languages are to be viewed as social practices rather than discrete linguistic systems or entities. Makoni and Mashiri⁸ suggest that rather than adopting an approach to multilingualism that take as its starting-point hermetically sealed languages, we should be describing the use of vernaculars that leak into one another to understand the social realities of their users.

16.2.2 The Conception of Multilingualism

The term ‘multilingualism’ has been defined in different ways in this volume. The definitions vary from societal multilingualism to individual multilingualism. Nel, for example, defines multilingualism as “the use of two or more languages by an individual (or a group of individuals) in daily contexts”. Drawing on Ong’s⁹ definition, Nel further defines multilingualism “as a sociolinguistic phenomenon that may refer either to speakers’ capabilities and competence, along a linguistic line, to the use of multiple languages (individual or personal multilingualism), or to the use of two or more languages within a community (societal multilingualism)”.

However, the shift in the conception of the construct of language has implications for these conceptions of multilingualism. The term ‘multilingualism’ needs to be viewed critically as it was used in some chapters implying “that people’s linguistic practices are composed of a number of discrete languages, with fixed boundaries between them”.¹⁰

Makoni & Pennycook eds. *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*.

4 Heller, *Bilingualism*.

5 Suresh Canagarajah, *Translingual Practices. Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations* (London/New York: Routledge, 2013).

6 Jan Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

7 Jan Blommaert & Ad Backus, “Repertoires Revisited: ‘Knowing Language’ in Superdiversity”, *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies*, 67 (2011): 1-26; Jan Blommaert & Ad Backus, “Superdiverse Repertoires and the Individual”, in *Multilingualism and Multimodality. Current Challenges for Educational Studies*, eds. Ingrid de Saint-Georges & Jean-Jacques Weber (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2013), 11-32.

8 Siffree Makoni & Pedzisai Mashiri, “Critical Historiography: Does Language Planning in Africa Need a Construct of Language as Part of its Theoretical Apparatus?” in *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*, eds. Siffree Makoni & Alastair Pennycook (Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2007), 62-89.

9 Ong, “Ancient Palestine Is Multilingual and Diglossic”, 337.

10 Jean-Jacques Weber & Kristine Horner, *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 3.

This conception of multilingualism is influenced by a monoglossic ideology of language implying the pluralisation of monolingualism. Recent studies on multilingualism have challenged the dominant institutional notions of multilingualism as the ordered deployment of different languages or parallel monolingualisms.¹¹

As Heller argues, there is a need for “an approach to researching multilingualism that moves away from a highly ideologised view of co-existing linguistic systems, to a more critical approach that situates language practices in social and political contexts, and privileges language as a social practice, speakers as social actors and boundaries as products of social action”.¹² It is against this backdrop that Makoni and Pennycook¹³ call for the ‘dis-invention’ of multilingualism.

16.2.3 Language Ideologies

The chapters in this volume reveal the different language ideologies of the authors towards language and multilingualism. Bakhtin identifies two types of language ideologies, namely, monoglossic and heteroglossic language ideologies.¹⁴ A monoglossic language ideology of multilingualism is based on a monolingual view of language, that is, language as an autonomous system, and multilingualism as repeated monolingualism. Monoglossic language policies seek to minimise linguistic variation through restrictive language approaches and are generally not supportive of variability within a given language or deviation from linguistic norms.

Heteroglossic perspectives focus on languaging, and language is regarded as “a fluid, complex, and dynamic set of social practices and processes that support the multiple and fluid identities of bilingual students”.¹⁵ In education, for example, multilingual students can draw on their full linguistic repertoires using translanguaging. In contexts other than education, strategies such as metrolingualism are used. These terms will be discussed in the next sections.

11 Sinfree Makoni & Busi Makoni, “Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth: Tension and Conflict Between Language Institutions in South Africa”, in *Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education*, eds. Wayne E. Wright, Sovicheth Boun & Ofelia García (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 552-63; Alastair Pennycook & Sinfree Makoni, *Innovations and Challenges in Applied Linguistics from the Global South* (London/New York: Routledge, 2020).

12 Heller, *Bilingualism*, 1.

13 Makoni & Pennycook, eds. *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*.

14 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, transl. M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

15 Ofelia García, “Theorizing Translanguaging for Educators”, *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB Guide for Educators*, 1.6 (2012): 3.

16.2.4 The Role of *Lingua Francas*

The various chapters in this volume also point to the role of *lingua francas* such as Aramaic, Greek, and Latin in the ancient Near Eastern empires in overcoming the challenge of linguistic diversity. However, the notion of *lingua franca* has often implied the use of a single autonomous discrete linguistic entity as medium of communication in multilingual contexts. This monoglossic approach to *lingua franca* often results in the tension between *lingua franca* and multilingualism, especially when the *lingua franca* assumes a hegemonic relationship to other languages.

Whereas Aramaic served as a *lingua franca* in various ancient Near Eastern empires until it was replaced by Arabic, the imposition of languages such as Greek and Latin as *lingua francas* during the Graeco-Roman empires created tensions between *lingua francas* and multilingualism.

As discussed in this volume (in Punt's chapter), after imperial Rome's takeover of territories, vernacular language speakers were under severe pressure to adopt either Latin or Greek. There was an expectation that Roman citizens, even if they could speak Greek, should learn Latin, and evidence suggests that, at least for a certain period, documents were produced in Latin even if the intended recipients did not know the language. This use clearly shows the dangers of a monoglossic approach to *lingua francas* and the linguistic tensions that may arise. Other understandings of *lingua francas* and multilingualism are also reflected in this volume, however.

Jonker, for example, in his discussion of the Ancient Persian context shows how Aramaic was used as a *lingua franca* alongside multilingual expressions of imperialism. He indicates that while monolingualism, and the enforcement of a *lingua franca*, is often associated with asymmetrical power relations in imperial regimes, and multilingualism generally associated with more liberal and inclusive expressions of political power, in Achaemenid Persia (539–332 BCE), trilingual inscriptions (in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian) were used to impose imperialism.

This is an interesting contrast to the South African situation. In South Africa, for example, and in many other multilingual countries where English is the *lingua franca*, there is often tension between this language and multilingualism because of the former's hegemonic position. South Africa therefore follows the more regular pattern of a *lingua franca* expressing hegemonic power, while multilingualism occupies a subordinate position to it.

To address this problem, some scholars argue that multilingualism should rather be used as a *lingua franca* instead of only one single language. Based on their studies on African multilingualism, Fardon and Furniss, for example, argues that in highly

multilingual contexts such as on the African continent, multilingualism should be viewed as a *lingua franca* instead of a singular language. Accordingly, “the African *lingua franca* might best be envisaged not as a single language, but as a multilayered and partially connected language chain, that offers a choice of varieties and registers in the speaker’s immediate environment”.¹⁶ Makoni and Pennycook propose the term “*multilingua franca*”¹⁷ which they describe as the singularisation of multilingualism.

16.2.5 The Role of Linguistic Repertoires

Another important observation from several chapters in this volume is the role of linguistic repertoires in the ancient Near Eastern empires in facilitating communication in various ancient Near Eastern contexts. Berlejung, for example, emphasises the need to focus on linguistic repertoires rather than languages as fixed and bounded codes, and the role those repertoires played between interlocutors (or between readers and texts) in the personal or public spheres.

Linguistic repertoires may be defined as “the totality of linguistic resources (i.e., including both invariant forms and variables) available to members of particular communities”.¹⁸ Multilingualism in ancient times may be best understood in terms of ‘linguistic repertoires’ rather than in terms of ‘linguistic systems’. As various authors point out in this volume, multilingual speakers in the ancient Near Eastern empires depended more on their heterogeneous linguistic repertoires than the selected official language(s).

Nel, for example, discusses the multilingual Jesus and how he often drew on his linguistic repertoire comprising Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Several books of the Bible, for example Matthew, show how speakers or authors of these books drew on their linguistic repertoires in communication. The linguistic repertoires of speakers are also revealed in artefacts such as amulets, inscriptions, and coins. Matthew situates his protagonist within the multilingual environment of Roman Palestine in which four languages were spoken during the first century: (1) Aramaic was spoken by most Jews as their native language with (2) koiné Greek being the *lingua franca* of the majority of the inhabitants of the area. (3) Latin was predominantly spoken by the small ruling elite and bureaucracy, while (4) Hebrew was mainly used in Jewish liturgical and educational contexts (from Nel in this volume).

16 Richard Fardon & Graham Furniss, eds. *African Languages, Development, and the State* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

17 Sinfree Makoni & Alastair Pennycook, “Disinventing Multilingualism: From monological Multilingualism to Multilingua Francas”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, eds. Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge & Angela Creese (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), 439-53.

18 Blommaert & Backus, “Repertoires Revisited”, 2.

16.2.6 Language Policy (Choices) and Language Practices

The chapters in this volume also reveal the challenge of the disjuncture between language policies/choices on the one hand, and language practices on the other hand in ancient Near Eastern contexts. Whereas in some empires there were overt or *de jure* language policies, such policy statements of intent were not fully realised as they ran counter to the linguistic cultures or language practices of the speakers of the languages or language ideologies of those in power.

Berlejung, for example, discusses two instances that show the disjuncture between language policy and the language practices of those in power. A good example is that of Sargon II's language policy/choice and its inconsistent implementation. Although Sargon II supported the multilinguality of his administration in the communication with his enemies and future subjugates, and designated Aramaic as the language of diplomacy and rulership, he explicitly rejected the choice of Aramaic in his diplomatic letters as he deemed it as not appropriate for communication within the contexts of Assyrian domination. For him, Aramaic had a lower status than Akkadian, and was not appropriate for royal correspondence. His language policy was therefore clearly context-bound.

Multilingualism and the strategy of language choice was part of political calculation, and of pragmatism. Thus, as Berlejung points out, the social status of Aramaic in the Assyrian empire was dependent on the user, text type, text intention, and context.

Another example is that of Darius I's (ca. 550–486 BCE) trilingual inscription in Akkadian/Babylonian, Elamite, and old Persian, carved into the Behistun rock-face. Darius I's choice of three languages for this inscription, instead of Aramaic which was an established *lingua franca* and the language of diplomacy, clearly shows the disjuncture between language policy and language practices. As Jonker indicates, the use of the three languages instead of Aramaic was a deliberate act to advance imperialism through multilingualism. This ancient example confirms that it is important to view language policy as “a complex and layered, stratified field in which language practices and language ideologies interact and intersect at a variety of scale-levels”.¹⁹

19 Jan Blommaert, “Small Print: Reflections on Multilingual Literacies in the Global South”, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 41.2 (2011): 293–9, here 294–5.

16.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

What implications do these insights hold for contemporary debates about multilingualism, particularly in educational environments? Multilingualism in domains such as education has drawn increasing attention over the last few decades.

Recently, there has been a shift in the west from viewing languages as separate, bounded entities to a view of communication in which language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative goals.²⁰ The study of multilingualism in the ancient Near Eastern world presents a strong case for the adoption of translanguaging approaches in our contemporary world. These translanguaging approaches entail a “move towards an understanding of the relationships amongst language resources as used by certain communities (the linguistic resources users draw on), local language practices (the use of these language resources in specific contexts),²¹ and language users’ relationship to language varieties (the social, economic and cultural positioning of the speakers).”²²

Translanguaging approaches provide a lense for studying or analysing multilingualism in complex multilingual contexts. The ancient Near Eastern empires were characterised by high linguistic diversity. Similarly, our contemporary world is experiencing an unprecedented high linguistic diversity since the beginning of the modern epoch.

There is now a consensus that multilingualism is the norm of the contemporary world, rather than the exception. The complexity of language and multilingualism in the ancient world and in the contemporary world seems to be captured well by the recent notion of superdiversity. The term ‘superdiversity’ was proposed by Vertovec²³ to describe the new type of diversity which resulted in demographic, legal, religious, and sociological changes in different parts of the globe.

Vertovec points out that superdiversity “has brought with it a transformative ‘diversification of diversity’ not just in terms of ethnicities and countries of origin, but also with respect to a variety of significant variables that affect where, how, and

20 Adrian Blackledge, Angela Creese & Jaspreet Kaur Takhti, “Discourses of Aspiration and Distinction in the Local School Economy”, in *Multilingual Encounters in Europe’s Institutional Spaces. Advances in Sociolinguistics*, eds. Johann W. Unger, Michal Krzyzanowski & Ruth Wodak (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 173-194, here 176.

21 Also referred to as ‘metrolinguism’. See discussion below.

22 Alastair Pennycook, “Translingual English”, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31.3 (2008): 30.1-30.9.

23 Steven Vertovec, “Super-diversity and its implications”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30.6 (2007): 1024-54.

with whom people live”.²⁴ The superdiversity perspective is helpful as it challenges the traditional notions of multilingualism and provides a lens to look at multilingualism from a complexity perspective. Superdiversity compels us to abandon any preconceived or absolute notion of communication interaction (in the ancient past, but also in contemporary contexts) as comprising stable language systems, and to replace them with a more fluid and dynamic notion of linguistic repertoires.²⁵

Whereas translanguaging has been a common linguistic feature of the ancient world, no special attention has been given to this linguistic phenomenon in this volume, despite the overwhelming evidence of its occurrence in inscriptions, clay tablets and amulets in different case studies. Thus, the new meta-terms that have recently emerged—meta-terms to describe translanguaging practices in the contemporary world in domains such as education and in general communication—may be useful as a lens or gaze to analyse the translanguaging in the ancient world as well. These meta-terms include ‘translanguaging’ and ‘metrolinguism’. The term ‘translanguaging’ (*trawsieithu* in Welsh) was coined by Cen Williams, a Welsh educator, who defines it as “the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson”.²⁶

In this approach, one language is used to reinforce the other in order to increase learners’ deep understanding and participation in learning and teaching activities.²⁷ In the last few years, translanguaging has been the focus of various studies on multilingualism in communication in general, and in education in particular.²⁸ In fact, there is now a general consensus amongst applied linguistic scholars that we

24 Vertovec, “Super-diversity”, 1025.

25 Cf. Mbulungeni Madiba, “The Multilingual University”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Superdiversity*, eds. Angela Creese & Adrian Blackledge (London/New York: Routledge, 2018), 504-517.

26 Gwyn Lewis, Bryn Jones & Colin Baker, “Translanguaging: Origins and Development from School to Street and Beyond”, *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18.7 (2012): 641-54, here 643.

27 Lewis, Jones & Baker, “Translanguaging”.

28 E.g., Ofelia García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Angela Creese & Adrian Blackledge, “Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom: A Pedagogy for Learning and Teaching?” *The Modern Language Journal* 94 (2010): 103-15; Angela Creese and Adrian Blackledge, “Ideologies and Interactions in Multilingual Education: What Can an Ecological Approach Tell Us About Bilingual Pedagogy?” in *Language Policy for the Multilingual Classroom* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011), 3-21; Colin Baker, *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 5th edition (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2011); Suresh Canagarajah, “Code meshing in Academic Writing: Identifying Teachable Strategies of Translanguaging”, *The Modern Language Journal*, 95 (2011): 401-17; Nancy H. Hornberger & Holly Link, “Translanguaging and Transnational Literacies in Multilingual Classrooms: A Bilingual Lens”, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 15.3 (2012): 261-78.

have reached what may be termed a translanguaging ‘turn’.²⁹ Different scholars have contributed to the development of a translanguaging theoretical framework and its practical implementation in various ways.

Baker,³⁰ for example, popularised the term internationally when he included it in his book *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Other scholars who extended the use of the term include García,³¹ Creese and Blackledge,³² Hornberger and Link,³³ and García and Wei.³⁴ In education, translanguaging is thus regarded as a pedagogic theory and a pedagogic practice.³⁵ García expanded the use of the term beyond schooling contexts, however.³⁶

She views translanguaging as a normal discursive practice of bilingual people who use their full linguistic resources flexibly to make meaning of their lives and their complex worlds.³⁷ As translanguaging assumes that bi-/multilingual speakers have one linguistic repertoire, it emphasises speakers’ capacity to use language fluidly to make meaning beyond one or two languages.³⁸

The notion of ‘metrolingualism’ furthermore emphasises that ‘place’ is also an important factor in researching multilingualism. This perspective is a further motivation for studying multilingualism “from below”. Pennycook and Otsuji define ‘metrolingualism’ as follows:

[W]e are ... interested not only in individual accounts of personal trajectories, but also in the use of languages in particular places. Metrolingualism therefore takes up the challenge of understanding everyday multilingualism not through the demolinguistic enumeration of mappable multilingualism but rather through the study of local language practices. Metrolingualism

29 Ofelia García & Li Wei, *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

30 Baker, *Foundations*.

31 García, *Bilingual Education*.

32 Creese & Blackledge, “Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom”.

33 Hornberger & Link, “Translanguaging and Transnational Literacies”.

34 García & Wei, *Translanguaging*.

35 García, *Bilingual Education*; García & Wei, *Translanguaging*; Angela Creese & Adrian Blackledge, “Translanguaging and Identity in Educational Settings”, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35 (2015): 20-35.

36 García, *Bilingual Education*.

37 See also Berlejung’s engagement with this phenomenon in her introductory chapter to this volume.

38 Creese & Blackledge, “Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom”; García and Wei, *Translanguaging*.

focuses on everyday multilingualism (practices and experiences) and the interrelationship between language, mobility and urban space.³⁹

The notions of ‘translanguaging’ and ‘metrolingualism’ may create interesting avenues for interdisciplinary discussions between scholars who study multilingualism in the ancient world, and those studying it in contemporary contexts. Admittedly, a qualitative difference exists between these two fields of study. Scholars studying multilingualism in the ancient world no longer have access to living speakers and everyday use of languages. They must rely on a multiplicity of artefacts, inscriptions, and written texts in their analysis of the phenomenon of multilingualism-as witnessed in the different contributions in this volume.

It is also generally known that scribalism was practised mainly by the elite in ancient societies. However, scholars of the ancient world do have linguistic artefacts from different spheres of life at their disposal for study-from amulet and coin inscriptions which functioned in the religious and economic life respectively; letters written in and for the everyday life environments of ancient people; official communications; royal inscriptions; administrative texts; and more. These studies of multilingualism in the ancient world therefore do not only provide excellent and interesting case studies for modern-day linguists and educationists, but they can also benefit greatly from the recent theoretical developments in the fields of sociolinguistics and language education in order to gain deeper insight into the material that they study. Opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction are thus numerous.

16.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to provide a summary of a critical engagement with and a synthesis of the various case studies of ancient multilingualism presented in this volume.

It was noted that the first chapter by Berlejung provided a theoretical framework for the study of multilingualism in the ancient Near Eastern world. She gave a critical perspective on multilingualism and constructs such as ‘language’. In contrast, most authors in the rest of the volume seem to have adopted structuralist approaches in their discussions of the construct of language and multilingualism. Nevertheless, the various chapters provide enough evidence of the complex multilingual environments and language choices, or their use, in the ancient world for communication and identity formation.

39 Alastair Pennycook & Emi Otsuji, *Metrolingualism: Language in the City* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015), 49.

A synthesis of the studies in this volume was made with a view to draw lessons for the study of multilingualism in the contemporary world as well. Although the various case studies in this volume are very insightful, their limitation is that most of the linguistic evidence was drawn from written materials such as inscriptions, clay tablets and other artefacts such as amulets, without access to the speakers of the languages or their spoken words.

Nevertheless, it is clear from these case studies that the safer way to look at multilingualism in complex environments is to focus on variable ways in which linguistic features with identifiable social and cultural associations get clustered together whenever people communicate, instead of focusing on named ‘languages’ as the unit of analysis.⁴⁰

It is important to adopt an approach to multilingualism which recognises that languages are social resources rather than distinct codes with clear boundaries. This view places the speaker at the heart of social interactions. The adoption of translingual approaches such as translanguaging and metrolingualism is therefore recommended for both the study of multilingualism in ancient contexts and in the contemporary world.

40 Jan Blommaert & Ben Rampton, “Language and Superdiversity”, *Diversities*, 13.2 (2011): 1.