

# Bilingualism, Language Disorders and Intercultural Families in Contemporary Italy

## Family Relations, Transmission of Language and Representations of Otherness

Daive Bruno<sup>1</sup> · Umberto Balottin<sup>2</sup> · Vanna Berlincioni<sup>1</sup> · Marie Rose Moro<sup>3</sup>

Published online: 3 June 2015

© Springer Science+Business Media New York 2015

**Abstract** This study aims to show how language disorders in children affect language transmission and the mixedness experience in intercultural families. To this end, it adopts a qualitative method of study based on the administration of ad hoc interviews to intercultural couples who consulted our Child Neuropsychiatry Service because of language disorders in their children. One of the main consequences, when the child of an intercultural couple presents a language disorder and a diagnostic process has to be initiated, may be interruption of the transmission of the second language, especially if it is the mother’s language. The decision to do this, which may be taken on the advice of teachers and health professionals, but also because the parents themselves often attribute their child’s language disorder to his bilingual condition, affects not only the relationship between the mother and her child, but also processes in the construction of parenthood and in the structuring of the child’s personality and the plurality of his affiliations. A clear understanding of how the dialectic between the categories of “alien” and “familiar” is managed in these contemporary families, which have to reckon with the condition of otherness, is crucial for psychiatrists and psychotherapists working in settings in which cultural difference is an issue to consider.

---

✉ Davide Bruno  
davide.bruno@unipv.it

Marie Rose Moro  
marie-rose.moro@parisdescartes.fr

<sup>1</sup> Section of Psychiatry, Department of Applied Health and Behavioural Sciences, University of Pavia, Via Bassi 21, 27100 Pavia, Italy

<sup>2</sup> IRCCS Mondino, University of Pavia, Via Mondino 2, 27100 Pavia, Italy

<sup>3</sup> Department of Adolescent Psychopathology, Maison de Solenn, 97 bd du Port Royal, Paris, France

**Keywords** Bilingualism · Intercultural couples · Transcultural psychiatry · Language disorders · Cultural difference · Otherness

## Introduction

Although there exist relatively numerous investigations of bilingualism and language disorders, these studies have tended to focus mainly on the neurolinguistic and cognitive aspects of the problem (Salameh, Håkansson, and Nettelblad 2004; Crutchley, Nicola, Gina 1997; Karanth 2000). Several authors have underlined the need for further studies that might lead not only to the construction of appropriate assessment tools for bilingual children, but also to a better understanding of the family, socio-economic and psycho-affective factors underlying language problems (Kohl et al. 2008; Rezzoug et al. 2007). In this qualitative study, we aim to show how language disorders in children could affect language transmission and the mixedness experience in intercultural families.

Language is a cultural element used in different ways in the construction of individual and collective identity, but we hypothesise that it can also be used as a marker of otherness both within the family and within society at large.

## Language as an Identity Trait

Even though some authors refer to “mixed couples” (Varro 1995; Peruzzi 2008; Barbara 1993), the definition of this term is complex and controversial. Mixedness is not an objective reality and there exist different definitions of the concept that are linked to different historical, social and legal settings, as well as to the different viewpoints of the researchers and social players involved (Varro 2003). The expression could be criticised for “semantic weakness”, since it can be argued that every couple is “mixed”, or for having “colonial” connotations, when it is used in reference to the assimilation of colonised peoples into another nation (Benevelli 2010). It could also be deemed “antiquated”, given the declining popularity of the institution of marriage in Western societies generally, or criticised as “provincial” in the face of the opening of national borders (in Europe, for example) and the processes of globalisation. Furthermore, in a country like Italy, which has a fragmented sense of national identity and feels the consequences of being a relatively young nation-state, the expression “mixed couple” could also be used in reference to marriages between spouses who come from different regions. Mixedness indicates a “distance” between spouses that may be more or less marked, depending on the perspective adopted and the categories under consideration (Safi 2008). More specifically, the idea of “mixing” presupposes the combination of unlike things belonging to one or the other spouse. This qualitative study explores the phenomenon of children’s language disorders when these are complicated by bilingualism in situations in which language and cultural differences are perceived as a key factor by all the social players involved. Given that, as previously remarked, the term “mixed

couples” raises considerable problems regarding the definition of this category, this paper instead refers, in general, to intercultural couples and intercultural families. The term “mixed couples” will be used only when citing the work of other authors who do use it.

A bilingual person is one who, placed in a family or social situation that leads him to develop and maintain dual language skills, possesses minimum skills in both the languages of reference. In an ideal situation, we talk of balanced bilingualism, which is when the ability in the two languages is such that the individual expresses himself, in both languages, fluently and with sufficient richness of language in the different registers: factual, emotional and symbolic (Hamers and Blanc 1989).

All language, including that of monolinguals, is “heteroglot”, i.e. shot through with multiple and competing sociohistorical voices and ideologies, and this is particularly true in the context of bi- and multilingualism (Bailey 2001, Shankar 2008, Gal 1987). Language acquisition and bilingualism are sociolinguistic processes embedded in historical, economic and cultural contexts. Even though various authors have stressed that not all children born into a bilingual setting are bilingual in the technical sense of the term (Rezzoug et al. 2007; Varro 2003), the transmission of languages is nevertheless, in many cases, the “key element” of the “identity projects” (Meintel 2002) that parents have for these children. Indeed, some authors maintain that in these families, the transmission of identity takes place primarily through the teaching of language (Varro 1995). In a recent study on intercultural unions in the bilingual city of Montreal, Meintel and Kahan (2005) pointed out that most of the parents interviewed were keen for their children to speak not only English and French correctly, but also their own parents’ and grandparents’ language or languages of origin. They were found to attach great importance to visits to the foreign parent’s country of origin, as a means of allowing the child contact with that parent’s culture and a “full immersion” in their language. With regard to the commitment to promoting multilingualism in the second generation, we encountered very similar attitudes in a preliminary study in Italy: interviews we conducted with several intercultural couples revealed quite clearly that what was transmitted to the children of these couples was not only the languages themselves, but also the pleasure that can be derived from being able to speak several languages (Bruno et al. 2012). The “identity projects” which these couples have for their children are strongly plural in nature, and their desire to make the most of their offspring’s differences can be viewed in the broader context of globalisation: indeed, even though multilingualism is not a new phenomenon, specific to our contemporary societies, in today’s globalised world, the ability to speak several languages is considered an advantage, both socially and in the job market.

In most contexts, bilingualism generally is regarded as more than just a technical skill; it is seen as a whole mindset characterised by a particular way of conceptualising the word, of interacting with others, and of constructing one’s individual and collective identity; in particular, in the families examined in this study it was found to be loaded, by parents, with strong symbolic significance, to the point that, for them, it sometimes assumed the character of a “cultural trait” proper,

distinguishing bilingual from monolingual individuals<sup>1</sup> (Hamers and Blanc 1989). In these families, the importance attached to the children's acquisition of the languages of both parents may be linked not only to the global nature of today's Western societies, but also to the processes of affiliation that, in general, bind children to their two family lines. The birth of a child can trigger different mechanisms in these families: in some cases the event reawakens old conflicts between the two parents and/or their respective families (Streff-Fenart 1990a; Barbara 1993), while in others it defuses previous tensions and results in the development of creative solutions to the issues of the child's sense of belonging and the construction of his identity. Indeed, in these family units, successful combining and intergenerational transmission of cultural elements allow the new arrival not only to take his place in both his lines of descent, but also to enjoy multiple affiliations. It has been shown that the children of intercultural couples, providing the processes of cultural negotiation have been successful, are more tolerant towards diversity, show greater interpersonal flexibility and have less ethnocentric attitudes (Vivero and Jenkins 1999). While language is normally considered just one of the many elements that define a culture, in intercultural families it frequently becomes a symbol of the identity of the parents and their children. Peruzzi (2008) found that "mixed couples" are often openly proud of not being the same as others, and are also very aware of the linguistic and cultural differences that distinguish them. Along the same lines, all the women in a study by Imamura (1988) expressed the wish to bring up their children according to a bicultural model, while young French-speaking women married to English-speaking men in Ontario were found to consider their children's acquisition of both languages an essential aspect of their education (Heller and Levy 1992). However, biculturalism is not necessarily a starting point in the formation of an intercultural family: according to Varro (1995) people are not born bicultural, they become it. Indeed, even though the choices made by these parents clearly represent the foundation of their offspring's experience of mixedness, children go on to develop a bicultural identity that often differs from their initial one (i.e. the one transmitted by their parents). The construction of these children's sense of identity is certainly based on the intergenerational transmission of the two languages and cultures, but at a certain point it is determined by the extent to which the young person takes up his dual inheritance. In this regard, it is worth recalling that some second-generation immigrants interviewed by Meintel and Kahn considered themselves "more than simply Quebecois", indicating that, in their case, the nature of the relations between the cultures is cumulative rather than subtractive.

<sup>1</sup> Among the various symbolic resources available for the construction of individual and collective identity, language is considered one of the most porous and pervasive. It is not surprising that various anthropological studies on identity start from the observation that the selection, use and transmission of language play a crucial role in the formation and negotiation of cultural subjectivities (Fuller 2007; Tabouret-Keller 1991; Woolard 1998; Urciuoli 1991; Koven 1998). For example, the heritage language acquires often a strong symbolic value for the adolescents whose parents are immigrants: often they refer to the heritage language as "my language", even in absence of competence in it (Hamers and Blanc 1989).

## Social Groups, Identities and Linguistic Practices

The social representations of a given language have concrete effects on the transmission of that language within intercultural families. With regard to bilingualism, Gabrielle Varro (1995) highlighted the existence of inequality between “mixed” families, linked to the social status of the second language. The reasons why particular value is attached to one language, rather than another, are essentially political and economic; hence, “international languages” such as English are currently highly valued, whereas languages associated with the phenomenon of economic migration, such as Arabic or Wolof, are often devalued.

Straying outside our specific field of research for a moment, we can note that languages have often been used as vehicles of identity capable of supporting political demands; after all, those who affirm a strong sense of their own identity assert their rights more effectively, both locally and internationally. The strategic use of languages in the definition of collective identities is a widespread phenomenon well illustrated by, for example, the N’Ko movement which has been studied by Jean-Loup Amselle (1997). This movement, an attempt to “give Africa back to the Africans”, grew up in Mali in the second half of the last century. Its aim was to give the Africans a sense of their own historical and cultural identity, as opposed to the European and Arab identities. The leader of the movement, Suleyman Kanté, launched a “political” initiative whose purpose was to create a literary language and an ad hoc system of writing. N’Ko has become, over the years, a movement of identity affirmation which has spread among most of the West African countries where there are members of the Islamised Mande people. Many of these African Muslims find it difficult to accept the tendency to identify Islam with the Arab world. Indeed, to distinguish themselves from the Arabs, the members of the N’Ko movement abandoned the Arabic alphabet and adopted a new one, similar to the Latin alphabet; however, like Arabic, this language is written from right to left. Interestingly, by adopting features of both these forms of writing, the followers of this movement veer between two identities that they have partially assimilated but from which, at the same time, they wish to distance themselves: the identity inherited from European colonialism and the identity stemming from the ancient Islamisation of Africa by the Arabs.

To cite some examples from the Western world, before subsequently moving on to the Italian situation, in the Canadian province of Quebec, linguistic practices have for many years been closely bound up with identity-based claims and demands. Indeed, the defence of the French language was linked to the French-speaking people’s claim to exercise political and economic power within their province: by polarising the struggle on cultural and linguistic issues, the people of Quebec succeeded in regaining control of the province’s social and economic capital, until then largely in the hands of the English-speaking community (Hamers and Blanc 1989). According to Meintel and Kahn (2005: 157), the French–English dichotomy is now weakening and these authors link the pluralisation processes now characterising Montreal society to the increasing prominence of second-generation immigrants in the city: “far from being mere mediators between the modernity of the host society and the ‘traditionalism’ of their parents, they are agents of social

change, transforming the very concept of ‘Quebecois’, in such a way that their own children will grow up in a city and province where plural identities will be the norm”. In the United States, on the other hand, struggles to gain recognition for languages of origin are interwoven with the issue of the political recognition of minorities. In this sense, the defence of English as the national language and the devaluation of Castilian as a language of immigration has the purpose of drawing a line separating “genuine” Americans from immigrants from Central and South America. The drive for acculturation and assimilation of minorities is actively supported by the school system, which promotes the exclusive teaching of English: in a bid to maintain social cohesion, particularly after the events of 11 September, 2001, it has resorted to policies actively defending national unity against the threat posed by “foreigners”/“aliens” (Le Bars 2007). In the context of the ongoing debate about Spanish in the United States, some scholars emphasise that widespread prejudice over Hispanic immigration is exploited in the discourse of certain political parties, and liken the irrational fears that Anglo-America could be invaded by Hispanic immigrants and culture to the fear that Quebec could be swamped by English America (i.e. the parts of America and Canada where English is the main language) (McArthur 1986; Milroy 2001). However, processes of social change are also vehicles for new forms of language, and vice versa. We may consider, for example, the emergence of “Spanglish”, a cross between Spanish and English used by Hispanophones in the USA. This new “language” is very widespread on the border between Mexico and the United States, for example, in Florida and Los Angeles, but it also exists in multicultural cities like New York.

As regards the integration of immigrant populations in Europe, France opted for a rigid assimilation model whereby schoolchildren can only be taught in the national language and all cultural and religious particularities have to be kept within the private sphere (Schnapper 1991). Even though the European Community recently urged member states to recognise the right of foreign students to conserve their respective languages of origin, in France, the bilingualism of immigrants’ children is generally stigmatised or, at best, ignored. In this setting, talk of pluralism is often perceived, within the education system, as potentially dangerous and transgressive (Moro 2002). For a long time, the shortcomings of the French model of integration were put down to the inability of immigrants to adapt to their host society. Only recently has it become clear that it is, rather, French society that has tended to discriminate against immigrants on the labour market, in the search for housing, and in everyday life generally (Fassin and Rechtman 2005). The 2006 riots in the *banlieues* of Paris not only highlighted these tensions, they also brought to light movements of social transformation that are opposed to assimilation and based on a “conflictual hybridisation model” whereby cultures carry political significance and enter into contact with each other through mutually antagonistic movements.

As far as Italy is concerned, it must first be remarked that this is an area in which different cultures and different languages have long co-existed. The establishment of Italian as the national language, supported by a small group of intellectuals, is actually a relatively recent occurrence, coinciding with the birth of the Italian Republic in 1946. Even today, the tensions between dialects, regional particularities and local cultures, on the one hand, and Italian as the single national language, on

the other, have not been overcome.<sup>2</sup> For example, part of the centre-right coalition in Italy, in power until just recently, vigorously promotes the importance of the languages and cultures of northern Italy, as opposed to the central state, which it considers guilty of taking resources away from the rich regions of Lombardy, Veneto and Piedmont.<sup>3</sup> In this case, too, language is used as a marker of identity in support of political claims and demands. It is, however, curious to note that while these political forces were advocating the supremacy of local dialects over Italian, they were also lending their support to a new law that requires immigrants to have mastered the Italian language before they can apply for residence permits. Knowledge of the Italian language is here used as sort of “triage” for separating “desirable” people, who are ready to be assimilated, from “undesirable” ones who are to be repatriated; at the same time it defines power relations that see immigrants relegated to the rank of a “subaltern class”, carriers of cultural values that are not only devalued but often stigmatised as well.

### **Intercultural Families, Linguistic Practices and Language Disorders in Children**

According to various sociological studies, the linguistic practices developed within intercultural families are never “neutral”. It must be pointed out that if the main language transmitted to the children is that of the country of residence, and therefore the language in which they are educated, then the transmission of the second language is linked not only to the status of that language within the host society, but also to the value that is attached to it and how it is represented within the family (Varro 1995; Deprez-de Heredia and Varro 1991). What happens in these families when problems occur in the acquisition of the dominant language? What repercussions does this have on the transmission of the second language? How do the representations of the second language change?

In intercultural couples, the “Other” is located right within the family system, rather than in external social spaces from which it is possible to distance oneself (Green 1971; Bruno 2008). In this situation, “otherness” is “within reach” and may be responded to in different ways, usually ambivalently. This is one of the reasons why, in these families, we may observe interesting phenomena of “cultural hybridisation”, when the couple is open to change and to new experiences, but also projection and mutual antagonism processes. There are indeed various possible patterns. However, in the presence of problems of transmission to the second generation the situation can suddenly degenerate. To adapt Freud’s famous

<sup>2</sup> The political value of linguistic practices in Italy has been highlighted by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1995: 221), among others. He noted with regret the gradual disappearance of Italian dialects in favour of Italian and their increasing conformity with the national language. For him, these processes were symbolic of the assimilation of the proletariat for the purposes of the industrial middle classes: “The lower classes still speak in dialect, but it is an Italianised dialect similar to that of the middle classes, reduced to pure sound and devoid of cultural models and emotional correlates. It is just the bare bones of dialect, because this dialect, this potential language, has lost expression and no longer has the slangy character it once had”.

<sup>3</sup> These are instances of what Kirmayer (2006) termed “ironies of globalisation”: alongside phenomena of creolisation and pluralism, there is a new strengthening of local identities and cultures in pursuit of economic and political power.



metaphor of the crystal to this context, the fracture lines probably become easier to detect when the “identity projects” for the child are called into question, as they can be, for example, when he develops a language disorder.

## Method

This study is part of more extensive research on intercultural families in northern Italy.<sup>4</sup> We examined cultural transmission practices, intrafamily relationships and parents’ “identity projects” for their children, both in the general population and in couples consulting child neuropsychiatry services because of language problems in their children. The latter were the subject of this work which, adopting a qualitative method of study based on interviews and in-session observations, allowed the particular experiences of the subjects involved to emerge. It was conducted in collaboration with the Child Neuropsychiatry Unit of the C. Mondino National Neurological Institute, Pavia, University of Pavia, and was inspired by preliminary studies on the topic of intercultural couples in the Italian province of Pavia<sup>5</sup> conducted by Dr. Vanna Berlincioni as part of the activities of the same university’s Laboratory of Psychiatry, Culture and Environment (Berlincioni and Bruno 2012). For the purposes of the study, we administered a specially prepared interview to intercultural couples whose child presented a language disorder in Italian.

## Participants

This study involved ten intercultural couples who consulted our because of language disorders in their children. In two cases, the couple was formed by a foreign man and an Italian woman, while in the other eight cases, the father was Italian and the mother foreign (Table 1). For the sake of homogeneity, our analysis will be restricted mainly to the latter families, not just because they make up most of the sample, but also because they are more representative of the general population. Some references will be made, as working hypotheses, to the cases in which the father was the foreign partner.

All the couples had at least one child aged between four and 6 years at the time of the interview. This age range was chosen because it is not recommended to diagnose language disorders in children who are exposed to more than one language without taking into account the delay in language acquisition that can normally be expected in these subjects (Hamers and Blanc 1989). Possible organic causes

<sup>4</sup> Intercultural marriages, once an absolutely marginal phenomenon in Italy, are now increasing rapidly. They are more common in northern Italy, where migratory trends are well established, than in southern Italy where immigration is a more recent phenomenon (Tognetti Bordogna 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Pavia is a small city in Lombardy with around 71,000 inhabitants. It is the home of an ancient university which attracts students both from Italy and from abroad (in particular Greece, Israel, Albania, Romania, Latin America etc.). Its inhabitants are distributed in about 36,000 households. A fifth of these are couples without children, while around 36 % of the city’s households have at least one child. Families in which at least one of the partners is foreign number around 4000, and of these around 30 % are intercultural families, in most cases composed of an Italian man and a foreign woman, most likely to be Eastern European or South American.



**Table 1** Main sociodemographic data of the “mixed couples” interviewed

Couple	Nationality (f/m)	Parent attending the interview	Age (f/m)	Religion (f/m)	Education	Of mixed parentage <sup>a</sup>
1	I/CU	Mother	35/32	C/C	UD/D	No
2	I/UC	Mother	51/31	C/O	UD/D	No
3	I/R	Mother	34/30	C/O	N/D	No
4	I/CU	Mother	35/30	C/C	D/UD	Yes
5	I/CO	Mother/father	42/41	C/C	D/UD	No
6	I/MO	Mother	33/31	C/C	N/N	No
7	I/R	Mother	35/30	C/O	D/UD	No
8	AL/I	Mother/father	40/29	C +/C+	N/N	No
9	I/P	Mother/father	38/31	C/C	D/D	No
10	TU/I	Mother/father	45/38	M/C	D/D	No

CU Cuba, UC Ukraine, R Russia, CO Colombia, MO Moldavia, AL Albania, P Peru, TU Tunisia, C non-practising Catholic, (C+ practising Catholic), O Orthodox, M Muslim, N lower/middle school, D secondary school diploma, UD degree, f father, m mother

<sup>a</sup> Parent born of mixed parents

(deafness, neurological disorders) were ruled out in all the children on the basis of instrumental examinations, and severe cognitive impairment on the basis of age-appropriate tests. The recruitment period lasted 10 months (November 2010–August 2011) and we included all the intercultural couples with children in the age range considered who consulted our service because of this specific problem (Table 2). Four of the eight foreign mothers came from Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova), and four from Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America (Cuba, Colombia, Peru). In the two families with a foreign father, one father was Albanian and the other Tunisian. As regards religion, in six families, both the parents declared they were Catholics; in three one parent was Catholic and the other Orthodox Christian, while in one family the father was Islamic and the mother Catholic. From a social point of view, all the families may be considered middle class. Finally, in seven of the ten families, the spouses were of a similar age.

## Procedures

The interview is meant to be administered to both parents. When this was not possible, it was deemed sufficient to interview the foreign parent.<sup>6</sup> Most of the interviews were conducted by the first author, who is a psychiatrist, and in three cases by collaborators trained in transcultural psychiatry. The interviews lasted, on average, 90/120 min. The questionnaire, made up of open questions, is inspired by the “ELAL d’Avicenne” questionnaire for parents (Wallon et al. 2008). The following areas were investigated: the family history of each family member (including details of the foreign parent’s migration), relations within the nuclear

<sup>6</sup> This is in line with the terms of administration of the ELAL d’Avicenne questionnaire (Bossuroy, Amalini, and Moro 2011).

**Table 2** Health and social data of the children

Child	Age (in years)	Referral diagnosis	Position in the sibship
1	5 ½	Expression disorder	1 of 1
2	6	Speech-sound disorder	2 of 3
3	5	Expression disorder	2 of 2
4	4 ½	Expression disorder	2 of 2
5	6 ½	Expression disorder	1 of 1
6	5	Expression disorder	4 of 4
7	4	Expression disorder	2 of 2
8	4	Expression disorder	1 of 2
9	5	Expression disorder	2 of 2
10	5	Expression disorder	1 of 1

family and the extended family, linguistic practices within the family, negotiations over the transmission of cultural elements (religion, educational practices, choice of name, dietary habits), the transmission of languages, and the parents' representations of the position of schools and health services on the issues of bilingualism and cultural difference. The independent ethics committee of the C. Mondino Foundation gave its approval before the research was started. All the participants signed a specially prepared consent form.

### Data Analysis

A preliminary analysis was performed at the data collection stage, on the basis of observations noted during and at the end of each interview. The answers given were transcribed, word for word, and we also recorded any emotional responses, both on the part of the respondent (type of contact, negative reactions to questions, need for support, difficulty ending the interview and taking their leave, etc.) and on the part of the interviewer. In particular, the interviewer, on the basis of his impressions, was free to explore in greater depth any issues that seemed to be important to the respondent, for example putting further questions and clarifying points not covered in the questionnaire. Thus, the preliminary analysis allowed us to formulate and orient our hypotheses, and also to follow up avenues of research that emerged during the interview. The analysis of the interviews focused more on the content of the discussion than on its form. The provisional conclusions reached were discussed with experts in transcultural psychiatry during supervision sessions and with the doctors in charge of the case. The results here presented are a synthesis of these processes. Below, we report some of the most significant parts of the interviews; the names of the individuals involved and any details not essential to understanding of the cases have been changed in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

## Results

As indicated in the introduction, the experience of mixedness that evolves in intercultural families in relation to parents' "identity projects" for their children is highly complex, being linked to the dialectic between the categories of "alien" and "familiar".<sup>7</sup> In this context, efforts to find a synthesis useful for the future of the child can lead to the emergence of solutions in a sort of liminal space, open to creativity and innovation. However, the presence of a language disorder often interferes with the processes of language transmission and with the search for creative solutions, undermining the balances established within the family and the agreements that had been reached between the parents.

### Intercultural Couples and Multilingualism

The parents we interviewed were found to set great store by the transmission of languages, seen as a useful tool for providing children with a "secure base"<sup>8</sup> with respect to their affiliations. When asked "Where do you rate language among the things of your home country that you wish to transmit to your child?", all the foreign parents put language in first place. The strategy most often used by families was that of having each parent speak his or her native language to the child, while exchanges between the couple were generally in Italian. The transmission of the foreign parent's language is perceived as an experience destined to shape profoundly the identity of the new arrival, to the extent that foreign parents are far more prepared to forgo the transmission of other cultural traits (practices of body modification, dietary habits, religion, etc.) than the transmission of their language.<sup>9</sup> Most of the respondents, in fact, are eager to define their children "bilingual", but not in the technical sense; rather, they use the terms as a kind of synecdoche to indicate that their child has come into contact with the cultures of both his parents.

In today's increasingly globalised world, the acquisition of languages is linked not only to questions of affiliation, but also to children's future prospects, particularly their employment prospects. When asked "What do you wish for your child in the future?", most parents replied that they would like their children to complete their education successfully and find a job. The proper acquisition of Italian was deemed important because "the children go to school here"—this was a phrase that recurred frequently—, but it was considered equally important that they develop adequate skills in other languages too. Most of the mothers we interviewed come from countries whose language is valued internationally (Spanish, Russian). Those whose language, instead, has the status of a minority language sometimes put it on a par with another, more widely recognised language. For example, Linda, who

<sup>7</sup> The terms *alien* and *familiar* are here used bearing in mind the significance which Freud (1919) attaches to these categories in his work "The Uncanny".

<sup>8</sup> In this paper, this expression is used as meant by Bowlby (1988).

<sup>9</sup> As regards the choice of name, most couples opt for "neutral" names, i.e. ones that exist in both cultures, or give the child two names, in such a way as to balance the power relations between the two parents and between the two family lines.

comes from the Ukraine, sees transmitting her native tongue to her son as crucial in order to allow him to choose his future employment and have more opportunities in life:

“I would like him to study and get a good job. I hope that 1 day he will manage to establish himself, as I have done... I came over to see my aunt, who was here in Italy; I wasn't thinking of getting married. I left my parents and my first child behind. I came with the idea of finding a job and instead I found a husband... As far as my children are concerned, I think it is always a good thing to speak several languages. They say that you're lucky if you're born bilingual. Perhaps in 20 years' time my son will want to go to Russia to work and he already speaks Ukrainian, which is similar!”.

These parents' desire that their children should learn several languages is undoubtedly related to the value attached, in today's world, to proficiency in languages. While Italian is fundamental in order to allow these children to complete their education and fit into the society in which they live, it is equally important for them to acquire a third language, such as English. Increasing one's language skills is seen as a key to future opportunities, especially in urban settings where diversity and multiculturalism are valued. These parents want their children to be “citizens of the world” and able to find, anywhere, a place where they will be welcome. Maria's remarks are paradigmatic in this regard:

“I see my children as independent entities, separate from me. They mustn't be attached to their mother. As a child, I was independent, I was used to travelling because my father moved around a lot for his work: I was actually born in Switzerland! In my view, independence is a cultural issue ... Italians are too attached to their mothers, whereas in Cuba children are more detached. I view bilingualism in a positive light, because in today's world all languages are necessary. Sometimes I put on cartoons in Spanish for the children and I realise that they are understanding everything; but if I put them on in English, after a while they get bored...In any case, I would like them to learn languages. I see it myself in my work...I used to work in a village shop and I didn't like it there because the locals had a closed mind towards foreigners. Now that I have moved to the city and changed jobs, I can see that the fact that I speak Spanish and have studied English gives me advantages over others. It is essential to speak several languages, if you want to get ahead in life!”

Our observations partially corroborate existing literature data, albeit referring to other areas such as Quebec (Meintel and Kahan 2005), on the openness that intercultural couples display towards multilingualism and cultural differences. In Italy, this mindset is incorporated into a social context still characterised by rather ambivalent attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism, even though the situation may now be changing slowly: while on one hand, there are still many Italians who are diffident and concerned about the presence of immigrants, on the other hand, an ever increasing proportion of the population believes that they enrich the social and cultural life of the country (Beneduce and Martelli 2005). Rather like the choice of names (an aspect that we cannot dwell on here), languages are treated

by these couples as symbolic resources that allow the child to lay the foundations of his own identity (multiple affiliations)<sup>10</sup> and broaden the sphere of his future choices and actions, in a society destined to become ever more multicultural.

### Children's Language Disorders and Parents' Representations

The openness to multilingualism displayed by intercultural couples enters into a dialectical relationship with the attitude of concern they display in the face of their children's language problems.

From a biomedical perspective, language disorders, just like other neuropsychiatric disorders, are currently the subject of specific studies which are endeavouring to establish their underlying causes and pathogenetic pathways and also the most targeted and specific therapeutic-rehabilitative approaches to adopt. A primary language disorder is defined as a disorder in the acquisition of language in relation to what might be expected on the basis of age, with the emergence of a significant discrepancy between language development and cognitive functions. It is not due to deafness, to mental delay, to neurological or psychiatric disorders or to pervasive developmental disorder or autism. Its aetiology is not completely clear and various factors have been considered in this regard: genetic, psychological, environmental, demographic and socio-economic. The association with exposure to a multilingual environment is controversial and has been the subject of fierce debate among experts (Leung Cheuk et al. 2005).

Against this background, parents, attempting to fill in the gaps in current knowledge, which are linked to the typical multifactorial aetiology of these disorders, fall back on "lay" explanations for their child's problem. In most of the cases we observed, the parents, in a somewhat contradictory and almost paradoxical manner, given their previous assertions, linked their children's problems to the bilingualism itself and to the decision to form an intercultural family. Linda, a young Ukrainian mother of two children, said:

"The speech therapist says it's a mechanical problem: she says my son isn't bringing his tongue to his palate properly, and in fact when he speaks slowly he manages to do it. But I think it's also because he's a bit bilingual, although I can't really explain why that is, especially since his older brother didn't have any problems..."

In some cases, open family and social hostility to the couple's decision to form an intercultural family was found to favour a linking of the child's language disorder to his bilingualism/biculturalism. In others, this connection was favoured by a resurfacing, in the foreign parent, of feelings of transgression and loss associated with her migration. In both situations, in the parents' imagination, it is as though the child, by developing the disorder, is paying the price for their choices.

<sup>10</sup> The idea of identity behind this concept is that which Devereux refers to as the product of a real work of "bricolage", meant in Lévi-Strauss's sense of the term. Identity is not something given a priori. "It is the result of an assemblage that is both planned and fortuitous, the possibilities and scope of which are limited on the one hand by the nature of the "project" and on the other by the materials available, whose potential [the child] exploits with varying degrees of success." (Devereux 1967: 49).

Migration is often depicted as an essentially sociological event, prompted by certain historical and political circumstances. From this perspective, there are numerous reasons why people migrate: some are forced to do so for economic reasons, others for political reasons. From the psychological perspective, however, it has been shown that the impetus to migrate often conceals rather ambivalent reasons for doing so: a desire to leave but a fear of leaving loved ones, a way of resolving family conflicts or problems, rejection of values expressed by the society of origin, desire for a better life, etc. The fact is that every migration, regardless of whether it is necessary or a voluntary choice, is an act that marks the life of the individual in question and changes his family history, both present and future (Moro 2010). From these considerations, there emerges a complex situation in which the attitude of the intercultural couple towards multiculturalism and mixedness is actually seen to be ambivalent: while, on one hand, the parents value these phenomena (because of the changes in modern society) and present them in an extremely positive light (to reinforce own their choice to form an intercultural family), on the other hand, they consider them, more less explicitly, the main causes of their child's difficulties.

The main consequence of attributing the language disorder to the child's bilingualism is a temporary interruption of the process of transmitting the foreign parent's language (in our cases usually the mother's language) to the child. Vera, who is Russian, told us that her husband's family immediately attributed her child's language problems to his bilingualism. Feeling in some way under accusation, she stopped speaking to her son in Russian:

“His parents accused us of not taking enough care of our son because, despite his problems, we were slow to have him seen by specialists. My husband preferred to adopt a wait-and-see approach, saying that things would sort themselves out in time... However, when my mother came over from Russia to give me hand, they complained that our son was spending too much time with his Russian grandmother, who talked to him only in my language. She stayed with us for a year, but in the end she decided to go home to Russia because she didn't want to be the cause of a lot of arguments. She entrusted my son to me, urging me to sort out his problem, and in fact I was the one who got in touch with the doctors. But first I decided to do a test: I stopped talking to him in Russian and despite this, the situation did not improve....(she smiles)”.

The presence of a language disorder thus seems to challenge the parents' initial openness to change and diversity, i.e. the attitude that underpinned their decision to form an intercultural family. In this situation of emotional stress, there may resurface feelings of transgression linked to the migration and the formation of the intercultural family; not only this, there often emerge antagonistic power relations between the two members of the couple and between their respective families of origin (Streiff-Fenart 1990a). The negotiations that had taken place and the balances that had been established before the arrival of the child are often undermined and an asymmetrical relationship is created between the two partners, often in favour of the Italian parent. Maria had this to say:

“I used to speak to my daughter in Italian and Spanish, then my husband’s family told me to stop using Spanish because, in their view, I was only confusing her more. My husband took their side: he thought our daughter hadn’t been sufficiently stimulated in Italian when she was little. In fact, my sister moved in with us to look after her until she was a year and a half old, because we were both working. Now my husband accuses my sister (with whom he has never got on well) of having spoken to our daughter only in Spanish. He doesn’t blame the dialect that his mother regularly speaks to our daughter, only my language! Now I am giving this matter some careful thought...”.

### **The Migration Experience and Interruption of the Transmission of the Foreign Language**

The decision to interrupt the transmission of the foreign language in favour of the language of the country of residence is often supported by schools and healthcare providers. When asked, “What do you think your child’s teacher/paediatrician thinks of bilingualism?”, most of the parents say that they have been advised by these professionals to use only Italian with their children, “so as not to create more confusion”. The suspension of the transmission of their own language resonates with the feelings of loss that foreign parents may harbour in relation to their own particular migration experience.<sup>11</sup> These parents’ own experience of separation was always brought up during the interviews, i.e. their separation from people to whom they had been emotionally attached, from the family in which they had grown up, from friends, but also from a familiar cultural environment and from their mother tongue. The parents, when recalling these memories (almost always evoked towards the end of the interview and thus just before their separation from the interviewer), seemed emotionally depressed and this climate would sometimes induce them to tell stories of previous separations and bereavements too. If the child was present in the room, he would leave his toys and approach his parent in a consoling manner.<sup>12</sup> Lucia, a young Cuban woman, used cultural differences between Italy and her country of origin to illustrate the distinctive “human warmth” of her homeland:

“Here I have lots of friends from my own country; I used to work in a Cuban restaurant and I have kept in touch with my old workmates. But I miss the human warmth of Cuba, which is different, like in all hot countries...It’s been very hard to fit in here, sometimes you can have lived here for years and still not understand something, but then more time goes by and eventually you

<sup>11</sup> The interviewees often described their particular migration experiences in a concise and matter-of-fact way. Most of them said they had decided to emigrate for financial reasons; others explained that they moved to be with their partner, who in many cases they had met on internet. For the purposes of this analysis, we considered more significant the sentiments that emerged later on, linked to the issues of loss, foreignness and racism. These will be examined in the Conclusion section of this paper.

<sup>12</sup> In some cases, especially if there were separation difficulties, the child was allowed to stay in the room during the interview. The drawings they did during the interview often showed the means of transport used, at holiday times, to get to their foreign parent’s country of origin. These will be analysed in a subsequent study.



come to understand it. For example, prejudices are inculcated in children here from a very young age, there is too much education, they aren't allowed to develop their instinctive side. I live in a small place, and I let everyone into my home, but my daughter is not accepted by others. I don't think this is because I am foreign, but rather because other parents are irritable and stressed out; perhaps they are worried about children messing up their home... This thing makes me feel paranoid... My daughter, on the other hand, is imaginative and funny, and now she's begun to play music and sing like my father did... My mother comes over once a year to visit us, but my father has been dead for a long time, I've told her (the girl) that he's not here now, that he's in heaven..."

The presence of a language disorder and the interruption of the transmission of the mother's language to the child thus seem to work as "phantasmatic amplifier" of feelings of loss and separation in the immigrant parent (particularly the mother). The most frequent answers to the question "What aspects of your homeland would you like to transmit to your children?" are well summarised in Vera's words:

"The language is the only thing that can be transmitted; the rest can't, because you have to live there in order to transmit it..."

On a symbolic level, the experience of the mother who feels she has cut her ties with her homeland and her own family parallels that of the child with a language problem: some of these young patients "cut off" words at the start or end, while some "drop" consonants, such as dental and sibilant ones; others create a "third" language, understandable only to their family, thereby making it difficult for themselves to communicate with the outside world. The experience of loss is thus shared by the mothers and their children. These feelings experienced by foreign parents can be worsened by the presence of conflicts within the family and/or with the host social group. It has been shown that foreigners generally, and intercultural couples in particular, are often subject to more or less overt racial prejudice (Peruzzi 2008). When this happens, the fact of having moved away from one's own group in order to move closer to a different social group becomes loaded with transgressive significance which may bring out, in the parent, feelings of anxiety related to the fear of not being accepted by either group, and of ending up permanently alone.<sup>13</sup>

In our sample, we found that children with language problems are considered more fragile and vulnerable because of their disorder. These children often showed a preferential relationship with their mother, resulting in the establishment of a form of identification between the immigrant mother and her child, in terms of both somatic aspects and character traits. The special relationship with the mother<sup>14</sup> was, in a number of cases, linked to separation problems in the child, the severity of which varied considerably. However, the thing that it is interesting to note here is

<sup>13</sup> On this topic, cf. Heenen-Wolff and Knauss (1995).

<sup>14</sup> Further confirmation of the presence of a special bond with the mother was provided, in the course of our observations, by the fact that most of the fathers, often for work reasons, did not attend the interview. The role of the mothers (of whom seven out of the ten were housewives) was generally to look after the home and the children.

the play of references that is established between language disorders, the experience of migration, the foreign parent's feelings of loss, and the formation of an intercultural family.

### Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to this study. The first is the small size of the sample. The number of participants recruited was limited not only because this was a pilot study, but also because intercultural families account for only 3 % of the families living in the Pavia area. One possible future development of this line of research could be to conduct multicentre studies or to increase the recruitment time.

The second limitation was that the study included only two families in which the father was the foreign parent, and therefore our analysis focused mainly on the experiences of mothers. Nevertheless, we are able to advance a preliminary hypothesis on the transmission of the second language: in the families in which the father was the foreign parent, we found from the interviews that transmission of the second language remained fundamentally important even when the child presented a language disorder in Italian. In short, the foreign fathers were keen for their children to remain in contact with their respective languages and continued to stimulate them through stories, books and TV and radio programmes. The sex of the parent thus seemed to carry considerable weight in the negotiations between the couple as regards the level of commitment to the transmission of cultural traits to the second generation. This hypothesis, already advanced by other authors (Streiff-Fenart 1990b) in relation to the naming of the child, implies a system of power relations that places the two members of the couple, and the two family lines, in opposition to one another, in a situation in which one party is dominated and the other dominates. We think that it would be interesting, in larger studies, to extend the exploration of this hypothesis to language and language transmission problems.

The third limitation is that we did not perform a detailed analysis of speech practices within the families considered in this study. Such an analysis should look at several aspects: how code-switching is actually done, in what kind of speech contexts and with what kind of participants, etc.; whether interactions with the child are assimilatory or accommodatory; and whether one language is used rather than the other. These are key aspects that need to be focused on in more depth in future studies, which should be conducted more from a linguistic anthropology perspective.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the fact that the interviewer was a member not just of European society, but also of the medical profession, both circumstances that might have caused the respondents to feel inhibited or judged in some way and, as a result, led them to give answers as close as possible to what they felt was expected. However, the duration of the interview, the fact that the more personal questions were left to the end of the interview, and the fact that the interviewer was not a member of the team treating the child are all factors that seem to have guarded against these problems. In all the interviews conducted, no respondent ever refused to answer a question and the interviewer always had the impression that they were

conducted in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. These interviews thus allowed the creation of a space, outside the context of the child's treatment, in which the parents were able to express, at length, their own doubts, concerns and wishes.

## Conclusion

Given the exploratory nature of this study, its results do not allow us to draw universally valid conclusions. However, it did raise some questions that deserve more in-depth investigation in future studies. Intercultural families emerge from this study as new families, open to change and to contact with the other. Cultural traits are often transmitted to the child in a way that makes it possible for him to count on a system of plural affiliations. In this context, great store is set by languages, not just because they open up more opportunities on today's job market, but also because they constitute a useful tool for maintaining relations with the extended family and represent, in a symbolic sense, a "secure base" on which the child can construct his identity. Indeed, intercultural couples, as a rule, not only allow their child to visit his foreign parent's homeland and family, but also actively encourage his acquisition of that parent's language.

However, one of the main consequences, when a child presents a language disorder and a diagnostic process has to be initiated, may be that of interruption of the transmission of the foreign parent's language, especially if that parent is the mother. This decision may be taken on the advice of teachers and health professionals, but also because the parents themselves often attribute their child's language disorder to his bilingual condition. The connection that is made between bilingualism/biculturalism and the development of language problems in the second generation exposes the "transgressive" side of the formation of an intercultural family, which represents a choice that, more or less explicitly, goes against the homogenous option (which instead corresponds to the dominant norm, and is also more likely in statistical terms). Indeed, when an intercultural couple is formed, some of the elements on which a traditional partnership is founded (such as reproduction of the lineage identity and consolidation of a particular system of social relations) are deliberately ignored or relegated to the background. This is one of the reasons why these couples are often stigmatised, both by the family group and by society at large.

The issue of racism was never addressed explicitly by the couples we interviewed, even though it sometimes emerged, accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame, in the mothers' descriptions of their experiences with the extended family as well as with the host society: some authors point out that stigmatisation of intercultural couples implies not only a value judgement, but also a xenophobic attitude that is exacerbated in times of economic crisis or war. If it is true that the same attitude emerges towards other issues related to the concept of "creolisation", such as bilingualism, multiculturalism and integration, then we can conclude that what we are faced with is a real "phobia of mixedness", linked to ideas of purity and the loss of a Platonic ideal of unity that is yearned after. According to this

ideology, borrowing between and mixing of languages and their modification over time leads to decline of languages (Fiala and Varro 2007; Tabouret-Keller 1991). In this regard, it might be considered that implicit recourse to a sort of ranking of languages and cultures is a means of expressing, in a veiled manner, a discriminatory ideology that cannot be expressed openly in society. Indeed, discrimination on linguistic and cultural grounds is today more “acceptable” than discrimination on grounds of race or nationality. While classic racism was based on a hierarchical vision of mankind divided into “compartments” called “races”, its modern version no longer refers to biological factors (even though there is no shortage of examples of recent attempts to restore a racist ideology on such a basis). Instead of presenting a vision of mankind based on somatic prerogatives, the new form of racism turns human languages and cultures into entirely distinct and non-communicating universes. Put another way, modern racism is “cultural”, “non-biological” racism, constructed as a result of a re-essentialisation of cultural elements (Fabietti 1995, Arkin 2009).

A mother’s relinquishment of her mother tongue leads her to conclude that it may be worth less than the host country’s language and, ultimately, that the things she transmits are insignificant. This consideration creates a distance between the migrant mother and the native, in which what is at stake is linked to the ideas of assimilation and compliance with cultural and linguistic standards that are shared on a social level and often defended by health institutions and schools.<sup>15</sup> If it is true, to paraphrase Franz Fanon (1952), that speaking a language means being a bearer of a whole world, a culture, and—we might add—, specific links with the world and with other people,<sup>16</sup> then it becomes clear that for the migrant individual, its loss is, ultimately, an expropriation of what she carries with her and might pass on to future generations, in terms of cultural heritage, plurality of affiliations and identity building.

Attributing language disorders to bilingualism challenges the very concept of mixedness: the decision to interrupt the transmission of the second language impacts not only on family balances and on the processes of harmonious exchanges, it also deprives the mothers, who have already undergone separation experiences related to migration, of a valuable support on which to build their relationship with their child. The sense of loss linked to the sudden interruption of the transmission of the

<sup>15</sup> Alongside these considerations, it is worth remarking that in the course of this research we were contacted by teachers and health professionals wanting more information on the topic of bilingualism. As a future application of this research project we plan to organise discussion groups and training courses on multilingualism and multiculturalism aimed specifically at these groups.

<sup>16</sup> In his work on language, *Peau noire, Masques Blancs* (Black Skin, White Masks, 1952), Franz Fanon stresses the relationship between language, culture, power relationships, and identity. Although he writes from the colonial perspective, his observations on the political and existential implications of speaking a specific language can be applied to the problems of integration and multiculturalism that characterise post-colonial Western societies, where racism often assumes other forms. On this topic he writes (1952: 22): “[in the French Antilles] the official language is French; elementary-school teachers closely monitor their pupils to make sure they are not using Creole. We will not go into the reasons why. So, the problem perhaps lies in the fact that in the Antilles, as in Brittany, there is a dialect and there is the French language. But that can’t be right, because the Bretons do not feel inferior to the French. The Bretons were never civilized by the Whites”.

mother's language thus acts as a “phantasmatic amplifier” that can revive, in the mother, old feelings of separation and grief. Some authors have linked the radical sense of not belonging, and of not having a language in which to express oneself, not so much to the act of migrating itself as to the fact of feeling *foreign*: people who migrate are somehow under the illusion that if they had not gone away, they would not feel foreign (Varro 2003). It is not within the scope of this study to discuss, case by case, how these depressive feelings impact on the relationship between the mother and her child and on the relative separation-individuation processes. However, we can affirm that language development is not only based on the maturation of the relative cognitive processes, but is also conditioned by emotional development and by the processes by which mental life is transmitted between the generations. Finding ways, through education and care, of enabling a parent to transmit her own language to her child is justified not only from a linguistic point of view, but also in an existential sense, as it means passing on her own individual history, culture and affiliations. The transmission processes as a whole are thus linked to the construction of parenthood and also to the structuring of the child's identity and the plurality of his affiliations. In this sense, understanding how the dialectic between the categories of “alien” and “familiar” is dealt with in these contemporary families, which have to reckon with the condition of otherness, is crucial for psychiatrists and psychotherapists working in settings in which cultural difference is an issue to consider.

**Acknowledgments** We wish to thank Dr Rebecca Rossi and Dr Benedetta Nessi for their collaboration and valuable comments during the design phase of this study. We also thank Dr Francesca Brustia for helping to recruit the couples we interviewed. We are grateful for the support of Dr Nicola Ludwig, University of Milan and for the comments of the two anonymous reviewers. Finally, we wish to thank all the parents we interviewed for granting us access to the intimacy of their private family lives.

## References

- Amselle, Jean Loup  
1997 Salvation through Writing: The N'ko, a West African Prophetism. *Diogenes* 45: 37–52.
- Arkin, Kimberly  
2009 Rhinestone Aesthetics and Religious Essence: Looking Jewish in Paris. *American Ethnologist* 36(4): 722–734.
- Bailey, Benjamin  
2001 The Language of Multiple Identities Among Dominican Americans. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 10(2): 190–223.
- Barbara, Augustin  
1993 *Les Couples Mixtes*. Paris: Bayard.
- Beneduce, Roberto, and Pompeo Martelli  
2005 Politics of the Healing and Politics of Culture: Ethnopsychiatry, Identities and Migration. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 42: 367–393.
- Benevelli, Luigi  
2010 *La psichiatria coloniale italiana negli anni dell'Impero (1936–1941)*. Lecce: Argo.
- Berlincioni, Vanna, and Davide Bruno  
2012 Les « couples mixtes » et leurs enfants: une nouvelle problématique en psychiatrie transculturelle ? *L'Autre. Cliniques, Cultures, Sociétés* 13(2): 181–193.
- Bowlby, John  
1988 *A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory*. London: Routledge.

- Bossuroy, Marion, Simon Amalini, and Marie Rose Moro  
2011 La souffrance à l'école des enfants des migrants: quand la langue de l'école est une langue seconde. *Les Collectifs du Cirp* 2: 357–362.
- Bruno, Davide, Vanna Berlincioni, Anne Revah-Lévy, and Marie Rose Moro  
2012 Penser la différence. Les couples mixtes et leurs enfants dans l'Italie contemporaine. *Psychomédia* 35: 56–61.
- Bruno, Davide  
2008 Immigration et rejet social: les centres de rétention pour immigrés en Italie. *L'Autre. Cliniques, Cultures, Sociétés* 9(2): 217–227.
- Crutchley, Alison, Botting Nicola, and Conti-Ramsden Gina  
1997 Bilingualism and Specific Language Impairment in Children Attending Language Units. *European Journal of Disorders of Communication*. 32(2): 267–276.
- Deprez-de Heredia, Christine, and Gabrielle Varro  
1991 Le bilinguisme dans les familles. *Enfance*. 45(4): 297–304.
- Devereux, Georges  
1967 La renonciation à l'identité. Défense contre l'anéantissement Paris: Payot.
- Fabiatti, Ugo  
1995 L'identità etnica. Storia di un concetto equivoco Roma: Carocci.
- Fanon, Frantz  
1952 *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*. Paris: Editions Du Seuil.
- Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman  
2005 An Anthropological Hybrid: The Pragmatic Arrangement of Universalism and Culturalism in french Mental Health. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 42: 347–366.
- Fiala, Pierre, and Gabrielle Varro  
2007 Mixités: tensions discursives ou rupture linguistique?. *Langage et société* 121–122: 215–232.
- Freud, Sigmund  
1919 The Uncanny in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (vol. XVII), pp. 219–252. London: Hogarth (1953).
- Fuller, Janet M  
2007 Language Choice as a Means of Shaping Identity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 17(1): 105–129.
- Gal, Susan  
1987 Code—Switching and Consciousness in the European Periphery. *American Ethnologist* 14(4): 637–653.
- Green, André  
1971 La projection: de l'identification projective au projet. *Rev. Fr. De Psychanalyse* 35: 939–960.
- Hamers, Josiane F, and Michel H. A Blanc  
1989 *Bilinguality and Bilingualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heenen-Wolff, Susan, and Knauss Werner  
1995 Expériences psychanalytiques. In *Les couples mixtes et leurs enfants en France et en Allemagne*. Varro G, ed., pp. 115–120. Paris: Armand-Colin.
- Heller, Monica, and Laurette Levy  
1992 Mixed Marriages. *Life on the Linguistic Frontier*. *Multilingua* 11(1): 11–43.
- Imamura, Anne  
1988 The Loss That Has No Name: Social Womanhood of Foreign Wives in International Marriages. *Gender and Society* 2(3): 291–307.
- Karant, Prathibha  
2000 Multilingual/Multiliterate/Multicultural Studies of Aphasia. The Rosetta Stone of Neurolinguistics in the New Millennium. *Brain and Language* 71: 113–115.
- Kirmayer, Laurence  
2006 Beyond the 'New Cross-cultural Psychiatry': Cultural Biology, Discursive, Psychology and the Ironies of Globalization. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 43: 126–143.
- Kohl, Magali, Beaquier-Maccota Bérange, Marie Bourgeois, Chantal Clouard, Stéphanie Donde, Annick Mosser, Pascale Pinot, Guy Rittori, Laurence Vaivre-Douret, Bernard Golse, and Laurence Robel  
2008 Bilinguisme et troubles du langage chez l'enfant: étude rétrospective. *La psychiatrie de l'enfant* 51(2): 577–595.

- Koven, Michèle  
1998 Two Languages in the Self/The Self in Two Languages: French-Portuguese Bilinguals' Verbal Enactments and Experience of Self in Narrative Discourse. *Ethos* 26(4): 410–455.
- Le Bars, Sylvia  
2007 Quelle place pour l'espagnol aux Etats-Unis: assimilation monolingue ou diversité plurilingue?. *Le français aujourd'hui* 158: 41–50.
- Leung Cheuk, Daniel Ka, Virginia Wong, and Gabriel Matthew Leung  
2005 Multilingual Home Environment and Specific Language Impairment: A Case-Control Study in Chinese Children. *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* 19(4): 303–314.
- McArthur, Tom  
1986 Comment: Worried about Something Else. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 60: 87–91.
- Meintel, Deirdre, and Emmanuel Kahan  
2005 De génération en génération: identités et projets identitaires des montréalais de la 'deuxième génération. *Ethnologies* 27: 131–165.
- Meintel, Deirdre  
2002 Transmitting Pluralism: Mixed Unions in Montreal. *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études ethniques au Canada* 34(3): 99–120.
- Milroy, Lesley  
2001 Britain and the United States: Two Nations Divided by the Same Language (and Different Language Ideologies). *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 10(1): 56–89.
- Moro, Marie Rose  
2010 *Nos enfants demain. Pour une société multiculturelle* Paris: Odile Jacob.  
2002 *Enfants d'ici venus d'ailleurs. La Découverte: Naître et grandir en France*. Paris.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo  
1995 Il popolo e la televisione distruggono in maniera turpe il mio mito... *In* *Interviste Corsare sulla politica e sulla vita 1955–1975*. M Gulinucci, eds., pp. 220–223. Roma: Liberal Atlantide Editoriale.
- Peruzzi, Gaia  
2008 *Amori possibili. Le coppie miste nella provincia italiana* Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Rezzoug, Dalila, Sylvaine De Plaën, Malika Bensekhar\_Bennabi, and Marie Rose Moro  
2007 Bilinguisme chez les enfants de migrants, mythes et réalités. *Le français aujourd'hui* 158: 61–68.
- Safi, Mirna  
2008 Inter-mariage et intégration: les disparités des taux d'exogamie des immigrés en France. *Population* 63: 267–298.
- Salameh, Eva Kristina, Gisela Håkansson, and Ulrika Nettelblatt  
2004 developmental Perspectives on Bilingual Swedish-Arabic Children with or Without Language Impairment: A Longitudinal Study. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders* 39(1): 65–91.
- Schnapper, Dominique  
1991 *La France de l'intégration*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Shankar, Shalini  
2008 Speaking Like a Model Minority: "FOB" Styles, Gender, and Racial Meanings Among Desi Teens in Silicon Valley. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 18(2): 268–289.
- Streiff-Fenart, Jocelyne  
1990a Familles pluriculturelles. Le cas des couples franco-maghrébins. *Migrants-Formation* 80: 124–137.  
1990b La nomination de l'enfant dans les sociétés franco-maghrébines. *Sociétés Contemporaines* 4: 5–18.
- Tabouret-Keller, Andrée  
1991 La question du bilinguisme. *Enfance* 44(4): 271–277.
- Tognetti Bordogna, Mara  
2006 Les mariages mixtes, un laboratoire transculturel: à partir d'une recherche de terrain. *L'Autre. Cliniques, Cultures et Sociétés*. 1: 79–98.
- Urciuoli, Bonnie  
1991 The Political Topography of Spanish and English: The View from a New Puerto Rican Neighborhood. *American Ethnologist* 18(2): 295–310.



Varro, Gabrielle

2003 *Sociologie de la mixité*. Paris: Belin.

1995 *Les couples mixtes et leurs enfants en France et en Allemagne*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Vivero, Veronica Navarrete, and Sharon Rae Jenkins

1999 Existential Hazards of the Multicultural Individual: Defining and Understanding “Cultural Homelessness”. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 5(1): 6–26.

Wallon, Estelle, Dalila Rezzoug, Malika Bennabi-Bensekhar, Coralie Sanson, Geneviève Serre, Marcellin Yapo, Elise Drain, and Rose Moro Marie

2008 Évaluation langagière en langue maternelle pour les enfants allophones et les primo-arrivants. Un nouvel instrument : l’ELAL d’Avicenne. *La psychiatrie de l’enfant* 51(2): 597–622.

Woolard, Kathryn A

1998 Simultaneity and Bivalency as Strategies in Bilingualism. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 8(1): 3–29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.