Larissa Aronin and David Singleton have written a most complete book on multilingualism, ideal for readers who want to familiarize themselves with the study of multilingualism, bilingualism or sociolinguistics in the wider sense.

The introduction to the volume is replete with references and examples. The authors cite different definitions of multilingualism starting with Bloomfield (1933), Braun (1937) and the 1961 edition of the *Webster’s Dictionary*. In addition, they discuss more recent definitions such as the one presented in Edwards (1994). The authors also review the *status quaestionis* including the problematic concept of *mother tongue*. Other terms they discuss are *bilingual* and *multilingual*. Furthermore, they contrast (p. 5) L2 and L3 acquisition *pace* Hoffman (2001). By and large, they stress the differences between learning languages and cross-linguistic interaction in this first chapter.

In Chapter 2 (pp. 11–32), Aronin and Singleton present multilingualism as a uniquely human possession, tool and ability. As far as the first dimension is concerned, they discuss features such as the use of the vocal-auditory channel as well as the arbitrariness, semanticity and cultural transmission of human communication. As a tool, they refer first and foremost to multilingualism from the point of view of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. When
discussing multilingualism as ability, they draw upon neurobiology, neurolinguistics and psycholinguistics. There is an interesting subchapter about the societal awareness of language (p. 19); in it the authors compare the societal awareness of monolingualism vis-à-vis multilingualism across time.

In the third chapter (pp. 33–57), the authors develop the concept of multilingualism as a manifestation of globalization. They offer a critical discussion of different aspects such as space, time, technology and mobility. They also deal very exhaustively with the new linguistic dispensation, commenting on language ideologies and policies, language education and patterns of language in both communities and individuals. Their comparison of historical vs. current multilingualism (pp. 43–48) seems particularly interesting. The discussion of shifts in norms and new focal issues (pp. 54–55) is also likely to capture the reader’s attention.

Chapter 4, entitled ‘Dominant Language Constellation’ (pp. 59–75), deals with the language community – the concept, its boundaries, functions and diverse illustrative cases. According to the authors, the Dominant Language Constellation (DLC) is made up of the languages present in a person’s linguistic environment which, taken together, enable him or her to meet all their linguistic needs (p. 59). They conclude the chapter by stating that the DLC is the key point of departure for the investigation of multilingualism.

The individual aspect of multilingualism constitutes the focus of Chapter 5 (pp. 77–97). The authors begin by outlining the concepts of ethnicity and nationality which are connected to language and identity. They introduce us to the terminology of multilingualism – for instance, linguistic identity vs. multilinguality – and its uses, points of views, connections, etc.

In addition, they present different models of multilingualism, for instance Levelt (1989) and Clyne (2003) (pp. 83–84). In the same chapter they bring up the interesting dynamics of activation/inhibition of languages (p. 85) pace Green (1998), and the concept of language mode introduced by Grosjean (2001) (p. 86). They enumerate distinct factors which influence the learning of language like age, ability, motivation, etc., and which account for the individual differences in multilinguals as personal life trajectories play a crucial role in contemporary multilingual societies (pp. 93–96).

Multilingual conditions are at the centre of Chapter 6. Aronin and Singleton give us several examples of language acquisition and its outcomes: from early childhood, usually simultaneously, and sequentially, just to name the most important ones. The last part of the chapter (pp. 109–114) deals with the advantages and disadvantages of multilinguality. The authors provide evidence for the argument that being multilingual is an asset, not an impediment.
In Chapter 7 the authors introduce the reader to their classification of multilinguals constructed around the dimensions of user, environment and language. They present different typologies of bilingualism and using more than two languages (pp. 119–121) and their application to educational contexts (pp. 128–131), as well as typologies of multilingual societies, for example Kloss (1966; p. 132), Stewart (1968; pp. 134–135), De Swaan (2001; p. 137), and Edwards (1992; pp. 140–141).

Cross-linguistic influence is the subject of Chapter 8, entitled ‘A Multilingual Monolith?’ The authors review the counterarguments of Wei (2011) and the multicompetence model of Cook (1992), but the theory of Harris (1981, 1998) is at the centre of the discussion of this chapter. The concept of blur is pivotal to Harris’s modelling of cross-linguistic interaction and multilingualism and is supported by the evidence that users tend to confuse their languages (pp. 153–161).

Chapter 9 summarizes the findings of recent research on multilingualism. In the first place, the authors point out the need for reconceptualizing multilingualism in the light of present conceptualizations. As far as new lines of inquiry are concerned, they stress the importance of taking into account four dimensions: the philosophy, the material culture, the complexity and the affordance of multilingualism. After that, they conclude their work by evaluating the advances that have been made in this area over recent years.

As can be gleaned from the above, the book by Larissa Aronin and David Singleton is essentially a thorough presentation of the status quaestionis of studies on multilingualism, its main original contribution to the field being the DLC phenomenon. Nevertheless, it gives students and scholars a most useful overview of recent advances both in terms of theory development and case studies.

Notes

1 Their nomenclature is slightly different from Edwards (1994) who takes into account speakers, settings and languages when discussing multilingualism.
2 Kloss distinguishes three types of communities: monolingual, bi-trilingual and multilingual.
3 Stewart aims at specifying language types in a multilingual society but ‘at a national level’.
4 In his Galactic Model, De Swaan proposes a hierarchy of languages consisting of thousands of languages in an ordered pattern.
5 Edwards presents a typology of minority languages.
6 The authors explain and exemplify the term ‘affordance’ on pp. 174–175 and 176, respectively.
References


