



**Larissa Aronin, Eva Vetter (Eds.),**  
***Dominant Language Constellations Approach***  
***in Education and Language Acquisition***  
**Springer, 2021 (eBook),**  
**240 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-70768-2**

*Dominant Language Constellations Approach in Education and Language Acquisition* is the second volume in Springer’s Educational Linguistics series on Dominant Language Constellations (DLC); the first volume is titled *Dominant Language Constellations: A New Perspective on Multilingualism* (2020), edited by Joseph Lo Bianco and Larissa Aronin. Both present the concept of Dominant Language Constellations (DLC). DLC are a group of an individual’s or a group’s most important, thus most used, languages that function as a unit in their multilingual environment.

The Dominant Language Constellation includes only the most expedient languages for a person, rather than all the languages known to them, as would be the case in language repertoire. Unlike a language repertoire, a DLC comprises the languages which, together, perform the most vital functions of language (Aronin, 2016, p. 196).

In the second volume, this definition of DLC is reconsidered more in detail in the first chapter (Lo Bianco) and the second one (Aronin); the concept is the main subject of the book. The aim of this second volume is to apply DLC in school and in teacher training and to show how the concept of DLC can reveal processes of multilingual and language education, without claiming completeness. The book is divided into a theoretical introduction and three parts according to different domains. In the first part, DLC in language educa-

tion policy and school practices are discussed. In the second part, the concept of DLC is applied to teacher training, and in the last part, innovative ways of researching DLC and identity are found through the use of narratives and visualizations.

In his introduction titled *Literacy Learning and Language Education: Dominant Language Constellations and Contemporary Multilingualism*, Joseph Lo Bianco uses the concept of DLC to apply it to literacy teaching. This connection is made to understand the impact contemporary multilingualism has on education and how literacy teaching manifests itself in the multilingual classroom. In a first step, he describes DLC as an analytical category in which languages are organized in constellations and as an opportunity for adequate simplification of multilingualism. In a second step, he adapts the DLC approach to literacy which he defines as a “complex fusion of audio, visual, image, color, movement and design” (p. 7) and underlines the importance of developing multilingual literacy in a gradually converging (“flatter”) world. After briefly describing the book chapters one by one, he concludes that all the contributions enable an academic examination of DLC that becomes increasingly important in today’s society.

In the second chapter titled *Dominant Language Constellations in Education: Patterns and Visualisations*, Larissa Aronin explains that the concept of DLC, which includes a reduced number of languages (usually three), is complementary to the concept of language repertoire that includes all the languages known. DLC represent an interconnected and complex system of the most expedient languages. She views DLC as context dependent patterns and shows how these patterns allow dealing with various factors in multilingual education, for example, language policy and education, teaching third/fourth/...*n*th languages or teaching immigrants, but also a language’s association with cultures and mentalities. In the last part, she presents models and visualizations of DLC patterns for multilingual education that capture DLC more easily than other methods. Visualizations as pedagogical appropriate designs of a person’s DLC are DLC maps and 3D models that represent the multidimensionality of multilingualism.

In her chapter about *Language Education Policy Through a DLC Lens: The Case of Urban Multilingualism*, Eva Vetter addresses language education policies in the urban context. More specifically, she researches the European language education policy in three different lower secondary schools in the multilingual and superdiverse city of Vienna. She presents data on formal language practice through analyzing languages present at 60 schools’ websites to select the three most diverse language profiles. These profiles will then be further explored through interviews with the school’s principal about their perception and handling of multilingualism. In the last step, she researches less formalized language use by teachers and students through classroom ob-

ervation in the least multilingual of the three schools. The results show that most websites are dominated by monolingualism, and that principals perceive their schools as multilingual although they follow a language policy that results in activities limited in addressing linguistic diversity. The classroom observations show that pupils make use of their DLC and the epistemic function of multilingualism. The results indicate that DLC can be used to understand language policy and its planning, involving bottom-up and top-down structures in educational language policy.

Caterina Sugrañes, author of the chapter *Promoting Plurilingual Competences in Primary Schools in Barcelona: A Dominant Language Constellation Approach to Teaching and Learning Languages*, discusses the benefits of using DLC to understand multilingual learning and teaching contexts. She exemplifies this based on a five-month study (including pre-post quantitative data and qualitative data such as interviews with the pupils), during which 45 primary school pupils in Barcelona worked on English story books and translated them into the languages they knew. Her results show that by using such a translanguaging practice to illustrate pupils' DLC in learning, pupils become more aware of the languages around them and their motivation for using a specific language, especially Catalan, was viewed more positively after the intervention. The results indicate that pupils' academic performances and teachers' positive attitudes towards teaching language increased resorting to this intervention.

In his chapter *Family Language Policy and Dominant Language Constellations: A Canadian Perspective*, Nikolay Slavkov adapts a DLC lens to family language policy in the context of the officially bilingual (French/English) province of Ontario. More than being officially bilingual, the province is multilingual including heritage and Indigenous languages. Family language policy involves the transmission of minority language(s) and the choice of one of the two official languages of schooling. His empirical data derive from a mixed methods study with questionnaires from 170 bilingual/multilingual pupils and interviews with 20 selected families (with one parent representing the family). The results show that the pupils' DLC is influenced by the family language policy in terms of number and choice of languages in the constellation, active vs. passive use of these, and the DLC dynamics.

The last chapter of the first part (language educational policies and school practices) is titled *Educational and Career Opportunities for Refugee-Background Adults in Norway: A DLC Perspective*. The authors Anna Krulatz and Anne Dahl refer to Norwegian language training for adult refugees. By means of interviews, they compare the actual refugees' DLC—composed of individual language(s) and Norwegian while lacking English, the most important foreign language in Norway—to the DLCs their teachers are aiming at, and to the provided language offers at governmental websites. The results attest to a discrepancy between the refugees' DLC, the DLCs teachers aim at,

and the provided language offers that lies in the Norwegian authorities' denial of offering English language training, which would contribute to success in education, and possibly to a more favorable profession and financial situation.

The second part consists of two contributions. In the first one, titled *Embracing Multilingualism in Teaching Practicum in Finland? DLC as a Tool for Uncovering Individual and Institutional Multilingualism*, Mikaela Björklund and Siv Björklund explore university teachers' DLC in constitutionally bilingual (Finnish/Swedish) Finland. The participants lead a teaching practicum and work at two different universities, one with Swedish as the teaching language and one with Finnish. They were given blank DLC maps in which they should visualize the languages they use before they commented on them via think-aloud protocols. The teachers' DLC differ slightly between the two universities, although there is a general tendency for a rather stable dominant language constellation (including the languages Swedish, Finnish, and English) and variation in the language affordances upon personal awareness, interest and classes taught.

The other contribution to the second part is *The Dominant Language Constellations of Immigrant Teacher Trainees in Israel: Russian, Hebrew and English* by Judith Yoel. The author explores the dynamic community DLC of seven English teacher trainees from the Former Soviet Union who immigrated to Israel in the last four years. She gave them guiding questions about their DLC to encourage narration (narrative method). Participants' DLC differ slightly; however, there is a common importance given to mastering Israel's national language, Hebrew, as well as a common initial benefit associated to mastering English as a transition language. Nevertheless, the language's functions, for example, English serving as a *lingua franca* in daily life, shift according to the mastery of Hebrew. This shift, or interplay, is also closely linked to a shift in immigrant teacher trainees' identity.

Three contributions form the last part where narratives and visualizations enable the immersion in individual DLC and identities. In the chapter titled *Exploring Identities and Life Stories of Multilingual Transnational Couples Through the Lens of Multilinguality and Dominant Language Constellations*, Anna Krulatz and Jennifer Duggan discuss the identities and experiences of five multilingual, transnational couples residing in Norway by employing the concept of multilinguality and DLC. Multilinguality refers *inter alia* to the complexity, variation, varying functionalities, and balance of multilingual actions. Data from all ten participants were gathered through a Language Use Questionnaire and DLC maps to investigate changes in their DLC and shifts in their identities. All multilingual identities are highly complex and multifaceted. They depend on different factors: changing attitudes towards languages and cultures as well as individual language trajectories due to international mobility—including the length of residence in the target community.

Silvia Melo-Pfeifer's contribution, titled *Understanding Dominant Language Constellations Through Analysis of Visual Linguistic Autobiographies by Foreign Language Student Teachers in Germany* represents a description and analysis of the DLC from 64 Spanish and French student teachers at the University of Hamburg through linguistic autobiographies drawn by themselves. These autobiographies enable the identification of the languages that form part of the DLC in both cohorts. She understands DLC as a dynamic and complex system, that is, a system that undergoes constant change and reorganizes itself according to change and interaction with the environment. The corpus consists of 31 visual linguistic autobiographies from French student teachers and 34 from Spanish student teachers. Quantitative analysis of the visualized languages shows that the linguistic dispensation varies. Additionally, selected drawings are analyzed qualitatively viewing DLC as a dynamic system that depends on the individual life story, but also on the curricular language offer at school. DLC are based on the language policies at school, in the family, and in professionalization (latent DLC) and do not differ between the groups. This shows that DLC depend on the ecology of languages in the world and the national educational language policies.

The last chapter of the book by Guðrún Gísladóttí is titled *Languages as Ways of Being: The Linguistic Biography of a Nordic Nomad*. Gísladóttí explains her ever-changing DLC in the realm of her multilingual repertoire. She describes the languages she learned (starting with her first language, that is, Icelandic), referring to the emotions she has about them and the role they take in her life. She divides her chapter into the languages in her homeland and into the languages away from her home where cultural experience and autonomous language learning play an essential role and feelings like "I am a different self, when there" (p. 232) emerge. In the summary of her linguistic autobiography, Gísladóttí relates that her DLC changes according to where she lives, where she works, and with whom she communicates.

In both volumes, the concept of DLC is commonly defined as the use of only the most important languages in the individuals' repertoire and the concept is seen as adequate for superdiverse linguistic contexts. All the parts (*Dominant Language Constellations in Language Education Policy and School Practices*; *Dominant Language Constellations in Teacher Training*; *Dominant Language Constellations and Identity Through Narratives and Visualizations*) of the second volume can be understood as completing the parts *Current Developments in DLC Research* and *Institutional Expressions of DLC* of the first volume by enhancing empirical studies (e.g., Vetter's research on language policy and Slavkov's insights into family language policies) and as continuing the first volume's part *Personal and Group Experiences with DLC* (e.g., Björklund and Björklund's study on teacher trainers in Finland and Yoel's contribution on the group DLC of Russian immigrants in Israel). Thus, the volume *Dominant*

*Language Constellations Approach in Education and Language Acquisition* shows that the concept of DLC presents a theoretical framework in which diverse language studies can find their places. Thanks to the concept, clear insights about multilinguals and multilingualism can be gained because the concept of DLC simplifies multilingualism and makes it researchable as is shown in the contributions.

I would like to emphasize the rich data basis and the diverse data collection methods, that is, qualitative research and mixed-methods, in all empirical studies. Additionally, the contributions show an integrated consideration of the context, by providing thorough information about the national or regional (diverse) linguistic context; discussions are also highly contextual. This second volume continues the ideas and results from the first volume since nearly all contributions provide applications of DLC in the school context, discuss educational language policy, and refer to contributions from the first volume. Slavkov forecasts this application to the educational language policies as follows: “more explicit and targeted multilingual policies [...] and awareness raising of multilingual values can contribute to an even larger proportion of the population having rich and interesting DLCs” (p. 105). In the end, this innovative book shows how DLC can be a point where society and individuals meet each other.



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3217-7399>

*Lisa Marie Brinkmann*

## References

- Aronin, L. (2016). Multicompetence and dominant language constellation. In V. Cook & L. Wei (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic multicompetence* (pp. 142–163). Cambridge University Press.
- Lo Bianco, J., & Aronin, L. (2020). *Dominant Language Constellations. A New Perspective on Multilingualism*. Springer.