

Topic 11 OUR MULTILINGUAL WORLD

Speaking two or more languages is the natural way of life for three-quarters of the human race. (Crystal 2005)

- The term *multilingualism* can be defined as the ability to use multiple languages and switch between them to navigate daily communicative needs;
- Multilingualism exists on two levels: individual (personal) and societal (community-based);
- Societal multilingualism refers to linguistic diversity found in a country or community;
- There is no single and simple model of multilingualism;
- *Official multilingualism* is the policy adopted by some states of recognizing multiple languages;
- The use of multiple languages and dialects is the global norm, found in practically every country in the world, whether it is officially recognized or not;
- Multiple language use can be traced back to the very beginnings of spoken language;
- Exposure to multiple languages is the norm, not the exception;
- The movement of peoples for political, religious, social or economic reasons helps explain global multilingualism;
- Use of two or more languages and exposure to multiple languages have been called *the normal human condition, the natural way of life for three-quarters of the human race and an integral part of human development* (Crystal 2006);
- Bilingualism and multilingualism have been described as *the normal and unremarkable necessity of everyday life for the majority of the world's population;* (Romaine 2012)
- Multilingualism is essential for global communication, understanding of other cultures and the development of global citizenship values;
- The presence and use of multiple languages are a normal part of everyday life for the majority of the world's population;
- About 3.5 billion people use more than one language to communicate every day, and
- Multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers in the world's population.

References

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