Multilingual interaction and minority languages: Proficiency andlanguage practices in education and societyDurk Gorter University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU - IKERBASQUEd.gorter@ikerbasque.orgIn this plenary speech I examine multilingual interaction in a number of European regions inwhich minority languages are being revitalized.Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms ofDURK GORTER: MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION AND MINORITY LANGUAGES 852.1 Focus on multilingualismThe ideas of Williams, Baker, Garcia, Canagarajah, Li Wei and others were an inspirationfor the studies of multilingualism I have undertaken with my colleague Jasone Cenoz.Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms ofDURK GORTER: MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION AND MINORITY LANGUAGES 87interconnected world, in which the local and the global merge to become the GLOCAL in anetworked society (Castells 2000; Wellman 2002) in which people are increasingly 'alwayson' (Baron 2008).The paper is based on my experience of over 30 years of research into theFrisian language in the Netherlands (Gorter 1987, 2001, 2008a), in addition to several years ofcomparative work on minority languages across the European Union (Sikma Gorter 1990;Revised version of a plenary address given at the International Conference on Bilingual and Multilingual Interaction,Bangor, Wales, 30 March-1 April 2012use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.It is interesting to note that speakers of European minority languages, such as Basque,Frisian, Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Breton and Catalan, share certain characteristics thatdistinguish them from speakers of majority languages, especially the fact that they all becomefluent bilingual speakers.This way of conceptualizing the idea of repertoirefits with our focus on multilingualism because we also want to take into consideration all thelanguages in the speaker's repertoire, ranging from the language maximally known, to thelanguages in which a speaker develops partial or minimal competence or can only recognize alanguage, even if we are aware that 'languages' are constructed entities (Makoni Pennycook2007).Theories and models about revitalization or about loss and maintenance of minoritylanguages are often based on a vision of a society in which only two languages play a role, onebeing the minority language, such as Basque, Breton, Catalan, Frisian, Irish, Scottish Gaelicor Welsh, and the other the dominant language, such as Spanish, French, Dutch or English.The definition in the European Charter forRegional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe (1992) is frequently quoted inthe literature (e.g. Dunbar 2001: 91; Extra Gorter 2001: 19; Hult 2004: 192; Darquennes2011: 549; Nic Craith 2012: 377).Education is seen as a crucial variable for the revitalizationof minority languages: Fishman (1991, 2001), in his influential multi-stage model of theGIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale), emphasizes the importance of languageacquisition, learning and education.The associated languageinstitutes, such as the Alliance Fran,caise for French or the Goethe Institut for German, activelypromote their languages and cultures to learners in numerous countries across the world,and in part explain their spread.Theproject is carried out in collaboration between the Faculty of Education of the Universityof the Basque Country in Donostia-San Sebastian, the Basque Autonomous Community in 'Spain and the Mercator Research Centre of the Fryske Akademy in the province of Frieslandin the Netherlands.For my discussion I will draw onthe results of the long-running project on the 'Added value of multilingualism and diversityin educational contexts', in which the teaching of languages in the Basque AutonomousCommunity in Spain is compared to that in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands(Arocena et al. 2010). Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of8 4 PLENARY SPEECHESdefinition contains the word 'state' no less than four times, which demonstrates the powerof the state authorities to give official recognition to a minority language on its territory (orto deny such recognition).Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms ofDURK GORTER: MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION AND MINORITY LANGUAGES 89and other languages (such as immigrant languages).A multi-method approach was used, including questionnaires, classroom observations,student essays, language diaries and photographs, to collect quantitative and qualitative dataon such matters as language proficiency, language use and attitudes, in a sample of secondaryschool students aged from 14 to 16, as well as among their teachers.A number of researchreports were produced for the Basque government and are available online (Arocena et al.2010; Douwes, Hanenburg Lotti 2010; Bangma, Van der Meer Riemersma 2011; DeVries Arocena 2011).Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of9 0 PLENARY SPEECHESHowever, the regional government generously supports and facilitates the teaching of Basque,and parents are free to choose the model they want for their child. Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms ofDURK GORTER: MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION AND MINORITY LANGUAGES 91Arocena 2011).I draw on the results of a long-running project on the 'Added valueof multilingualism and diversity in educational contexts' among secondary school students,and show that there are interesting differences and similarities between the minoritylanguage (Basque or Frisian), the majority language (Spanish or Dutch) and English. Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms ofDURK GORTER: MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION AND MINORITY LANGUAGES 83Extra Gorter 2001, 2008).Although this definition is widely used, it is not undisputed, because Article 1a of theCharter explicitly excludes 'dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languagesof migrants', and such varieties would be described by some as minority languages.Our approachalso implies that 'the goal in multilingual education should be to behave as a competentmultilingual speaker' (Cenoz Gorter 2011: 367) and the school should adopt a 'flexiblebilingual pedagogy' (Creese Blackledge 2010: 112).A comparative research projectFor the discussion I will draw on the results of the project entitled 'Added value ofmultilingualism and diversity in educational contexts', which has run for several years, andin which the teaching of languages in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain iscompared to what happens in schools in the Province of Friesland in the Netherlands.The basic aim of the project is to compare the position of the languagesin education in both regions, with a focus on the minority languages Basque and Frisian, butin both regions also looking at the majority languages Spanish and Dutch, as well as Englishuse, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.After the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975, during the period oftransition to democracy, the educational authorities of the Basque Autonomous Communitydeveloped three linguistic models: Model A, in which all teaching is through Spanish, andBasque is taught for about three hours per week; Model B, in which all subjects are taughtthrough both languages for more or less equal amounts of time; and Model D, in which alllessons are in Basque, except when Spanish and English are being taught as subjects.Outsidethe Basque Autonomous Community itself, that is, in the other parts of the Basque Country -the historical province of Navarre in Spain and the area known as Iparralde in the southof France - advances in teaching the minority language have been much weaker (see alsoZalbide Cenoz 2008; Cenoz 2009).Language practices comprise the routine selections that speakers make fromtheir linguistic repertoire (Spolsky 2004: 5), which includes all types of linguistic behaviourby individuals in a multilingual context.Itis often believed that multilingual communities were once monolingual, a misconception alsoapplied to countries as a whole, but in reality regions such as the Basque Country, Frieslandor Wales have been bilingual or multilingual at least to some degree for several hundredyears.Garcia (2009: 45), in her book on bilingual education inthe twenty-first century, broadens the scope of translanguaging to all 'multiple discursivepractices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds'.For Li Wei (2011) the concept of translanguaging has adifferent source because it builds on the notion of 'languaging' in psycholinguistics, andthe term also links to Becker's (1988) attempt to move away from language as a noun tolanguage as a verb.From our comparative studies of autochthonous minority languages in the European Union(Sikma Gorter 1990; Gorter 2008a) we concluded that the position in education of mostminority languages covered by the Charter can at best be characterized as weak or very weak.In a comparative perspectiveon European minority languages, the Basque language group comes out as relatively strongand the Frisian language group occupies an intermediate position (Nelde, Strubell Williams1996: 65).3.1 Multilingual education in the Basque CountryOne of the most significant developments affecting a European minority language has takenplace in the Basque Autonomous Community in the north of Spain, where the main languageof instruction in the education system has changed from Spanish (and only Spanish) topredominantly Basque.Revitalization processes no longer take place in a bilingual context with one minority andone dominant language, but increasingly in a multilingual context in which international andimmigrant languages are also present.The language usage patterns of teachers and students can be examined under thisheading, but it is also important to investigate language use in wider society, asking questionsabout the development of languages in a specific community of speakers, how speakers usethe languages in their repertoire, how languages interact with each other and how differentgroups of speakers use languages.In the Welsh context and for Garcia in the US, translanguaging appliesto two languages, but Canagarajah (2011) uses the term for 'the general communicativecompetence of multilinguals'.Li Wei (2011: 1223) applies translanguaging to multilinguals in its widestsense, since it includes 'any going between different linguistic structures, including differentmodalities'.In contrast, we believe that 'if multilinguals have some special characteristics when learningand using languages, monolingual native speakers of each of the languages they speak cannotbe the appropriate reference' (Cenoz Gorter 2011: 367).Speakers of Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, aswell as those from European Union countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and manyothers have migrated to countries all over Europe.London, where Baker Eversley (2000) estimated that school children speak over 300different home languages, has been used to demonstrate the extensive linguistic diversity ofmodern urban settings (Salverda 2002).In many cases a monolingual mindset (Clyne 2005) lies behind ideas that go againstbilingualism; a similar way of thinking occurs among authors on minority languages whenthey think in terms of two languages only - the majority and the minority language - ignoringother languages.Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of8 8 PLENARY SPEECHESa 'bilingual mindset'.For example, many studies and governmental reports mention the importance of teaching theminority language at school (Oakes 2001; Coluzzi 2007; Kaplan Baldauf 2007; Council ofEurope 2010; Henn-Reinke 2012).An example is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, mentioned earlier,which states in its Explanatory Report (Council of Europe 2010: 43) that 'A crucial factorin the maintenance and preservation of regional or minority languages is the place theyare given in the education system'.The discussion demonstrates thecomplexity of everyday multilingual practices and the outcomes have implications for the gapbetween education and society and for further research into the linkages between languageproficiency and actual language practices.In this plenary paper I want to examine the interaction between three or more languagesin a number of European regions in which minority languages are already experiencingrevitalization.Additionalconsiderations include the aims of language teaching and more complex questions suchas how languages are taught, what teaching strategies are used, how the school tries toimprove the level of proficiency in each of the languages and the desired outcomes in terms ofproficiency.We distinguish three dimensions in the focus on multilingualism: (1) the whole linguisticrepertoire, (2) the multilingual speakers and (3) the wider social context.2.2.3 The wider social contextToday, regions where minority languages are spoken, such as Wales, the Basque Country orFriesland, can no longer be thought of as closed, traditional societies.The most recent full report available relates to 2006 (Gobierno Vasco 2008), althoughsome provisional figures for 2011 have been released (Viceconsejer'ia de Pol'itica Lingu?'istica2012), which show a gradual increase in the number of speakers.The areas of lower density are mainly in the southern half of the autonomous communityand in the urban areas of Bilbao, Vitoria and San Sebastian.Baker (2007: 2-3) examines the potential advantages of using translanguaging in theclassroom to enable the student to develop into a balanced and confident bilingual person.Baker suggests that bilingualism offers communication, cultural, curriculum, cognitive,character and cash advantages.She further asserts that 'despite curricular arrangements that separate languages, the mostprevalent bilingual practice in the bilingual education classrooms is that of translanguaging'(Garcia 2009: 304).In the traditional approach, based on a 'monolingual mindset' (Clyne 2005: xi), thecompetence of a multilingual person in one language is compared to that of a native speaker.Thesecond category is 'partial' competence which concerns specialized language, registers andgenres and also touches on the whole range of language skills, with some limitations.Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, on 28 Oct 2019 at 07:42:30, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of8 6 PLENARY SPEECHESno minimum language knowledge.They can be characterized as 'speakers who use their resources when communicating withmonolingual and multilingual interlocutors' (Cenoz Gorter 2011: 367).He uses an analogy from athletics, in which the high hurdlerblends the competences of a high jumper and a sprinter, but it is unfair to compare one typeof athlete to the other.Another factor in increased linguistic diversity is, of course, the spread of numerous'migrant' (or community or heritage) languages.Barni (2006: 11) found traces of 24 varieties in thelinguistic landscape of one neighbourhood in Rome, a predominantly monolingual Italiancity.Theories of language revitalization point to education as a crucial variable, andinternational legal instruments recognize the right to teach minority languages at school.The Charter refers to 'languages that are traditionally usedwithin a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numericallysmaller than the rest of the state's population and [are] different from the official language(s)of that state'.Multilingual speakers learn and use theirlanguages while participating in language practices that are shaped by the social context.I prefer the view put forward by Blommaert Backus (2011), for whom repertoire is basedin someone's biography and comprises the individual's current language resources, theiractual skills and competences.The competenceof multilingual speakers is fluid, not fixed: difficult to measure, but real (Cenoz, Arocena in press).Young minority language speakers maynot be aware of concepts such as 'minority language', 'dominant language' or 'internationallanguage', but as speakers they soon become aware of the social inequalities of the languagesthey speak; they pay attention to the significance of language choice and to the role oflanguages in social relationships.English is followedat some distance by a limited number of widely used languages such as French, German,Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic and Chinese.To complement this plenary,I will use the outcomes of this sub-project to illustrate the next generation's awareness ofthe importance of multilingualism.We held interviews with a number ofteachers and carried out classroom observation in different schools (see also De Vries , available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.IntroductionActivities to protect and promote minority languages are common throughout Europe andbeyond.However, early efforts to secure the survival of minority languages showed that revitalizationcannot be achieved by schools alone; society at large is at least as significant.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.Thus it is not the speakers of a minority language, or activistsor language experts, but the state that has the power to determine the status of a minoritylanguage, including whether it officially exists at all.My emphasis is on European minority languages, in particular Basque andFrisian.One of the most creative concepts of recent years is probably TRANSLANGUAGING('trawsieithu' in Welsh): a skill that aids the development of bilingualism.Baker (2001) attributesits origins to Cen Williams, for whom it means (2002: 2) '(i) receiving information in onelanguage and (ii) using or applying it in the other language'.It is a skill that bilingualWelsh-English children already use in everyday life, but one that should also be developedsystematically at school, because it reinforces not only the two languages, but the relationshipbetween them.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.In this plenaryspeech I want to apply our ideas to a comparison of Basque and Frisian and other Europeanminority languages.2.1.1 The whole linguistic repertoireOur focus on multilingualism makes us look again at the concept of REPERTOIRE: 'the totality oflinguistic resources available to members of particular communities' (Gumperz 1986: 21-22).Thethird category is 'minimal' competence, which depends on the kind of encounters a speakerexperiences, and may be merely temporary knowledge, such as learning the odd word whenvisiting a country.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.Cook (1992, 2003)and Grosjean (1985, 2008) proposed some time ago that multilingual speakers have differentcharacteristics from monolingual speakers because they have more than one language intheir repertoire.Similarly,Grosjean (2010: 75) states that the 'bilingual is not the sum of two (or more) complete orincomplete monolinguals'.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.The origins of this vision are based on concepts like DIGLOSSIA (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1967)which take account of only two languages.This limited set of languages also appears in many lessexpected places, such as an option for the operating language of an electronic device in thehome, its instruction booklet and guarantee document.This way of thinking is common and, following Clyne, I want to label ituse, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.Policies to promote minority languages are in operation throughout Europe and elsewhere.But he also warned that a 'narrow education frameworkwithin which language maintenance retrieval and revival activities have been grounded isdoomed to failure' (Fishman 2001: 417).Only a few minority language groups control their ownfully-fledged school system, or have relatively strong provisions at different levels of education.Nelde, Strubell Williams (1996: 6) noted that education as socialagency may contribute more to endangerment than to revival.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.We also collected data about the advantages and disadvantages of multilingualism, asseen by different groups of university students in both regions.The disadvantages mentioned include 'knowing a word only in one language and borrowingit, polluting the language with that word'; 'you might reject your native language (Basquein my case) if you learn another one that is more useful' and even 'I cannot think of anydisadvantages'.In the early 1980s Model B and Model D together were offered toless than 25% of all students, the remainder being educated under the Spanish Model A.use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.In the language surveys four different sociolinguistic zones are distinguished in terms of theproportion speaking Basque: (1) less than 20%, (2) 20-50%, (3) 50-80% and (4) over 80%.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000481Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core.Education is a crucial variable, but the widersociety is equally significant.The context of revitalization is no longer bilingual butincreasingly multilingual.Of course, language learning continues outside theclassroom, mainly through language use, so how the different languages are used has greatsignificance.In this plenary paper I will be looking from a multilingual perspective at these twoaxes: language practices and proficiency on the one hand and education and society onthe other.Theoretical approachWork on bilingualism and multilingualism has been inspired in many ways by researchin Wales.Translanguaging, in its original formulation, is a teaching method in which,for example, the listening, singing or reading taking place during a lesson is in one language(Welsh), and further work, such as discussion or writing a summary, is in the other (English).They make use of all their linguistic resources and navigate between their languages ininteraction (see also Kramsch 2006).This perspective can be applied to research into theacquisition of languages as well as to the classroom in multilingual education.Just as there is no absolute maximum, there isuse, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.The repertoire of a multilingual speaker comprises hisknowledge of all languages taken together.Multilingual speakers are not different monolingual people whenthey use each of their two, three or four languages at different times or on different occasions.A multilingual speaker uses different languages for different purposes,sometimes using one language at a time, and at others mixing languages.Monolingual majority language speakers, in contrast, find onlyone language in their surroundings and grow up using that language, their 'mother tongue'.At the time of these early contributions it wasuseful to apply a schematic representation of two languages to such societies.However, overthe last decades societies have changed, becoming ever more linguistically diverse, so thereare several reasons why we can no longer simply talk of 'bilingual societies'.Words fromthese languages might also be used for the name of an exotic restaurant, a type of food, ona label inside a piece of clothing, or the name of a distant location, habit or product, whichreaches us through the daily flow of news from every corner of the world.Instead, we need improved models to represent complex multilingualsocieties in which major and minor languages are present.Several international legal agreements contain provisions for teaching minority languages.It is clear that in areas where a minority language is spoken, the majority language oftendominates the educational system.The advantages they mentioned include 'to understandcultures around the world'; 'to communicate with other people'; 'possibilities for travel'; 'morejob opportunities'; 'access to more information'; 'making it easier to learn other languages'.In the school timetables the languages are allocated to different slots and are taughtseparately.Teachers of other subjects also contribute to thisgoal, even if they do not focus on teaching the language per se in the course of, for example,mathematics, history or music lessons.Theuse, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.Minority language speakers are multilingual by nature, or by necessity, from a young age.use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.Cenoz and I want instead to focus on the whole repertoire of languages and take intoconsideration the relationships between them. They distinguish four broad categories of competence (2011:16), which can be read as a sliding scale of language knowledge.'Maximum' competence iscomprehensive and refers usually to the mother tongue and to school learning and coversthe whole range of language skills.It is clear, however, that there is no absolute maximumbecause the perfect knowledge of the ideal hearer-speaker does not exist in reality.This isthe ability to identify a word or text as belonging to another language, such as recognizinga different script such as Chinese or Greek.2.2.2 Multilingual speakersThe second dimension of our focus on multilingualism is that of 'multilingual speakers'.Cook (1992) suggested the concept of 'multicompetence' to denote a uniqueform of language competence that cannot be compared to that of monolinguals.They are part of anuse, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.These examples summarize the arguments in favour of and against multilingualism.Howdo we characterize them?1.2.3.