12 Visualising Interaction in Plurilingual Situations: What Do Future Teachers Think and How Do They Approach This Reality?

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1 Introduction

Navigating language and cultural diversity presents a substantial challenge for contemporary societies; however, it constitutes a fundamental element for fostering social cohesion. This is particularly relevant in regions where multiple languages are prevalent, including traditionally monolingual areas, due to the expanding impact of globalisation on linguistic interactions. Catalonia has never been a monolingual territory, even though the language (Catalan) was minoritised during Franco's dictatorship. The linguistic repertoire of Catalan citizens – especially for the last 30 years – has expanded, with a wide variety of different languages increasing the complexity of linguistic repertoires. In the early 2000s, the European Commission published *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (hereafter, CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) which included the explicit aim of spreading plurilingual competence. As a result of incorporating the CEFR into curricula material and teacher training for most of the last 20 years, there has been an explicit intention by European institutions to enhance public awareness of plurilingualism, while at the same time this knowledge has been slow to arrive in schools. Even though there is a new vision of linguistics in language education, with plurilingual competence being included in the Catalan school curriculum, it is often put aside because of its perceived complexity, and generally, practice is still based on an isolated view of languages. Even in the academic domain, pluralingualism

has been largely overlooked, with a strong preference for English as the dominant language continuing to be widely apparent (Castellotti & Moore, 2002, 2010). In this study, three questions were addressed:

(1) What do future teachers understand by a plurilingual situation?
(2) What strategies do future teachers depict when envisioning themselves teaching in a plurilingual situation at Catalan schools?
(3) Are there notable differences between a plurilingual approach of those student teachers whose future curriculum includes a focus on plurilingual competence (Primary teachers) and those that do not (Early Childhood teachers)?

To advance the cause of social justice and equity in this study, two key principles have been emphasised. Firstly, the research team consists of both university researchers and schoolteachers, which broadens the scope and relevance of the study. As an expression of the team's commitment to inclusivity, schoolteachers are acknowledged as a crucial component in researching educational topics, given their expertise in the practical application of research findings. Secondly, the study focuses on linguistic practices that are already occurring in schools, such as *intercomprehension*, where language equity is a reality, despite the fact that these practices may not always have been recognised by some of the linguistic approaches dominating the academic research arena. In a European country characterised by the coexistence of multiple languages, within a political context marked by the highest recorded number of individuals fleeing from wars, persecutions and conflicts (UN, n.d.) in the last decades, this issue emerges as a significant concern for sustainable cohabitation while preserving personal choices, such as language and culture. Bridging the divide between the academic sphere and the practical realities in schools is imperative to fostering greater social cohesion.

Section 2 of the chapter provides a general background of the study, with a particular focus on the Catalan context, plurilingual competence and teachers' beliefs regarding this topic. In Section 3, the research methodology used in the study is explained in detail, including information about the participants, data collection methods and data analysis techniques. In Section 4, the findings of the study are presented, directly addressing the research questions that were posed. The chapter concludes with Section 5 by discussing the lessons learnt from the study.

2 Background to the Study

The theoretical background addresses three areas: a brief contextual setting for Catalan schools; an updated definition of/perspective on plurilingual competence according to the CEFR; and finally, a review of previous studies examining the degree of plurilingual competence of future teachers at the University of Barcelona.

2.1 Catalan context

In Catalonia (Spain), after democracy was established in the late 1970s, Catalan became increasingly present in schools over the years. By 1983, Catalan had become the language of instruction in the education system. At this time, immigration was mainly from other parts of Spain, and the curriculum stated that all students should, by the end of their education, become fluent speakers of either Catalan or Spanish. In order to accomplish this, an *immersive linguistic programme* was designed for the majority of the schools. It was a mass education programme participated in by the majority of teachers, with the acceptance of the majority of the population. In this context, teachers would use Catalan as the language of instruction even though there was a significant number of students whose first language would be Spanish. This meant that the teacher would speak in Catalan but also know Spanish, which allowed him or her to use their individual linguistic repertoire as a resource – for example, by understanding students' demands even if these were made in the students' first language (Spanish). It is worth noting that both languages – Spanish and Catalan – come from Romance languages and share a wide linguistic base, allowing for intercomprehension to occur. The linguistic ambit of the classroom drastically changed with immigration in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the linguistic realities in schools became much more heterogeneous because of the variety of family origins, which meant a wider range of languages. Even though this change occurred more than 20 years ago, few strategies can be observed, either at schools or in teacher education, to acknowledge this linguistic reality and embrace it. The limited transfer of knowledge has meant that any changes that have been implemented tend to be minimal or superficial, such as celebrating a multicultural day or exploring the number of different languages spoken at home, in order to incorporate the information in school official documents. Catalan is the official language of the education system; however, the linguistic repertoires of learners have undergone significant changes due to various factors such as migration and the availability of internet content in different languages. The achievement of educational justice within schools – for students – can only occur through the promotion of linguistic equity. This necessitates an examination of the intricate and dynamic interplay of the linguistic repertories including their emotional weight both in teacher education programmes and school practices. Paulsrud *et al.* (2020) identify three distinct beliefs expressed by teachers in relation to multilingualism: viewing it as a right, a problem, or a resource. In teacher education programmes, the perspective of plurilingualism should be advocated as both a resource and a right for students, enabling them to empower themselves and take control of their own narratives. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the challenges it presents and address them in order to transform plurilingualism into a valuable resource and a fundamental right.

The Catalan curriculum stresses the importance of social interaction for learning with the teacher's role defined as guide or mentor, rather than leader. These aspects are reflected in both the Early Childhood and the Elementary curricula. The Catalan Early Childhood curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008), for ages three to six, puts the emphasis on the importance of being able to communicate in different communicative situations. The curriculum is designed to invite students – and therefore teachers – to participate in conversations, gradually taking into account the different rules when engaging in linguistic exchanges; to encourage small children to participate in different types of conversations, while learning to explore the world with others and sharing hypotheses, emotions, feelings, wishes, etc. Although the Catalan Elementary curriculum, for ages six to 12 (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015), does include a section relating to plurilingual competence, it subsequently became apparent that it was rather limited in terms of what was required by the CEFR. As a result, it was necessary to further develop this aspect of the curriculum in a supporting document (*El model lingüístic del sistema educatiu de Catalunya*, Departament d'Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018) for a more effective incorporation of plurilingual competence as needed and described in the CEFR. The new Elementary curriculum, for ages six to 12 (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2022), puts significantly more emphasis on plurilingual competence. Not only is plurilingual competence one of the eight key competences for primary education and for life-long learning, but it is also recognised throughout the curriculum, with a plurilingual approach explicit in all linguistic areas.

2.2 Plurilingual competence

In this chapter, *plurilingual competence* is understood to be a key competence within the plurilingualism approach as defined by the European Commission (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). In the 2001 CEFR document, no distinction is made between plurilingualism and multilingualism, and this is an issue which a number of researchers felt merits further exploration. In the 2020 CEFR document a distinction is made, with multilingualism being defined as 'the coexistence of languages' (2020: 30) and plurilingualism as 'the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner' (2020: 30). Piccardo *et al*. (2022) define the plurilingualism paradigm as putting the emphasis on valuing otherness and diversity – linguistically and culturally – through the exploration of individual linguistic repertoires and the valorisation of all languages, with a special mention of home and minoritised languages:

The distinction highlights the difference between two perspectives (multilingualism and plurilingualism): the prefix *multi* to stress a linear additive paradigm with addition of elements like numbers in multiplication,

> or people in a multitude, and the prefix *pluri* to open to a complex, fluid paradigm, which would value and build on plurality and considered embedded difference in a more holistic way … Multilingualism is used to refer to the coexistence of different languages at the social or individual level, while plurilingualism describes the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner. (Piccardo *et al.*, 2022: 4)

In school classrooms, a plurilingual approach can be identified by those practices where the exploration of personal linguistic repertoires is fostered; or by the explicit comparison of connections between languages in an attempt to identify similarities and differences. On the other hand, a multilingual approach could be identified with a curriculum that puts the emphasis on attaining competence in three languages – Catalan, Spanish and a foreign language:

> A multilingual classroom is one in which there are children with different mother tongues, perhaps with separate heritage language classes after school that have no connection with the mainstream curriculum. A plurilingual classroom is a classroom in which the strategy is to embrace and exploit linguistic and cultural diversity present in order to maximize communication, subject learning and plurilingual/pluricultural awareness. (Piccardo *et al.*, 2022: 4–5)

The construction of plurilingual competence is a *shared* process, in that it takes place in a social context with others, both teachers and classmates. It is also an *irregular* process wherein no constant or equal rhythm for the people involved can be expected; and it is a *personal* process, since everyone has to explore their own beliefs (Pérez-Peitx *et al.*, 2019). This plurilinguistic approach sharply contrasts with the one practised for many years, where native-speaker proficiency was the ultimate goal of language learning, and diverse individual repertoires were not valued. When talking about plurilingualism, *intercomprehension* is a useful concept – as an alternative to always using English as a *lingua franca*. The term *intercomprehension* refers to the capacity to understand another language that you may not have studied but, thanks to your linguistic repertoire, you can understand or, at least, partially comprehend (Carrasco, 2010). This is what the plurilingualism approach recognises as partial competence. From the perspective of language equity, *intercomprehension* is considered more inclusive because it allows for conversations that are not limited to a single language. A crucial element for increasing the likelihood of successful communication in this approach is where languages belong to the same family.

The introspective practice of examining individuals' linguistic repertoires, conducted by both teachers and students, can serve as a valuable tool for promoting reflection on language learning and plurilingualism in the classroom (Cabré, 2019; Carrasco & Piccardo, 2009; Coste *et al.*, 2009; Palou & Cabré, 2017; Pérez-Peitx *et al.*, 2018). However, it should be noted that this practice, while valuable, is not sufficient on its own.

Guaranteeing the cultivation of plurilingual competence necessitates its in-depth examination, analysis, and thoughtful contemplation, given that it embodies a novel framework for language instruction and acquisition. This transition is challenging to effect without critically questioning current linguistic practices and their repercussions, including systemic racism, social inequities, and broader societal injustices (Wassell & Glynn, 2022). This underscores the importance of researching the dynamics within teacher education programmes and schools, as it becomes one of the compelling reasons for such investigation.

2.3 Future teachers' beliefs about plurilingual competence

In response to the increasing recognition of plurilingualism in European school curricula, several studies have been conducted both at the *Universitat de Barcelona* (UB) and at the *Universitat Autònoma de Catalunya* (UAB) with the aim of studying and promoting linguistic and culturally responsive teaching practices. At the University of Barcelona, the research group, PLURAL, has been exploring teachers' beliefs and language acquisition with a particular focus on future teachers, in order to contribute to better education programmes. Since the early foundation of the group, the team is heterogeneous and has included both researchers from the university as well as teachers from schools. As an equity principle, schoolteachers' participation is not only limited to data collection; they play a crucial role in the analysis of data, since they bring reflections from a field in which they are experts. Reflection is constructed and shared with them as a fundamental element in education research. Initial investigations show how guiding processes of metacognition can transform beliefs into dynamic knowledge in order to question previous frames of reference in language education (Palou & Fons, 2011); they also indicate a lack of congruence with the CEFR and teachers' beliefs in it (Borg *et al.*, 2014).

Birello and Sánchez-Quintana (2013) show that teachers have a compartmentalised vision of languages, which makes it difficult for them to acknowledge the similarities and differences between languages, and there is an absence of the term or the idea of plurilingualism in students' narratives. They propose the idea that a more communicative approach, rather than one centred on grammar or memorising vocabulary, increases students' motivation regarding language learning. In Pérez-Peitx *et al.* (2018), the understanding of plurilingualism was based on that of Coste (2010) – a *plurality of plurilingualism* depending on different elements such as the origin, whether languages are chosen or an obligation, when the acquisition has taken place, among others. The comparison between the data collected before and after a year of contact with plurilingual theories and practices showed a sharp evolution in student teachers' views of languages. Conclusions showed changes in student teachers'

beliefs, but a concurrent resistance in the language teaching and learning manifested in practices such as a lack of representation of languages which do not form part of the formal education system; a big emotional relationship with languages, as identified by Chik and Melo-Pfeifer (2020); English standing as a professional priority; not talking about the sociopolitical dimensions of language learning (Chik & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020) – neither heritage languages nor others. The resistance to belief change may be related to a school experience where each language is taught and clearly defined in a specific space and time and where there was an absence of recognition of the plurilingualism approach (Palou & Cabré, 2019). In fact, most of the students attending universities have experienced many years of language learning following an accumulative vision, more related to a multilingual approach than one which embraces plurilingualism.

Studies conducted by researchers from the UAB also confirm the significant challenge of shifting away from monolingual-oriented practices in both schools and universities (Bergroth *et al.*, 2022; Birello *et al.*, 2021; Llompart *et al.*, 2023). Birello *et al.* (2021) identifies teachers as a pivotal element in ensuring educational linguistic justice, as they play a fundamental role in challenging monolingual mindsets and ideologies while promoting the incorporation of a more multi/plurilingual approach. However, the hindrance lies in the lack of practical training, knowledge and experience among teacher students, despite their recognition of the value of linguistic diversity as a resource (Paulsrud *et al.*, 2020), without the ability to translate this diversity into effective learning situations. Bergroth *et al.* (2022) suggest linguistically sensitive teaching (LST) as a means of addressing language and cultural diversity in classrooms through a respectful and empowering pedagogy. They also identify potential areas for implementing this approach, extending its scope beyond language teaching exclusively. Finally, according to Llompart *et al.* (2023), attention should be directed towards individual linguistic repertoires in order to challenge the linguistic status quo. Concepts such as privilege, social equity and neoliberal discourses should be critically examined and socially contemplated to promote a linguistically sensitive approach.

The focus of this chapter is to enhance teacher education by bridging the divide between theory, as exemplified by the CEFR, and the realities observed in Catalan public schools. It has been developed as a result of a research project funded by the Catalan government. Initially, the focus was on beliefs concerning plurilingual competence, student linguistic repertoires, and their perception of plurilingualism. Later on, attention covered the strategies that prospective educators employ when envisioning themselves teaching in plurilingual settings at schools. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the system of beliefs held by student teachers regarding interaction in plurilingual scenarios.

3 Research Methodology

There are more than ten different groups of students per academic year in the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Barcelona, with students studying one of the three Education Degrees offered (either Early Childhood, Primary, or a Double Degree in both Early Childhood and Primary). Seven of the ten groups participated in the present study, which was supported by a government-funded programme explicitly aimed at building bridges between schools and research conducted at the university level. Funds from this programme are exclusively dedicated to projects predicated on collaboration between schools and university professors. The current project focused on how plurilingual competence can be observed in schools, to promote the communicative approach to language learning established by the curriculum. The ultimate objective of the project is to promote changes in the Teacher Education degree to improve future teachers' education. It should be mentioned that, in all three degrees, plurilingualism is only part of the content of a six European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) course, out of the 240 ECTS to obtain the degree. This officially means that some reference to multilingual societies, plurilingual competence and linguistic repertoires should be made during students' education, although this is not one of the main learning outcomes of the course.

3.1 Participants

A total of 109 students from all three degree courses participated in this study. The first group is studying for an undergraduate Primary Education degree, and consisted of 27 students in their 2nd year (of four) of the education programme. The second group is studying for an Early Childhood Education degree, and consisted of 42 students in their 4th and last year. Finally, the third group, studying both the Early Childhood and Primary degrees, consisted of 40 students, in their 4th year out of five. Students in all groups had attended periods of practice at different schools, in different grades and stages, which varied depending on the requirements of their degree.

3.2 Data collection

Data was collected simultaneously in all three groups at the beginning of the second semester (February 2019). All participants were asked to complete two different tasks, both of which included a visual narrative accompanied by an explanatory text to help the researchers to understand the visual information. The design of the data collection puts the emphasis on the visual narrative because of the power of images, and because images can incorporate data that other forms cannot (Rose, 2016). Such

visual methods have been shown to be a useful approach to exploring the awareness of multilingualism (Chik & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020; Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2020). Two tasks were designed in order to explore different contexts; one neutral and one defined (the school). In the first task - Task A - participants had to 'represent a plurilingual situation', while in the second one – Task B – they had to 'represent themselves teaching in a plurilingual situation at school'.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to analyse both the visual narratives and explanatory texts in both tasks, a scheme was generated while conducting analysis and it was decided that the focus would be on *context*, *interaction* and *people and actions*.

At the *context* level: the place depicted in the visual narratives gives information about where participants imagine plurilingual situations occurring. This may be a public area, such as a metro or a museum, or a private one, such as a family living room. Other narratives situated the interaction in a foreign country, especially English-speaking ones. When envisioning themselves as future teachers, the school location depicted gives information such as, for example, the frequency with which they think they will have to address a plurilingual situation: choosing to depict a situation where the teachers are speaking with families, rather than their own classes, for example, conveys a different perception of the frequency with which they will be interacting in a plurilingual situation.

At the *interaction* level, the analysis took into account whether there was communicative use of the languages reflected in the narratives or simply the co-existence of those languages. This means that what in some cases may look like a communicative situation, may in fact be a succession of short, isolated conversations, occurring in a limited space, but with no interaction between them. This can happen, for example, when the situation includes two different families, each one speaking in its family language, and each family is only talking among its own members, with no further contact. If there is no explicit reference to communication – or the intention to communicate – with another person outside their linguistic group, the emphasis is on the multilingual coexistence of multiple languages rather than on embracing plurilingual competence. In the case of Task B where the focus was on the participant in a teaching situation, the analysis of the task, in some cases, revealed situations where there are no explicit strategies in the classroom to manage multiple languages being spoken at the same time.

At the *people and actions* level, information can be added to comprehend and give a better understanding of the previous categories. For example, despite not displaying a communicative situation, an individual is depicted as considering interacting with a plurilingual individual. In

this category, it is also enlightening to observe how the participants depict themselves as future teachers, because different teacher roles can be perceived in the classrooms depicted. Some student teachers depict themselves outside the interaction between students, while others display a range of strategies, such as translating, for dealing with language contact. For this category, the presence of other people in the images (such as families, perhaps students from other courses, etc.) was also analysed.

4 Findings

Results show no remarkable differences between Primary and Early Childhood future teachers, so findings will be presented answering the other two research questions, namely, what do the participants identify as a plurilingual situation and what strategies do they depict when envisioning themselves as future teachers in plurilingual situations?

4.1 Do future teachers recognise a plurilingual situation?

Regardless of the age group that teacher students will be teaching in the future, the participants clearly recognise what a *multilingual* situation is. Even though the task put the emphasis on plurilingual competence, the majority of the students depicted situations where there are different languages coexisting in the same place, for example, near the bus station (see Figure 12.1).

Judit includes three different languages in a reduced space (in this case, a bus stop). The official information at the bus stop is written in Catalan on the screen (*for a de servei* – out of service), the mother and the little boy on the left are speaking in English, and finally, the two individuals at the back are speaking in Spanish and are discussing what they are going to have for dinner. Here, each conversation occurs in one language
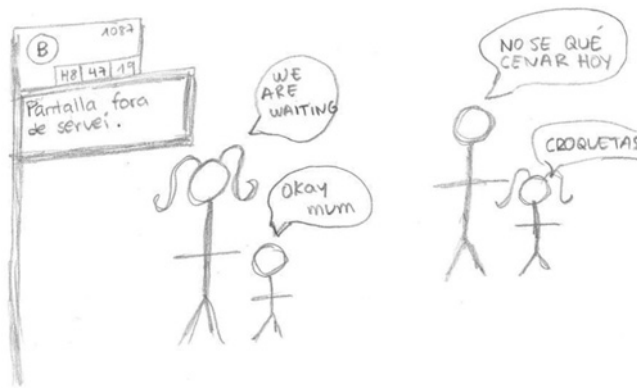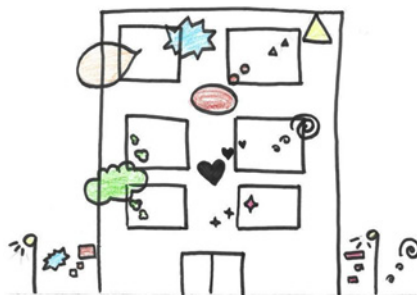

Figure 12.1 Judit's narrative (Early Childhood student)

Figure 12.2 Bruna's narrative (Early Childhood student)

and they coexist with no further implication of contact between them, so there is no recognition of plurilingualism.

In her drawing (see Figure 12.2), Bruna depicted a building of the town where she is from. She opted not to represent human figures because 'languages do not define us as persons'. She included the idea of several languages using different colours and different forms for representing speech bubbles. In the street, other languages can be seen, some of which coincide in colour and form, while some do not. As can be seen, some of the conversations interact – like the ones in the left corner and third-floor window on the left. In both examples, there is a communicative interaction where languages are not shared but communication does occur; a more plurilingual approach rather than having an accumulation of monolingual conversations.

A widespread resource utilised by the participants is the use of standardised national symbols, especially flags, to represent the idea of one language, one nation. While using this symbol, they seem not to take into account that some countries or flags may have more than one official language or represent wider territories. This can be observed in Figure 12.3, where the flag of Great Britain is used to represent English, even though this flag includes other territories where other languages are spoken such as Welsh, Scottish or Irish, among others, not to mention the fact that a vast number of languages is used on a daily basis all over Great Britain. In this narrative, there is also an explicit manifestation of interaction, because two people are speaking to each other (and we are told their L1 is not the language they are using). The concierge speaks in English to a Spanish couple, even though he is Danish. Here, even though there are different languages represented in the same place, interaction occurs between people in the same language (English).

This idea that a *lingua franca* is needed to successfully communicate is brought to the extreme in Elena's narrative (Figure 12.4) where, to ask for directions in the underground, an Italian speaker switches to English to communicate with a Catalan speaker. Here we see that, even between

Figure 12.3 Joana's narrative (Early Childhood and Primary student)
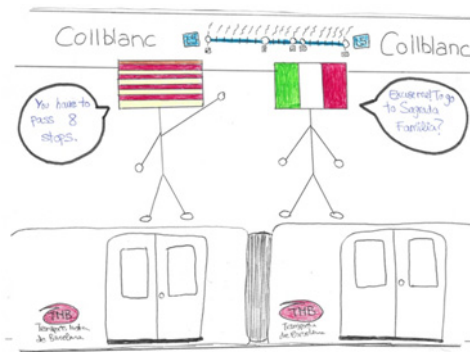
Figure 12.4 Elena's narrative (Early Childhood and Primary student)

languages from the same linguistic family, such as French and Catalan, or Italian and Catalan, where *intercomprehension* could be an interaction strategy, English is still perceived to be necessary.

In the written text of this narrative, the participant even makes this explicit:

Original text: És probable que si l'italià li hagués fet la pregunta en italià, el català no l'hagués entès, malgrat ser dues llengües semblants. L'anglès, en canvi, és una llengua més coneguda, ja que és universal.

(Translation: If the Italian had formulated the question in Italian, it is probable that the Catalan would not have understood, even though they are similar languages. English, on the other hand, is a more well-known language because it is universal.)

The two following narratives (Manel's and Lia's) represent a shift towards a more integrated view of languages, since they recognise the partial competences of languages, although without explicitly identifying it.

Figure 12.5 Manel's narrative (Primary student)

Manel's narrative (see Figure 12.5) reflects a particular anecdote that he experienced. In the written text, he explains that he is a Spanish speaker and that when he arrived in Catalonia at a young age (left unspecified), he discovered that he could understand Catalan, although he did not know it. Even though he had not studied the language, he could understand almost 'everything', which implicitly recognises the partial competence presented in the CEFR, particularly the intercomprehension of Romance languages. But, in the context of the narrative – a soccer game – there was a Catalan word (*cama*, which means 'leg') that means something very different in Spanish ('bed'), and he was very confused. It was not until somebody helped him with this misunderstanding that he grasped what the other soccer player was telling him (*m'ha fet la traveta amb la seva cama*, meaning 'he has tripped me up with his leg'). In the narrative, the importance of personal experiences and trajectories appears as an example of implicit knowledge, because, without naming it, he introduces the idea of partial competence and misunderstandings, especially when the same word means different things in different languages.

In Lia's narrative (see Figure 12.6), we can see a sequence of three different moments. The top two are at home, where the child is reading a book, first with her English mother ('Once upon a time…') and then with her Spanish father (*Érase una vez*). Then, at school, even though no one has taught her Catalan, she can understand '*hi havia una vegada*' because of her linguistic repertoire. Even though there is the same sentence in three


Figure 12.6 Lia's narrative (Early Childhood and Primary student)

languages (in this order: English, Spanish and Catalan) the approach goes beyond the mere translation. It is also, perhaps, significant that Lia has devoted twice as much space to the English version, possibly suggesting her attributing more importance to English.

4.2 What strategies do participants display at the school in a plurilingual situation?

First, it should be said that there are several narratives where the emphasis is (as it has consistently been in the past) on the idea of different languages coexisting in one place, with the complication that in the school, there are three curricular languages (Catalan, Spanish and English) that commonly arise in the examples (see Figure 12.7). However, in other narratives, we see different ways of representing the teacher. These include the teacher as a translator of languages, which is significant because it recognises the variety of home languages in the classroom; however, at some point, it can also be perceived as unrealistic because of the number of different languages to translate every time. That may be one of the reasons why a significant number of narratives where the participants use this strategy (translation) display 'the good morning greeting' as an example (see Figure 12.8). From left to right: Chinese, Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Catalan). In other narratives there is an explicit reference to the fact that teachers should be able to give basic instructions or know key vocabulary in all the L1s present in the class.

Two types of resources were identified for managing plurilingual situations. The first type included resources that are valid for any situation and which, at some point, are part of the teachers' repertoires for dealing with a regular class, such as non-verbal communication strategies, group arrangement, or having a one-to-one conversation with the pupil once general instructions have been given to the rest of the class. The second type of resources explicitly display plurilingual competence, as the following cases show. Despite displaying similarities to Alba's narrative (see Figure 12.8), Jordi's narrative (see Figure 12.9) is different in that the teacher initiates a language comparison task, making the students explore their own repertoires and share how a phrase is said in 'their language'.
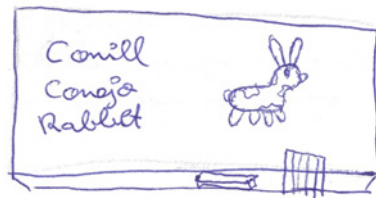
Figure 12.7 Lola's narrative (Primary student)

Figure 12.8 Alba's narrative (Primary student)

Figure 12.9 Jordi's narrative (Primary student)

Even though the teacher is embracing language diversity, he is not fully recognising the language itself because he is not naming it.

Another example of the same strategy is illustrated in Sonia's narrative (see Figure 12.10). Here the teacher not only embraces exploring the origins of the families and their home languages, but the classroom setting also supports this approach by having space to make linguistic and cultural diversity visible, through a world map, a list of different origins, and

Figure 12.10 Silvia's narrative (Early Childhood and Primary student)

Figure 12.11 Maria's narrative (Early Childhood student)

so on. As long as this resource is used to make visible the *pluralité de plurilingualismes*, and not as a way of othering students, it can help students to explore their personal linguistic repertoires.

Whereas it is common to use translation as a strategy, Maria's narrative (see Figure 12.11) is an example of a student that makes explicit reference to resources (telephone, tablet or computer) to translate an oral conversation, while it is happening. In this particular case, students have some keywords translated on the walls but using additional tools allows the teacher to make the conversation more accessible to all students. As can be seen, the teacher and the students are sitting in a circle and the teacher is surrounded by analogue and digital resources. When reading the participant's explanatory text, we can see that she places emphasis on these resources because she observed them during her practice period as part of her teaching degree.

In the following narrative, Joana depicts (see Figure 12.12) an interview taking place between a Catalan speaking teacher and two adults, whose languages are Moroccan Arabic and a Chinese language. The bridge is represented by the two pupils whose linguistic repertoire includes Catalan, Moroccan Arabic and Chinese languages. Even though there is still the idea that one flag represents one language, the flags are not physically separated (they are even overlapping) and can be seen to be sharing a space. In addition, the fact that the plurilingual repertoire is used to an advantage puts the emphasis on the potential of language diversity in plurilingual situations such as using code-switching or code-mixing in communicative situations where languages are not shared by all participants (as in the example) but, still, communication occurs.

Finally, in Carla's narrative, there is another example of positively exploiting the linguistic capital of the classroom, using pupils' knowledge to generate learning situations, as in the following sequence (see Figure 12.13 for the narrative and Table 12.1 for the text).

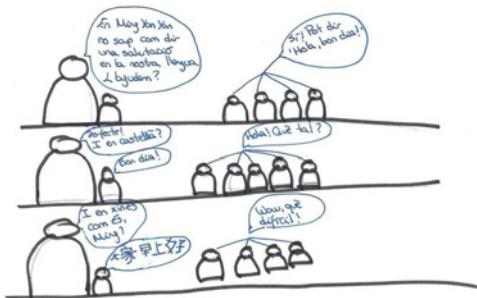**Figure 12.12** Joana's narrative task B (Early Childhood and Primary student)

Figure 12.13 Carla's narrative (Primary student)

Table 12.1 Carla's text from the narrative. Original Catalan text and translation (Primary student)

En Ming Yan Yan no sap com dir una salutació en la nostra llengua. L'ajudem?	*Sí! pot dir 'Hola, bon dia!'*	Ming Yan Yan doesn't know how to greet people in our language. Should we help him?	Yes! He can say, Hi, good morning!
Perfecte! I en castellà? Bon dia!	*Hola, qué tal?*	Perfect! And in Spanish? Good morning!	Hi! How are you?
I en xinès com és, Ming? -caràcters xinesos simbòliques	*Wow, què difícil!*	And in Chinese? How is it, Ming? -symbolic Chinese characters	Wow! How difficult!

In this example, the emphasis is on what linguistic diversity can contribute to the rest of the classmates who speak other languages. Clearly, Carla goes beyond the coexistence of languages and turns it into a situation from which all the students can profit while simultaneously exploring differences and similarities between languages because of the teacher's intervention.

5 Lessons Learnt

This research demonstrates that the majority of the student teachers are aware of the linguistic and cultural diversity in society, and it extends beyond school walls. Nevertheless, recognising the multilingual society we live in does not necessarily mean, by itself, that plurilingual competence is guaranteed. We have seen a persistent view of a multilingual approach based on the accumulation of languages rather than a plurilingual one (Birello *et al.*, 2021). Students have consistently depicted strategies associated with an isolated view of languages and the lack of the idea of a repertoire, such as using national flags for representing languages, associating flags with origins, not recognising being born in a country and not speaking its official language as an L1, etc. (Pérez-Peitx *et al.*, 2019).

Plurilingual competence based on metalinguistics is particularly apparent when exploring linguistic repertoires of the people in the classroom, which has proven to be an effective tool to raise plurilingual awareness (Palou & Cabré, 2017; Cabré, 2019). Compared with previous studies (Birello & Sánchez Quintana, 2013; Pérez-Peitx *et al.*, 2019) there is a clear shift towards a more flexible approach to language learning by giving the students the right to talk in their L1 in the classroom as well as the positive intention to include the familiar languages in the lessons. Still, the participants need to find a way to ensure that these languages are present without putting all the obligation on the teacher: it clearly cannot be expected that teachers speak all the languages spoken by the children in their classrooms.

Even though there was a lack of systematic training in the faculty regarding plurilingual competence (Birello *et al.*, 2021; Llompart *et al.*, 2023), specific resources were displayed by students when envisioning themselves as future teacher, such as: exploring languages or origins of their families in the classroom; bringing cultural richness by singing songs and including books in family languages; using the internet as a resource for helping communication, especially with those languages not known by the teacher, or where the possibilities for communication are lower; and, finally, using languages of their families as linguistic capital (Carrasco & Piccardo, 2009; Coste *et al.*, 2009). When tracking the origin of the resources, they usually depend on the personal trajectory – a personal experience during childhood, a practice attendance at school – rather than a university course (Pérez-Peitx & Sánchez-Quintana, 2019). The shift in paradigm should not rely on individual choices but must be driven by educational institutions. This is the principal resource to reevaluate existing language practices and advance the cause of linguistic justice and equity (Wassell & Glynn, 2022).

On balance, given the language diversity which exists in society, there seem to be rather few resources to take advantage of plurilingual

situations. While some of the strategies suggested by the drawings may be useful for a bilingual situation, such as translation, they would be less useful for a plurilingual one. The participants' drawings tend to represent their own experience as school learners, which occurred in a completely different context, where there was far less language diversity. An explicit effort needs to be made in teacher education programmes, for both pre- and in-service teachers, to contribute to the knowledge of plurilingualism, in order to help schools deal with plurilingual situations present in the majority of Catalan schools (Cabré, 2019; Pérez-Peitx *et al*., 2019). This entails offering educational programmes to both preservice and in-service teachers in order to enhance their plurilingual competence and embrace the plurality of plurilingualisms as a means to address linguistic diversity and contribute to a most equitable and cohesive society.

Two critical points emerge from this research. On the one hand, the inclusion of future teachers in research teams or as collaborators enhances research by making the team more heterogenous. This, then, is a practice that clearly invites further incorporation and exploration. On the other hand, although this research resulted in interesting insights and understandings, it was limited to a relatively small group of participants, all studying at one university. In the future it would be worth conducting similar studies with a significantly larger group of participants, preferably including those studying at different universities in Catalonia.

There is not just one set of principles to take into account for social justice and equity; rather, each investigation has to draw the key points from asking provocative questions as suggested by CohenMiller and Boivin (2022). For the PLURAL research group there are two principles to consider in research projects. Since the research takes place at the Faculty of Teacher Education with public funds, there is a commitment to work with schools and its teachers. The challenge of working with individual teachers who have not been traditionally included by academia is to value outputs with greater impact at teacher level, rather than those that tend only to be valued in the academic arena. Another guiding principle for the group is the imperative to advance societal change and justice through research topics. As such, the group has a longstanding tradition of exploring plurilingualism as an approach that can promote greater language equity and justice than teaching and learning languages with no emphasis on the relations and consequences of how languages work – and contribute to the construction of learner identity. The group also sought to bring greater attention to practices that are already in place in Catalan schools, even though this has not been a central topic in academia for many years. In these practices, students learn languages with the guidance of their teachers and commit to inclusion in an intuitive way, since little transfer regarding plurilingual competence has been made. Educational

programmes must address the importance of this topic in order to enhance the quality of teachers' expertise from an inclusion approach. Reflection is imperative to prevent the perpetuation of injustices in language educational practices and to effect a genuine transformation within society, fostering true social cohesion. Language learning and teaching cannot rely on intuitive practices; rather, they need to be constructed and discussed with students to give everyone the opportunity to author their own story. Nevertheless, there is a growing recognition of the importance of a plurilingual approach and its manifold benefits, as demonstrated in the present book.

Notes

(1) It should be mentioned that both curriculums (Early Childhood and Primary) were currently being redeveloped while the article was being written.
(2) 2017 ARMIF00014: *L'acolliment linguistic: la immersió i l'educació plurilingüe i intercultural*. Una proposta estratègica per a la formació inicial de Mestres.

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