Chapter 13

Awareness of Plurilingual Competence in Teacher Education

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This chapter reports a longitudinal study that sought to examine how two courses on language teaching methodology affected the awareness of and beliefs about plurilingual competence held by a group of student teachers (N = 50) at the University of Barcelona. The courses were given in the first and second years of their studies, and data was collected at the beginning of the courses. The students were asked to produce two visual narratives in response to the same prompt 'Me and my languages', each time complemented with verbal (written) comments. The findings suggest that a change in the type of visual narrative from one phase of data collection to another may be an indication of the development of plurilingual awareness. In addition, a shift towards a more complex vision of plurilingual competence was identified after the first course.

Introduction

One of the big questions facing educations systems is how to best train teachers for the learning of languages and interculturality, and the plurilingual environments in which we all live and work. This chapter examines student teachers' awareness of the concept of plurilingual competence, and explores how this awareness may be enhanced by the introduction of some reflective tasks in the course of their teacher education. It presents the early results of an on-going research project we are conducting at the University of Barcelona, focusing on the plurilingual competence of student teachers. In this chapter, we will highlight the changes identified during a one-year period in which students have their first formal contact with the fundamental elements of plurilingual competence. The aim of the project is to explore student teachers' beliefs systems, and to establish whether reflective tasks – in the form of visual narratives and explanatory texts – may enhance the depth and breadth of their beliefs systems. Our specific focus, within beliefs systems, is on plurilingualism, and attitudes towards language and culture. A total of 50 student teachers participated in the study, and data collected consisted of both a visual and a written narrative. A secondary aim is to contribute to the exploration of the use of visual narratives as a research tool, adding to previous work done in the field. Our research thus far indicates that both confrontation and confluence of student teachers' beliefs with regard to the proposals made in *The Common European Framework for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR), can be enhanced by including such reflective tasks in their teacher education.

Background to the study

The theoretical background we present here addresses two main areas: recent thinking regarding training for plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and teachers' perceptions of plurilingual competence.

Educating for plurilingual and pluricultural competence

In October 2015, the European Commission (2015a, 2015b) presented their report on schools and educators, in which three issues for debate were identified: school multiculturality, access to education and the recognition of the potential and development of other language skills. The report highlights the fact that teacher practice improves when teachers participate in reflection groups. The CEFR (2001, p. 4) defines the development of plurilingual competence as a complex process, in the sense that it is not formed by the simple juxtaposition of separate pre-existing competencies, but rather by building a new competence which includes knowledge of a diversity of languages:

> The plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact.

The term *competence*, as used here, acknowledges that true symmetric bilingualism rarely exists. It also acknowledges that even within a language, there is often significant variation in the individual's level of proficiency in the different language skill areas. An additional imbalance is observed between the individual's plurilingual and pluricultural competence; a sound knowledge of another language is not necessarily accompanied by a similar awareness of the culture or cultures shared by the speakers of this language. Obviously, the reverse is also true: an extensive awareness of another culture is not always accompanied by a sound knowledge of the language. Figure 1 illustrates this complex interplay.

Figure 1. Plurilingual competence
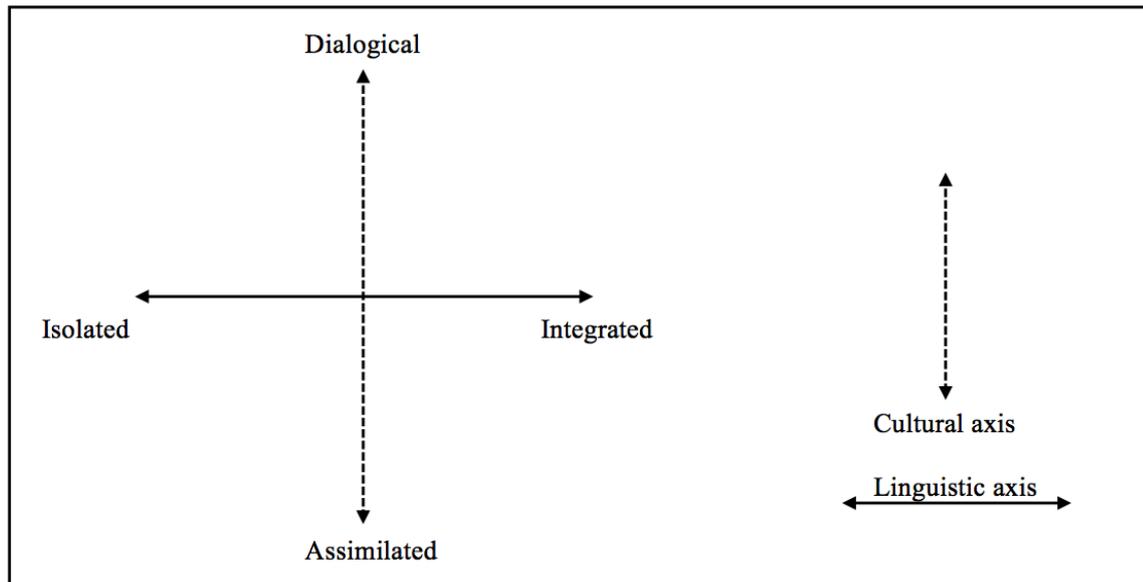
At one end of the horizontal axis of the figure, we see an *isolated* conception of languages, and at the other, an *integrated* one. We understand the isolated conception as one which perceives languages to be separate and compartmentalized within an individual's repertoire; this is based on a perception that the individual must develop mastery of each language through separate processes, with the goal of becoming a "perfect speaker" of each one (Coste *et al.,* 2009). The *integrated* conception is situated at the other extreme, and is related to an awareness of the connections that can be established between languages. This conception can be seen to relate to the common underlying proficiency, as defined by Cummins (1981)*.*

The vertical axis reflects different conceptions of pluriculturality: *assimilated*, at the lower extreme, and *dialogic* at the upper extreme. Using the same criteria employed to describe the plurilingual competence axis, we perceive an *assimilated* representation to encapsulate the idea of adding one culture to another, where one is dominant. A *dialogic* representation, in contrast, recognises the need to construct a shared space with other cultures.

Ricœur (2006), at the beginning of his work *Discours et communication,* differentiates between communication perceived as fact, and communication perceived as an enigma. Here we understand communication as an enigma, because the adaptation of register always forms part of an uncertain game, conditioned by the players mobilising their repertoires of knowledge, both linguistic and cultural. Plurilingualism and pluriculturality help create an individual who, in a particular communicative situation, is equipped with strategies to manage linguistic and cultural imbalance. These strategies allow the individual to develop a capacity to explore all available communicative resources, and to manage a wide field of knowledge and abilities, thus enhancing mutual understanding.

The CEFR (2001, p. 133) outlines a number of factors which indicate a certain imbalance as well as a wide variability in speakers' plurilingual and pluricultural competence. These include:

- Individuals generally achieve a greater proficiency in some languages rather than in others, depending on their linguistic biographies.
- Individuals may have different degrees of competence within their multilingual repertoires (for example, a learner may have excellent oral skills in two languages, while only having a good level of written expression in one of them).
- An individual's pluricultural profile may differ from her/his plurilingual profile (for example, s/he may have a sound knowledge of the culture of a community but a poor knowledge of its language; or a poor awareness of a culture in whose language, however, s/he is highly competent).

The response to the recognition of plurilingualism and cultural diversity should not be simply to teach more languages, or the characteristics of another culture. It is not a question of knowledge, but rather of recognizing the *otherness* of distinct languages and cultures. The first step towards moving in this direction is to enhance the individual's linguistic and cultural experience; and this, as Coste (2010) indicates, necessitates addressing the plurality of plurilingualisms, since every experience is constructed in a unique context.

Teachers' awareness of plurilingual competence

Our research group, PLURAL[ii], specialises in the analysis of teacher beliefs and the teaching and learning of plurilingualism. As part of an international research project, we conducted a study with the cooperation of university lecturers in France, Hungary and Italy. In each of these countries, practising teachers were asked to write a text about their linguistic repertoire (family languages, languages studied, languages habitually used, languages with which they have some level of familiarity, etc.). The findings of this project were reported by Birello and Sánchez-Quintana (Birello & Sánchez-Quintana, 2013). Those which have the most relevance for the purposes of this study include the following:

- Despite the fact that many participants expressed a sense of personal failure related to language learning, they nonetheless demonstrated a great interest in studying languages;
- Learning which occurs in extra-curricular courses tended to be more highly valued by participants than learning in formal contexts. They attributed this to three elements: more oral work, a wider range of teaching resources, and a preponderance of native speaker teachers;
- The participants in the study tended to have a compartmentalized vision of languages, and showed a lack of awareness of the fact that one language may facilitate learning another;
- The term *plurilingualism* did not appear in the participants' discourse, even though the plurilingual dimension should be evaluated by primary teachers as part of linguistic competence;

- The concept of the 'perfect speaker' was recurrent, with no reference to partial competence;
- some of the texts demonstrated a belief that the approach used to teach languages can increase or reduce the learners' motivation; approaches which do not focus solely on grammar or vocabulary were believed to increase motivation.

These results led to a number of insights; one of the most important was that there is a need to intervene in the initial training of future teachers in order to guide them towards a re-evaluation of their own beliefs. These future teachers attended school from the age of three, until at least sixteen. During this period, they internalized a particular type of behaviour in relation to language learning. In the case of Catalonia, which is a bilingual community, the educational system, at a curricular level, incorporates the obligation to achieve communicative proficiency in at least three languages: Catalan, Spanish and a foreign language, usually English. In the vast majority of schools, these three languages are taught by different teachers with different methodological approaches, which are based on their own belief systems. This is the reality upon which future teachers construct their own belief systems (Lortie, 1975, Causa, 2012). Each teacher's belief system has a strong emotional component. It tends to be directly connected with the individual's life experience, and is more characterised by its affectivity than by its reflexivity. These considerations perhaps explain a resistance to change (Borg, 2009; Woods & Çakir, 2011), given that the belief system can evolve more effectively once the individual becomes aware of her/his own actions. To further understand the evolution of belief systems, it is worth mentioning the central-peripheral dimension of beliefs (Rokeach, 1968). This holds that the closer the belief is to the core, the more difficult it is for change to occur. Thus, core beliefs are both more dominant and resistant to change whilst peripheral beliefs are subordinate and more variable (Gabillon, 2012).

The challenge we are dealing with at the level of initial training is to explore ways in which we can prevent student teachers simply reproducing familiar systems; ensuring, rather, that they actively participate in a process of reflection which allows them to internalize the key concepts that sustain the notion of plurilingual competence.

Context of the study: Initial training at the University of Barcelona

In order to promote change in the belief system of pre-service teachers at the University of Barcelona, students are encouraged to examine their own linguistic and cultural repertoires, as a first step towards beginning the cognitive process which favours reconceptualization. The multimodal linguistic biographies we ask them to produce at the beginning of the language methodology course function as mediators between the first level of awareness – offering a more static vision of multilingualism – and a more reflective level,

which views multilingualism as being more dynamic. In this latter view, there is an understanding that different languages will be developed to different levels of proficiency, and that all languages spoken and understood may be used to interact in the multilingual environments of a globalized world. The concept of translanguaging, as described by Garcia (2009), effectively synthesizes this idea of dynamism, in that it does not represent a language – a system of rules and structures– but is, rather, the product of a social activity closely related to cultural discursive practices, such as job-hunting, participating in a social event, or simply formulating a question.

When undergraduate education students produce their linguistic biographies by writing a multimodal narrative, focussing on their language learning trajectories, they are given an opportunity to reflect upon their own linguistic experience. This metacognitive process allows for the transformation of linguistic experiences into the dynamic knowledge and understanding necessary for teaching practice. Reflecting upon their own linguistic and cultural trajectory allows these future teachers to develop new frames of reference for plurilingual education (Palou & Fons, 2013). The investigation that the research group PLURAL has conducted during the last few years has led to a process of our rethinking current training models. As a result, we propose the development of training strategies which provoke a profound change in our students, both in cognitive processes and in language teaching practice in the classroom. These changes will only occur if we have the capacity to create training contexts in which recognition and analysis of lived experience occupy a prominent position.

Aims of the study

In this study, we investigate, from a longitudinal perspective, the belief systems that future teachers hold in relation to multilingual education and examine how these representations evolve through reflective inquiry. The study we report here has three main aims. The first addresses the importance of exploring student teachers' belief systems in relation to plurilingual competence in order to discern signs of change during the period of initial training. The second aim relates to the design of reflective processes, which will help destabilize student teachers' established belief systems. The final aim focuses on the use of visual narratives as a tool to facilitate the reconceptualization of beliefs. The research questions underpinning this investigation are:

1) What beliefs do student teachers have with regard to plurilingual competence?
2) How do the belief systems regarding plurilingual competence change during the one-year period of the study?
3) What kind of relationship exists between the narrative type used in the task and the participants' plurilingual competence?

In order to investigate these questions, a task was administered to a group of 50 students of primary education at the University of Barcelona. These students were asked to complete the same task twice; once at the beginning of the first year of their degree programme, and then again at the beginning of their second year. The notion of plurilingual competence is introduced during the first year of the degree programme.

Data collection and analysis procedures

Data collection

The longitudinal study reported in this chapter has been conducted within the scope of two concurrent on-going government-funded projects: an R+D[iii] project investigating the impact of teacher education on student teachers' beliefs in the process of building plurilingual competence; and a regional government-funded project (ARMIF), investigating language as a mediation tool for learning. The context of the study is the primary education undergraduate degree at the Faculty of Education of the University of Barcelona (Spain).

A total of 50 student teachers participated in both phases of the study, 42 women between 18 and 20 years old. All of them speak Catalan and Spanish (Catalan being the first language of approximately half the participants, while Spanish is the first language of most of the others) and have studied English for a number of years. The task was designed by PLURAL research group and data collected both by members of the group - including one of the authors of this chapter - and other teachers of the faculty, who were asked to collaborate with us. The first set of data was collected at the beginning of *First Language Teaching Methodology 1* course, in the first year of the degree (February – June 2016); and second set of data was collected at the beginning of *First Language Teaching Methodology 2* (February – June 2017). Student groups are not the same in the different subjects, which meant that, while nearly all students completed the task in the first year only 50 completed both the first and second year tasks.

In both cases, on the first day of the course, before the programme was explained, the participants were asked to carry out the task 'Me and my languages', which consisted of two parts. First they were asked to design a visual narrative, which could be *made*, such as a drawing or a collage, or *found*, for example, a photograph (Riessman, 2008). Participants were told that this visual narrative should portray not only the languages which constituted their repertoires, but also the languages present in their environment, both personal and academic. They were asked, also, to write a text in which they explained the key ideas portrayed in their visual narrative. Thus, all together, the study generated 100 visual narratives and 100 interpretive commentaries. The participants were given a brief background to the study and were reassured that the data they provided would be used without disclosing their identity.

Analysis procedures

The analysis of visual narratives implies taking into account both content and form. It is grounded, since the parameters set to analyse the tasks are not pre-established, but rather emerge in the process of analysis. The criteria we followed in order to establish the categories of analysis was based on a number of different studies (Borg *et al.,* 2014; Kalaja *et al.,* 2016; Kalaja *et al.,* 2013; Pavlenko, 2007; Riessman, 2008 among others). The research process involved the following four steps:

1) Reviewing the visual narratives produced by the 50 participants in the first phase of data collection in order to establish different types of visual narratives, focussing on the form adopted by the participants;

2) Generating a procedure that could be used to analyse the content of both the visual narrative and the explanatory text together;

3) Refining the categories of analysis and coding the data from the two phases of data collection;

4) Interpreting the data.

During Step One, analysis of participants' work generated four types of visual narrative:

- Symbolic representation (Figure 2), where an image is used to synthesise a key principle or idea, very often a metaphor;

- Sequence (Figure 3), which shows a series of events, and involves the presence of time; in this study, sequences usually show the process of acquisition of one or more languages;

- Mind map (Figure 4), which organises the concepts provided and visualises connections between them;

- Collage (Figure 5), where a group of ideas is represented without any specific order or structure.

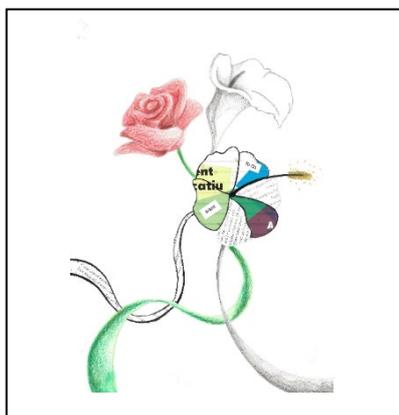*Figure 2. Example of Symbolic representation*
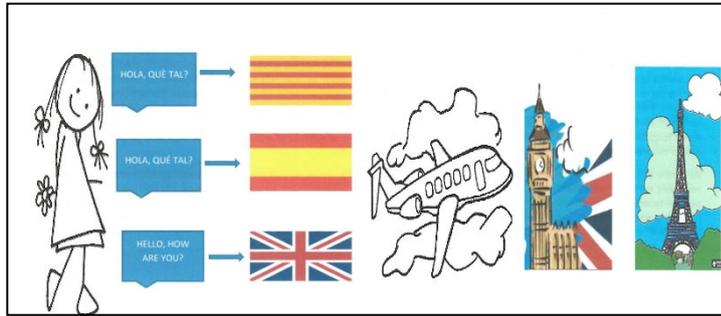
Figure 3. Example of Sequence

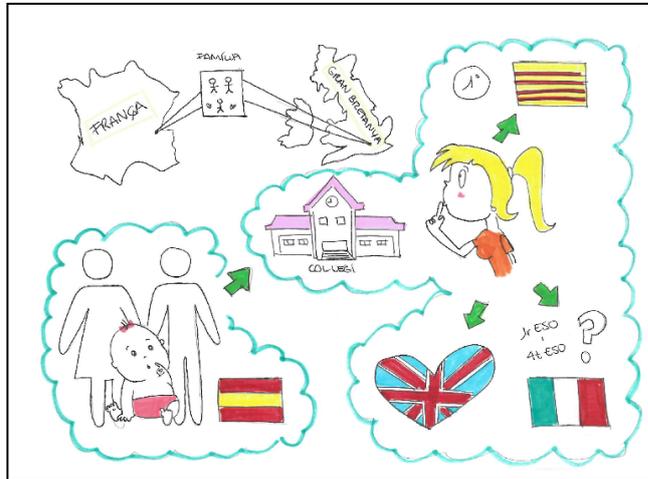*Figure 4. Example of Mind map*

Figure 5. Example of Collage

Step Two, following the division of the visual narratives by form, was the generation of a procedure that could be used to analyse the content of both the visual narratives and the explanatory texts together. Having examined all the participants' work we initially established three major themes: one relating to languages in general, one to identity, and the last to the different stages associated with the process of language learning. These three themes constitute the first three categories of analysis:

- OPP: The origin and process of learning languages, as well as the projection of languages (how the participants envision their relationship with languages in the future).
- NL: The number of languages which appear in each task, as well as whether or not these languages are classified in some way.
- IR: Identity relationships, which comprise emotional, socio-political and cultural factors.

During Step Three, we refined categories for analysis and coded data. Having identified three major themes, we then considered the key elements in the definition of *plurilingualism* offered by the CEFR, quoted above, and decided that three additional categories were needed in order to describe the degree of isolation/integration of languages as perceived by the student teachers. The following categories constitute the horizontal axis of Figure 1 (see above), which relates to conceptions the individual's experience of language:

- IsV (Isolated conception): when the participants conceive the languages they refer to (mainly the ones they have learnt or would like to learn) in different mental compartments.
- PIV (Partially integrating conception): in the cases in which the student teachers establish some kind of relationship between the languages they refer to.
- InV (Integrating conception): in the cases in which the participants make explicit in different ways that languages interrelate and interact.

The vertical axis (see Figure 1) was generated as a result of the recognition of the need to take into account the cultural aspects associated with languages. Thus, the following categories were added:

- NRLC (Does not relate language and culture): Does not acknowledge any relationship between language and culture.
- RCL (Relates culture and language): Acknowledges cultural aspects involved in languages and language learning.
- IC (Interaction between cultures): Refers to various types of interaction between cultures.

The visual narratives depicted young people, families, schools, university grounds, photographs of different cities (such as London, Paris or Pisa), flags from many countries, the globe, different alphabets, and symbolic images, such as a river, a road, a tree, an open book, etc. They also included text, with key concepts such as *family, secondary education, films, Spanish, Catalan, interaction, personality, freedom*, etc. The

richness of the visual narratives alone provided a huge body of data for analysis; however, for the purposes of this study, we decided to analyse both the visual narratives and explanatory texts together. Once we had established the nine categories of analysis, we began the process of coding the two tasks together (those tasks collected during the first and the second phases of data collection), looking for progress in the participants' belief systems, or for indications of the impact of the L1 teaching methods courses.

Step Four involved interpreting the data. Having established the four types of drawings as well as the categories of analysis, we were able to interpret the data. We made a point of considering not only that which had been depicted and expressed, but also that which was not present, or had been omitted or ignored.

Findings

In order to explore student teachers' belief systems in relation to plurilingual competence, and the changes in these systems (research questions 1 and 2, as outlined above), four cases will be discussed. This discussion focuses on the most relevant information offered by the combination of visual narrative and explanatory texts, as well as the evolution from the first to the second phase of data collection. The first two cases show students whose beliefs regarding plurilingual competence seem to have developed (represented by movement on both axes), Amira and Nora. The third and fourth – Noemi and Lena – are examples of students whose work does not reflect any change in beliefs with regard to plurilingual competence.

Change on the plurilingual competence axis: Amira and Nora

The first time Amira does the task, she creates a mind map (Figure 6), where the first "balloon" corresponds to Spanish, the second one to Catalan, the third one to Arabic and the last one to English. The position of each balloon is associated with performance in each language, where the first one – even though it has the smallest representation – is the one she is most comfortable with and the last is the one she needs to improve the most. In this visual narrative, her overall conception seems to be primarily cumulative, although it should be noted that each language depicted seems to be built on the foundations of the previous language, which could be seen as a reference to the common underlying proficiency. Thus, this visual narrative can be seen as representing a partially integrating view. The visual representation of the task is rational rather than personal, as she adds national flags to the composition. Here, we can identify the social conceptualization whereby each language is represented by a flag (suggesting a country) – and each country by one language.

Figure 6. Amira's 2016 visual narrative

Figure 7. Amira's 2017 visual narrative

When Amira completes the task during the second phase of data collection (Figure 7), she produces a very different visual narrative, one which would seem to indicate a significant change in her beliefs. Instead of making a narrative based on the description of the languages she speaks, she chooses to draw a symbolic image which represents herself and her heritage culture at the moment of drawing. The concept of identity is very strong because the entire narrative is constructed around the desire to learn Arabic. When she does the task this time, she does not seem to be referring to language competence in terms of fluency, but rather to be focusing on elements that can be associated with languages – elements such as origins, identity, emotions, cultural and socio-political implications. She goes from representing languages and the countries with which she associates them, to focusing on herself and her own culture. Even though she does not move on the *linguistic* axis (she is located in the *partially integrated vision*), on the *cultural* axis, she moves from a position of no recognition of this cultural component of languages to a clear acknowledgement of its importance.

In the narratives she completed in both stages of data collection, Nora solves the task by providing a symbolic representation. Although she does not change the type – both fit into the *symbolic* category – there are other important changes to be considered. For example, in the first narrative (Figure 8), she uses national flags to represent languages. In the second narrative (Figure 9) – completed one year later –, she uses a much

more metaphorical image: the idea of a system (The Solar System) composed of units (planets). There is a major body – the sun – that has no language label, and orbiting planets which have the following language labels: *Catalan, Spanish, English, Galician,* and *French*. It is important to highlight the inclusion of other un-named planets (languages) orbiting in the same system. A powerful idea underlying the metaphor is that the system reflects balance; that each component is necessary and brings something to the whole. Her drawing of the solar system suggests that all languages have a place in this system – even though she only names those which form a part of her own linguistic repertoire. It is also very interesting to note the inclusion of *Galician*, because it is a heritage language that was not mentioned in the visual narrative nor in the explanatory text completed in the first phase of data collection.

Figure 8. Nora's 2016 visual narrative

Figure 9. Nora's 2017 visual narrative
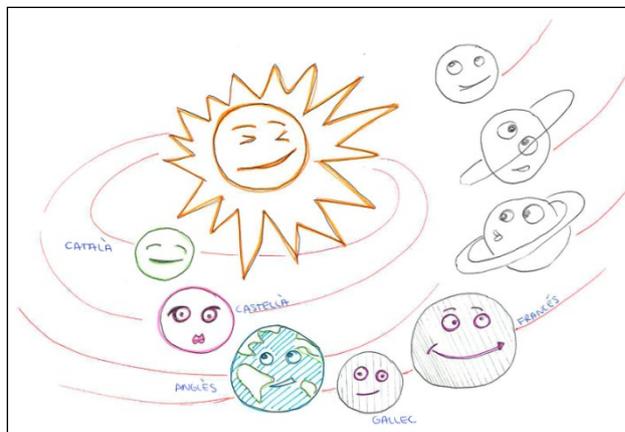
In both cases described above (Amira and Nora), there have been interesting changes between the first and second phases of data collection. In the first narratives there is a clear assimilation between language, country and flag, while in the productions of the second phrase, this relationship is not made explicit. In the second narratives the level of introspection seems deeper; Amira makes a connection between language and culture, and associates them both with her identity, whilst Nora incorporates Galician, a heritage language. It is worth noting, however, that Nora's new linguistic recognition does not imply any changes in her linguistic identity.

Lack of change on the plurilingual competence axis: Noemi and Lena

The visual narrative produced by Noemi in the first phase of data collection (Figure 10) was categorised as a mind map. The alphabet seems to be the background from where she starts her composition. Three languages are located in three different areas. In each space she outlines the contexts of learning and use of each language. At the top, we can see the Spanish flag, and a drawing of a family under a roof, possibly representing home. She adds two little drawings to this context: a book and a computer, one on each side. Then, there are two other languages depicted at the bottom of her drawing. On the left, we can see the Union Jack flag, accompanied by a TV set because she watches TV series, a poster with "English classes", notes and a plane circling the Earth. The last language is Catalan – represented by the drawing of the Catalan flag, together with personal activities depicted by, for example, a basketball basket and a university folder. A year later, at the second phase of data collection (Figure 11), Noemi offers another type of visual narrative, a symbolic one. She still divides the narrative into three parts, but this time she goes beyond the contexts and uses a single powerful image for each language. She indicates which language is to be associated with each picture by using the colours corresponding to the country flags. The illustration she draws for the Spanish language is an hourglass, representing time, since Spanish is her mother tongue and the one she uses most. She also adds (in the written explanation) that it is the language she feels most comfortable with. Catalan, represented by an open book, is for academic purposes. Finally, the plane is used to represent English, because it is the language she uses when she travels. Although the style of her drawings is different, and suggests some conceptual change, the languages are still represented as separate; Noemi has an isolated vision of languages (IsV) and does not make any reference to culture (NRLC).

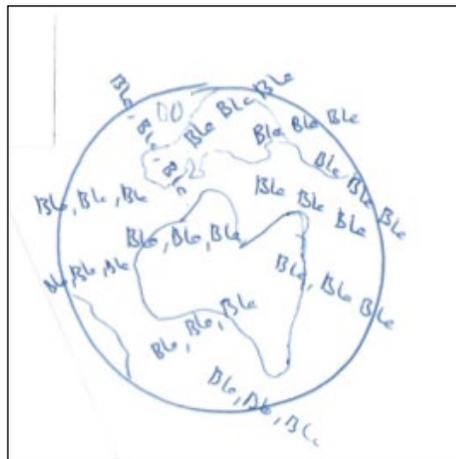*Figure 10. Noemi's 2016 visual narrative*


Figure 11. Noemi's 2017 visual narrative
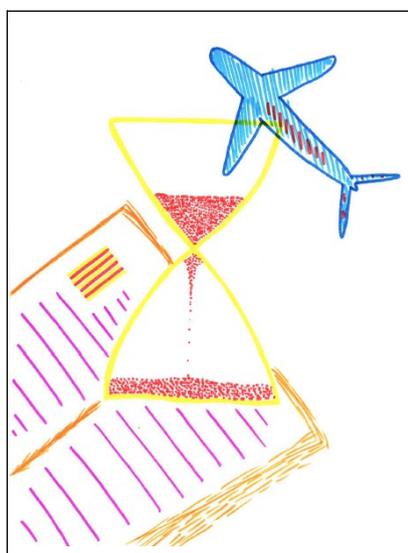
Lena is another participant whose work shows no significant change between the two phases of data collection. The lack of change is represented on two fronts: she opts for the symbolic narratives format at both stages; and, furthermore, her vision of both language and culture seems unchanged. Her drawings show the same isolated vision of languages – with no connections or contact points – and do not include any references to the cultural component of language. In the first narrative (Figure 12), a globe represents the idea of multiple languages; however, no distinction is made between them and no mention is made of a relationship between them. In her written texts, she establishes her starting point: she mostly uses Catalan,

which is the language spoken in the territory she lives in. Her drawing seems to suggest that all languages have the same communicative function. However, the programme of teacher education that she is following requires that she learn English. From the powerful metaphor she represents at the second phase of data collection (Figure 13), it can be inferred that, for her, language learning is clearly an obstacle – a brick wall. Although she identifies the benefits of overcoming this obstacle by adding a gift on the far side of the wall, the wall must first be climbed; the drawing suggests that her concept of language learning is that it is a barrier to overcome.

Figure 12. Lena's 2016 visual narrative

Figure 13. Lena's 2017 visual narrative
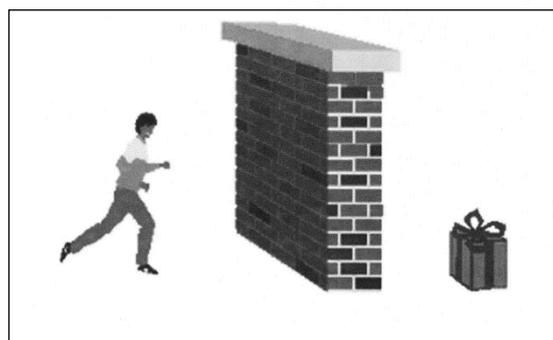
Both participants share the same vision of languages based on functionality. While Noemí depicts a different use for each language (mother language, language of education and language of the future), Lena

emphasises the difficult relationship she has with English, and the requirement that she learn it to become a teacher. They both have a very compartmentalized conception of languages. However, there are also notable differences between the two participants. For example, Noemi uses flag colours to represent each language – making the association between language and country – while Lena focuses on what language learning means for her. Clearly, her narratives are highly influenced by her experience in learning English.

General observations

A number of general observations have surfaced during data analysis. Perhaps the most interesting stems from the third research question, which examines the relationship between narrative type and plurilingual competence. Although no direct relationship has been established between the type of visual narrative – mind map, symbolic, sequence or collage – and the individual's conception of plurilingual competence, it does seem that changing the type of narrative may be an indication of movement along the plurilingual axis. Fourteen of the eighteen participants whose narrative type differed between the two phases of data collection (more than 75%), showed movement on the plurilingual axis. On the other hand, only four out of the twenty-four participants who did not show any variation on the plurilingual axis changed the type of drawing that they used (Table 1).

Table 1. Changes on the plurilingual competence axis and change/maintenance in the type of narrative

TYPE OF NARRATIVE/ PLURILINGUAL AXIS	Participants changing the type of visual narrative (36%)	Participants maintaining the type of visual narrative (74%)	TOTAL
Movement (52%)	14	12	26
Lack of movement (48%)	4	20	24

An additional observation of interest refers to the first research question, which seeks to explore student teachers' beliefs regarding plurilingual competence. When describing the origin and the process of learning languages, and the projection of languages in the future, two contexts – home and school – were consistently emphasized. The large majority of participants (76%) made some reference to one or both contexts when attempting to explain the process of L1 acquisition. When talking about projection – that is, languages to be learned or improved in the future – English stands out as the priority. The desire to learn English, it should be noted, does not tend to be associated with a desire to learn more about other cultures, but is rather,

expressed in terms of professional development or as a necessity for travel.

There is a broad lack of representation of those languages which do not form part of the formal education system; the majority of the participants (78%) refer only to those languages which they consider to be academic languages or heritage languages (78%). This view tends only to be altered as a result of personal circumstances, such as the need to learn Swedish because of a Swedish partner; or Galician for heritage reasons. The criteria the participants employ to classify languages are based on their personal experience, expressed for example in terms of the languages they speak, the order in which they have learned languages, and their level of fluency in each language. Very few participants (12%) take into account other possibilities for classification, such as the origin of languages, or the similarities and differences between them.

We have also observed that most of the participants (70%) talk about their emotional relationship to a language; specifically in terms of whether or not they feel *comfortable* with it. On the other hand, only six participants talk about the socio-political implications of languages – for example, threats to languages represented by government policies. The third component of the *identity relationships* category of analysis – cultural aspects – was identified by almost half of the participants during the second phase of data collection (46%) while only one out of four participants mentioned it the first time (26%).

Another interesting phenomenon noted was a shift towards a more complex vision of the possibilities inherent in the task. This complexity is manifested in a number of ways: through the participants' reference to a greater number of categories during the second phase of data collection (both in their visual narratives and the explanatory texts); in the shift from an interpersonal perspective to an intrapersonal one, as Amira and Lena move from referring to languages in a general sense towards talking about languages in their own lives; and also in the way in which images produced by Nora and Noemi in the second phase were more condensed – they were able to represent their ideas through a simpler, more powerful image than in the first phase.

Discussion and concluding remarks

In the course of this study much has been learned about student teachers' beliefs regarding plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, and the relationship between the two. The study has also led to the development of a deeper understanding of the use of multimodal tasks in research. The way a task is designed has a great influence on the typology of visual narratives produced. Also, performing the same task with a different type of narrative seems to have an impact on the reconceptualization of plurilingual competence. Even though it cannot be said that changing the type *necessarily* leads to movement on the plurilingual competence axis, changing the type of the narrative between the two phases of collection seems to be associated with a reconceptualization of plurilingual competence itself. In further studies, it would be interesting to focus on the change, and whether form or content changes first.

The design of the R+D project has shown its effectiveness regarding the tracking of change. Considering both how complex it is to change established beliefs and the short period of time covered by this study, some evidence of change has been identified. One of the more interesting indicators of change is the evolution of the participants' perception of plurilingualism.

Whilst the first phase of data collection saw most participants focusing on their school languages, during the second phase much more personal repertoires are evident. It would seem that the project is helping participants to see the differences between individual repertoires, and to highlight the "plurality of plurilingualisms" existent in the class (Coste, 2010) and also, in society. It is also interesting to observe that, at this stage, the project seems to have had an impact on peripheral beliefs rather than core beliefs (Gabillon, 2012), in that none of the participants has demonstrated a significant change in the plurilingual competence schema (see Fig 1). Nonetheless, some changes have been detected, and they seem to have had an impact on individuals' belief systems. As mentioned above, the first time that the participants engaged with the task, they referred almost exclusively to languages taught at school, whereas when they did the task again a year later, reference was made to many more languages.

It is clearly a challenge to destabilize students' representations (Borg, 2009; Woods & Çakir, 2011) regarding linguistic repertoires. They have experienced so many years of isolated perspectives regarding languages that a great deal of effort is needed to establish plurilingual competence at the core of language education and teacher training as proposed by the European Council. Again, the main challenge in teacher education is to make students aware of their past as well of their present trajectories, and to work with them to explore how these experiences have helped shape them into the pre-service teachers that they are (Causa, 2012; Lortie, 1978). Only by building students' awareness of their beliefs can we help them to deconstruct the representations upon which they have founded their vision of languages and language acquisition, in order for them to begin to construct new visions – a process which the CEFR defines as desirable (Palou & Fons, 2013). The construction of plurilingual competence is a *shared* process, because it takes place in a social context with other individuals, such as classmates and teachers; an *irregular* process, because there is no constant or equal rhythm for the people involved; and a *personal* process, because each student has to acknowledge and explore his/her own beliefs in order to achieve plurilingual competence.

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