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Practices of conformity and transgression in an out-of-school reading program for ‘at risk’ children

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Abstract

A large body of research has demonstrated that the plurilingualisms and pluriliteracies that children and youth bring to classrooms are often not those required for school success. This is even more so for students from underprivileged backgrounds, a demographic where children and youth with family backgrounds of immigration are over-represented. This article reports on ethnographic research at an after-school reading program for primary school children considered to be at risk of school failure in the old town of Barcelona. Results suggest that the practices of pluriliteracy supported by the program often conform with those inherent to the children’s formal education; that is, with the very practices that have contributed to the children being placed in the program to begin with. However, through the fine-grained analysis of child-volunteer interactions, certain practices that subtly transgress these norms are identified. It is in such practices that we see potential for educational transformation.

Keywords: plurilingualism, literacies, translanguaging, non-formal education, children, collaborative research

Introduction

Educational institutions face the enormous challenge of preparing young people in the plurilingualisms and pluriliteracies needed for their globalised presents and futures. However,

much research has demonstrated that the linguistic and cultural resources that young people bring to classrooms are often not those required for success in formal schooling. This is even more so for students from underprivileged backgrounds, a demographic often categorised institutionally to be at risk of school failure, in which children and youth with family backgrounds of immigration are overrepresented (Vallejo & Dooley, 2013). Thus, paradoxically, students who are ‘pre-equipped’ with diverse communicative repertoires that could be used to the benefit of their education, and of society, are often vulnerable to poor school results.

As Rujas Martínez-Novillo (2015) explains, ‘school failure’, and thus being ‘at risk’ of it, have become naturalised as categories of public and commonsensical discourse in Spain since the end of the 20th century. Targeted educational programs and mechanisms have proliferated as the categories have become crystallised. Rujas Martínez-Novillo claims that the naturalisation of the categories is the result of a process of “co-enunciation” (p. 2, our translation) and mobilisation on behalf of political institutions, the media, the educational community, etc., which have been inseparable from broader social and educational transformations in Spain. In general, students at risk of school failure are considered to be those who are not achieving minimum standards at school and will potentially drop out after compulsory education; i.e. they will be early school leavers. Spain has had some of the highest, if not the highest, levels of early school leaving in the EU over at the past several decades (Eurostat, 2016).

Defining some children and young people as being at risk of school failure has real consequences for them, and for the educational policies and initiatives addressed at supporting them, including the program where our research is taking place. Most studies in the Spanish

and Catalan context associate being at risk of school failure with a series of factors, including ethnicity, social class, cultural capital and gender (Fernández Enguita, Mena & Riviere, 2010; Puellas, 2012). The danger, though, is that by having certain traits, children and young people are predestined to be considered at risk of school failure as they are not *expected* to achieve academically, rather than not *actually* achieving. The labelling of students can become arbitrary, fixed and non-representative of their educational potential (Ross & Leathwood, 2013; Rujas Martínez-Novillo, 2015).

In our own research, conducted in an after-school reading program for primary school children in Barcelona, the category of being at risk of school failure is one that we believe neither reflects nor validates the types of competences that the children we are working with display. From our own viewpoint, there is more risk in not adapting educational systems to include children and young people's repertoires as resources for learning, and in not helping maintain and develop those repertoires further, considering the globalised world in which we are living. However, as this is a category that is used in political and educational discourse in the context we work in, and one that is relevant to understanding the origin of the program we study and the selection of its participants, it needs to be critically confronted.

The latest PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results for reading comprehension from 2012 for Catalonia, and the educational inequalities that they highlight, help understand the context in which programs such as the one where our research is being conducted have been created. We believe, as has indeed been highlighted by different experts (e.g. Prais, 2003), that the logic, methodology, and policy applications of PISA are problematic in many ways, and contribute to the naturalisation of the categories that we question; yet the results do help to introduce the context of our research. PISA is an

assessment system applied triennially in countries across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that measures educational outcomes globally based on 15-year-old students' abilities in reading comprehension in their schools' main language of instruction (Catalan in the case of Catalonia), in mathematics, and in science literacy. Although the overall results from 2012 (the most recent available) for reading comprehension in Catalonia are above Spanish, EU and OECD averages (and they are better than for math and science), the breakdown of those results provides reason for concern (for an extended discussion see Bonal, Castejón, Zancajo & Castel, 2015; Rincón Bonet, 2012):

- Socioeconomic status is a main factor determining differences in results, with students of lower socioeconomic status performing below their peers.
- Globally, autochthonous students who speak mainly Catalan at home perform better than students who speak mainly Spanish (a co-official and the majority language in Catalonia) at home, but this difference is minimal once socioeconomic status is accounted for.
- Students of immigrant background obtain worse results, even once socioeconomic status has been accounted for. In Catalonia, these differences are much higher than the average for OECD countries.
- Schools with high concentrations of children of immigrant background have lower results.

Reports such as these have caused certain alarm in Catalonia and have led to different initiatives aiming to pre-empt low attainment by targeting collectives of students considered to be at risk of school failure. These are mainly programs targeting students of immigrant background in public schools with high linguistic and cultural diversity. Furthermore,

perpetual strains on public schools mean that academic support is often left in the hands of other bodies, including public libraries and non-profit community organisations, such as the volunteer-based program in which we are conducting our research. Public spending on education in Catalonia as a proportion of GDP has long been lower than both the Spanish and the EU averages¹. Furthermore, the financial crisis in Spain since 2008 means that public spending on education per capita is continually decreasing as the school population is increasing. In Catalonia this has meant increased class sizes, fewer teachers in schools and poorer working conditions, as well as lower coverage of financial assistance for families and students in need, within in a broader context of increasing poverty. All of this helps contextualise the increasing demand for free out-of-school academic support programs targeting students considered at risk of school failure in general, and reading programs specifically. It also helps value the critical contribution of such programs towards more equitable educational outcomes.

An informative body of research on out-of-school literacy programs has shown how they contribute to an understanding of the educational experiences of children and youth and may help guide educational policy-making, school practices and teacher development programs. Some of the research from beyond Catalonia and Spain has shown how such programs have the potential to re-order power imbalances inherent to classrooms (Cole, 1996; Cole & The Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006), with external pressures on learners being lower and the adult agenda being more modest (Spielberger & Halpern, 2002). Some research has linked positive program outcomes to intervention in early primary school years, with programs involving older learners being considered less effective and more costly (Cobb, 2000). Other research has explored aspects such as tutorial session structure and types of adult

¹ In Spain, educational funding and policy is primarily managed at the regional level.

tutors; less systematic programs with minimally trained tutors often yield poorer results, especially with socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Allor & McCathren, 2004). Research in community-based educational programs has described the importance of the relational and identity aspects supported by them, that are often missing in formal schooling for minority children and youth, while also calling for more collaboration with schools (Lee & Hawkins, 2008). Several studies linked to the *Fifth Dimension* project (Cole, 1996; Cole & The Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006), and the related *La Clase Mágica* project (Vázquez, 2003; Macías & Vázquez, 2015), which promote diversity and digital technologies, have shown how collaborative interactional contexts, in which languages and modalities are mixed as a norm, are beneficial to learning.

In the Spanish and Catalan contexts, some interesting programs with children and youth have been implemented and studied. Among these, the *Casa de Shere Rom* project (Crespo, Pallí, Lalueza & Luque, 1999; Crespo, Lalueza, Portell & Sánchez Busqués, 2005) was inspired by the *Fifth Dimension* project and consisted of a learning community involving university based researchers and Roma educators, children and adolescents on the periphery of Barcelona. It aimed to favour the educational integration of the participating students, and in particular, the development of digital literacies. The collaborative, micro-culture developed in the program generated new intercultural teaching and learning relationships. Subero, Vujasinovic and Esteban-Guitart (2017) comment on a variety of projects in Catalonia and abroad that have sought to incorporate the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992), and what they describe as funds of identity, of students into educational practice, linking up formal educational spaces with families and communities.

A key contribution of all of this research has been to highlight the educational benefits of after-school programs that, quite simply, position learners as competent. This is highly significant in the program we study, taking into account that students attending have very often been selected based on supposed deficiencies; that is, for failing to meet expected minimum standards. However, despite the promise of after-school literacy programs, oftentimes the same dominant practices of schools – that is, the same practices that place certain students into support programs – are those reinforced by them (Hull & Schultz, 2001). Given the increasing demand in Catalonia for programs targeting students considered at risk of school failure, we believe that more research is still needed both to highlight what specific programs do well, and to offer empirical bases for their improvement.

In this spirit, in this article we present ongoing ethnographic research at one of the many sites of a large after-school reading program for children aged from 9 to 11 (4th and 5th grades) based in primary schools and libraries across Catalonia. The program has the explicit aim of improving children's reading comprehension and their reading habits. Most of the 24 children participating in the program site we have been involved in since the 2014/2015 school year have family backgrounds of immigration, and speak languages besides those included in the school curriculum at home. The general aims of our research are to document practices as they emerge in interactions between adult mentors and children, to understand the structural and ideological dynamics in which the program is embedded, and to promote practices that are more inclusive of children's plurilingual and pluriliterate repertoires, both within the program and beyond, and in collaboration with our co-participants. This article aims to present some initial analyses of some of the interactional data collected, which have revealed certain practices within the reading program that we interpret in terms of alignment

or conformity with the dominant praxis of the children's school, as well as others in which we see disalignment or transgression, and potential for educational transformation.

The article continues in the following section by setting out the background to our research in conceptual terms. It then introduces the genesis of the research project, the program itself and the neighbourhood and school in which it takes place, as well as the methodological approach we follow. In the analytical section, we introduce and examine three child-tutor interactions. The article concludes with some reflections on these practices and their potential relationship with educational transformations that might better the chances at educational success of the children we work with.

Theoretical background

In narrowing the analytical lens of this article, in this section we draw on scholarship from two fields that are highly relevant to our research, but that have tended to advance in parallel. On the one hand, we briefly overview the field of literacy studies, and on the other, the study of plurilingualism, which together form part of what we understand as pluriliteracies.

On pluriliteracies

Researchers and educators working in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity, such as ours, continue to face the challenge of deconstructing deeply rooted conceptualisations about what it means to be competently plurilingual. From a monolingual perspective, such competence would amount to the simple addition of socially constructed languages acquired as separate blocks. This is the way that plurilingual competence is often defined in school curriculums and in classrooms. Languages are separated into different subjects, taught in

isolation from one another, and students are only evaluated on their ability to perform on academic tasks using just part of their repertoire (i.e. what Heller [1999] referred to as ‘parallel monolingualisms’ or Cummins [2008] called ‘two [three, four] solitudes’). This mono-competence model (Hall, Cheng & Carlson, 2006) does not take into account the full extent of children and youths’ communicative repertoires and their ability to creatively and critically combine resources in complex meaning making processes. This contrasts with the linguistically and culturally complex contexts in which 21st century children and youth are growing up, and is especially problematic for students whose diversity of repertoires and of experiences with language goes well beyond what is included in the curriculum.

A large body of sociolinguistic and socio-cultural second language acquisition research has successfully demonstrated how plurilingual people have unique plural-competences and has forced strong debate on the monolingual perspectives entrenched in theory (e.g. Lüdi & Py, 2009; Nussbaum, 2013). Such contributions depart from the notion of repertoire put forward by Gumperz (1964) and have in common an underlying critique of monolingual approaches to language such as those described above, in favour of conceptualisations of languaging (Becker, 1995; Pennycook, 2010) as practical social action (on repertoire, see also Rymes, 2014). In defining plurilingualism, Lüdi and Py (2009) suggest referring to the full range of communicative resources available to plurilingual individuals in interaction with others for achieving different goals, including language learning.

In the so-called superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007) societies in which we live, plurilingualism comes into young people’s lives in their languaging practices across a multitude of media and modes– oral, written, spatial, aural, musical, tactile, sensory– often separated by time and space. García, Bartlett and Kleifgen (2007) thus advocate for the

integration of research on plurilingualism with research on literacies, and suggest the term pluriliteracies to this end. Like the plurilingual approach, the pluriliteracies perspective places the integration of language systems and the fluidity of language practices at the forefront of theory. It encapsulates current sociolinguistic realities of young people by incorporating under a common umbrella insightful scholarship from traditions such as New Literacy Studies (NLS), multiliteracies, biliteracies and multilingual literacies, and research on plurilingualism, in school contexts and beyond.

Indeed, NLS research (e.g. Baynham & Prinsloo, 2013) has shed light on the highly ideological nature of literacy; what counts as being ‘literate’ is always embedded in a particular context, a particular world-view and in relationships of power. The ‘new’ in NLS also points to a focus on multiple modalities, and in particular digital technologies. More directly concerned with classroom pedagogy, the multiliteracies approach (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) seeks to address the ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ of literacy instruction in contexts of rapid change due to globalisation, technological advances and increasing sociocultural diversity. Finally, research into biliteracies and multilingual literacies has focused more directly on instances in which communication occurs in more than one language, in or around writing. Hornberger’s (e.g. Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) continua of biliteracy (which we refer to as pluriliteracy) show that including a full array of contexts (e.g. family and school, plurilingual and monolingual), language developmental processes (e.g. in terms of the order of acquisition of languages, receptive and productive skills, oral and written skills), media (e.g. divergent and convergent scripts, multiple media) and contents (e.g. vernacular and literary) is not only highly desirable for learning but also necessary for transformative education in contexts of diversity. Continuing with the idea of

educational transformation, as an important part of our research, in the following section we introduce the notion of translanguaging as a way of analytically conceptualising potentially transformative practices.

On translanguaging as transgression and transformation

While the notions of plurilingualism and pluriliteracy are useful for describing the repertoires of the children with whom we work, the notion of translanguaging is useful to conceptualise how these repertoires might be mobilised to transgress and eventually transform practices and structures that are dominant to educational systems, such as those favouring mono-competences. Translanguaging refers to the multiplicity, fluidity, mobility, locality and globality of resources and practices drawn on by plurilingual and pluriliterate individuals for engaging in complex meaning-making processes, including learning (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 18; see also Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Moore, Bradley & Simpson, forthcoming)². Translanguaging builds on the notion of languaging introduced above and ontologically and epistemologically is closely related to other approaches to plurilingual and pluriliterate repertoires already introduced. For us, it is the prefix *trans* that we find appealing, not so much in the sense of going across and beyond languages – an element already inherent to the notion of plurilingualism as we understand it –, but in its allusion to *transgression* of dominant practices. As García and Li Wei (2014, p. 68) write: “translanguaging transgresses and destabilizes language hierarchies, and at the same time expands and extends practices that

² Several European projects have developed educational proposals that draw on research into translanguaging, as well as on prior research into plurilingualism. These include the ROMtels project (<http://research.ncl.ac.uk/romtels/>) and the KOINOS project (<http://plurilingual.eu/en/project>), both funded by Erasmus+, and the much larger CARAP project (<http://carap.ecml.at/>), funded by the ECML. The TLANG project (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx>), funded by the UK AHRC, although not directly concerned with education, is also worthy of mention. Authors of this article have contributed to, and are directly influenced in their thinking by, both the KOINOS and the TLANG projects.

are typically valued in school and in the everyday world of communities and homes”. Figure 1 is a representation of how we see translanguaging as offering a theoretical bridge for practices of languaging in general and of literacy in particular that are of interest to our study (represented by two continua that meet at the centre of the cross, and by the small diagonal arrows linking them up), as well as for conceptualising their transgression and expansion (represented by the two outward facing arrows).

[Figure 1 about here: Translanguaging as bridging, expanding and transgressing practices]

The *trans* in translanguaging also helps us to frame our research methodologically. Our research is deeply committed to co-constructing knowledge that is useful for educational *trans*formation, and to influencing practices that are more inclusive of children’s entire repertoires, both within the program and beyond, in collaborative ways. It is thus to our methodological approach to which we will now turn.

Research context and methodology

Language and immigration in Catalonia

Before describing the school, project, and neighbourhood, as well as developing our methodology, brief mention needs to be made of the social, educational and political discourses in relation to language and immigration in Catalonia. As Pujolar (2010) discusses in depth, newcomers to Catalonia face contradictory language ideologies and practices. Local public institutions aim to construct Catalan, which continues to be a minority language in terms of number of speakers and everyday use, as a language that is neutral, universal,

accessible to all and a medium of social cohesion and integration (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2007), in a context of nation-state building (i.e. the Catalan independence movement) and of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity as a result of immigration. This construction is achieved through what Gal and Woolard (2001) and Woolard (2008) refer to as discourses of anonymity, which sustain the role of Catalan as the main language of instruction in schools, for example. Yet everyday language practices, and popular and political discourses, simultaneously construct Catalan as Catalonia's 'own' or 'proper' language, through discourses of authenticity (Gal & Woolard, 2001; Woolard, 2008), linking the language to a national historical narrative and to an 'autochthonous' population. Many newcomers do not identify with this narrative and find access to Catalan-speaking spaces and people difficult. Decades of migration from other parts of Spain mean that many working class neighbourhoods, where most newcomers settle, are Spanish-dominant. Thus, it is not unusual in many areas of Catalonia for Catalan to be the main language of children's schooling in classrooms, while Spanish is their main language of socialisation in other public spaces (Vila & Siqués, 2013).

Newcomers to the Catalan education system are usually placed in so-called linguistic and cultural reception classes where they are taught Catalan intensively, while also gradually joining their classmates in curricular subjects. Newcomers continue to attend the reception class for several hours per week for a period of up to two years, depending on individual needs. Besides Catalan, the school curriculum includes Spanish as a subject (and optionally as the medium of instruction for other subjects in Catalan-dominant areas) and also the teaching of one or two foreign languages. In public schools, the foreign language taught is usually English, and French is sometimes introduced at the end of primary school. Like Spanish, these

languages might also be used as the medium of instruction for other curricular subjects. Finally, there are very few publicly supported initiatives for the maintenance or enrichment of home languages besides those already mentioned. Many of the students attending the after-school reading program we study spoke other languages at home, but were not able to read or write them. They were also often more proficient speakers of Spanish than of Catalan.

The school, project, and neighbourhood

As we have mentioned, our research takes place in an after-school reading program run by a non-profit organisation in a large number of public schools and libraries in Catalonia. More specifically, the program targets 4th and 5th grade primary school children (9 - 11 years old) who read one-on-one with a volunteer mentor for one hour, one afternoon per week. The children are chosen to participate in the program for different reasons, but mostly because they are considered to be falling behind the standards expected of them in reading comprehension and reading habits, and thus at risk of school failure in the future. The program takes place at a public primary school in the old town of Barcelona, in a socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhood with very high immigration (approx. 25% of the school population in the area has foreign nationality, compared with the approx. 6% average for Barcelona as a whole [Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona, 2015]; disposable household income is also approx. 20% lower than the city average [Departament d'Estudis i Programació, 2014]). Our conversations with program coordinators indicate that there was little support for the implementation of the program from the management of this particular school. Our ethnographic engagements with both coordinators and the children also suggest

that teaching practices in the school are largely traditional and organised around standard, monolingual practices.

The reading sessions are carried out in regular classrooms, or sometimes at the local public library. Reading materials are provided by coordinators, volunteers and the children themselves as the school's library is notably under-resourced. There are 24, mainly female volunteers of different ages, and a coordinator, who is usually assisted by university students doing work placement. The 24 children who have participated in the program in the time of our fieldwork are linguistically and culturally diverse, and many were born abroad or have parents who were, in places such as Morocco, Bangladesh or the Philippines. The two researchers who author this article, both of whom are from abroad and have learned Catalan (and Spanish in Emilee's case) as adults, also volunteer in the program, and combine the role as tutors with that of ethnographers, as shall be explained in the following sections.

There are no unified criteria for what makes a good reading session and there are no structured learning goals. There is insistence on using imaginative techniques and occupying school spaces in non-typical ways in order to break away from the dynamics that the program organisers consider are dominant in schools. There is also emphasis on bridging school and home spaces, by involving families. Our observations suggest certain tensions in terms of the genres and formats of texts deemed appropriate by volunteers, coordinators and the children, with the latter preferring comics, football magazines, popular novels and non-educational computer games, while the adults prefer more canonical books and digital and analogical word games. It is noteworthy that the issue of which language or languages should be used in reading activities is almost never explicitly discussed. However, the reading materials provided by program coordinators and by volunteers are almost always in Catalan. The

students bring reading materials in both Catalan and Spanish. Other languages are very rarely seen or heard.

The collaborative and experiential genesis of the research

We began systematic ethnographic data collection at the school in the 2014/2015 school year, and continue until the present. However, our participation in the program began in 2013/2014, when one of the authors of this article (Emilee) participated as a volunteer at a different school in the old town of Barcelona, with very similar characteristics. The tutoring experience in turn had its origin in the program coordinators' participation as guest speakers in a teacher education course taught by the same author. The following vignette from March 2014 (Fragment 1), reflecting on that initial volunteering experience, indicates the types of tensions experienced in this first stage, which motivated taking the collaboration a step further through more formalised research.

Fragment 1

The child I read with is Fatima, a 9-year-old girl born in Barcelona whose parents come from Morocco. She tells me she speaks Arabic at home, although one day I notice that she and her family use Moroccan sign language in the presence of her deaf father. Fatima reads and speaks in Catalan and Spanish quite well (she understands the register of children's books better than I do!), but gets easily distracted.

Fatima loves reading Dragon Ball (in Catalan) and teaches me to read Japanese manga. Like most of the children, Fatima loves playing games on the website Friv, all of which are in English. Other times she sings along to YouTube videos and shares the lyrics with me. 'Señorita' by Abraham Mateo is a big hit with the children. The lyrics, which Fatima and the

other children know by heart, include a mix of non-standard Spanish and English varieties.

Yet to my surprise, Fatima is convinced that she is bad at languages, an idea that is possibly unintentionally supported by her inclusion by the school in the after-school reading program.

Although the program officially targets reading comprehension and reading habits, we believed, based on observations such as those reflected in Fragment 1, that something was going on that had more to do with valuing children's entire repertoires than with just their ability to understand texts and with their reading habits. The voluntary experience helped establish our research goals of documenting practices, understanding structural and ideological dynamics, and promoting more inclusive practices. After discussing our reflections with program coordinators, permission was obtained to carry out systematic research, the methods of which are described below. We agreed on a change of school for this research, to the one in Barcelona where program coordinators felt they were least supported by the school principal and where they thought classroom teaching practices were most traditional.

Methodology

The research project is guided by collaborative linguistic ethnography (Hymes, 1974; Copland & Creese, 2015; Lassiter, 2005), an approach that has been concerned with both plurilingualism and the role of literacy practices in the communicative ecologies of communities since its beginnings (e.g. Heath, 1983). One or both of us have attended the weekly sessions at the school since 2014/2015. We either read with children ourselves, or sit in on sessions with other volunteers. We, or the children themselves, film parts of these

interactions using our mobile phones or iPads. We also conduct formal and informal interviews with volunteers, children and program coordinators, attend other program events, keep field notes, collect official documents and take photographs. All participants in the program are aware of our research and have given (or their parents have given) their informed consent to take part. At the same time, the fact that we have been part of the program for several years, and that our data collection is very much embedded in the everyday dynamics of the site, mean that we consider ourselves, and believe we are seen primarily by others, as just two more volunteers.

We also use plurilingual and multimodal ethnomethodological/conversation analysis (CA) (Auer, 1984; Sacks, 1992; Mondada, 2014) in seeking a more fine-grained analysis of interaction than may be achieved with purely ethnographic methods. The complementarity of ethnomethodology/CA with ethnographic approaches has been taken up by scholars elsewhere (e.g. Clemente, 2013), and both approaches have contributed to deconstructing monolingual bias about how people use language (e.g. Jaspers & Madsen, 2016; Mondada & Nussbaum, 2012). We select from the tens of hours of video data collected to produce multimodal transcriptions and analyses of interactions that we believe are telling of day-to-day program realities, and useful for our ongoing discussions with program coordinators and volunteers. Translations are provided in this article to make the data accessible to non-Catalan and Spanish speaking readers. Glosses have not been included in order to simplify the transcripts, although clarifying comments have been added when necessary. In a similar vein, transcriber's comments about embodied actions have been added when considered relevant for understanding the ongoing interaction, rather than more complex CA multimodal conventions. All names, except our own, are pseudonyms.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, our aim in this research is not simply to document practices and understand structural and ideological dynamics, but also to promote practices that are more inclusive of children's entire repertoires, both within the program and beyond, and in collaboration with our co-participants. In this regard, we take a transformative activist stance (Vianna & Stetsenko, 2014). This stance does not only refer to the fact that we share and discuss our data, transcripts, analyses and our writing with program coordinators and volunteers as a form of triangulation and of reciprocal learning, as is typical in collaborative forms of ethnography. Our research also involves the student-teachers with whom we work at the university, who, having also participated in the analyses of video data and transcripts from the program, take part in a service-learning project (Kinloch & Smagorinsky, 2014; Macías Gómez-Estern, Martínez Lozano & Vázquez, 2014). Since 2014/2015, our student-teachers have designed and tested materials with the children and volunteers that incorporate pluriliteracies as resources for learning. The interactions around these materials are also videorecorded and jointly analysed by us, our students, program coordinators and other volunteers. Our student-teachers (approx. 70 per year) cannot attend the program themselves as they are in class at the university, and also because there are too many of them for this to be possible in a non-disruptive way. Through this project, we aim to collaboratively provoke changes in the here and now of the out-of-school program, and also to help transform the educational experiences of future school students by impacting on mainstream education, through our work with future teachers.

Analysis: Looking inside the out-of-school reading program

In this section of the article, we present an initial analysis of some of the interactional data collected. This analysis has revealed certain practices within the reading program that we interpret in terms of conformity with the praxis that would appear to be dominant at the children's school, as suggested by our ethnographic work (i.e. our conversations with program coordinators and children, as well as our observations of the school landscape) and our analyses of interaction (i.e. of alignment in the ethnomethodological/CA sense of interactional convergence). The analysis has also revealed other practices in which we see subtle acts of transgression, in the sense we set out above of destabilising hierarchies and expanding and extending practices that are typically valued in school, and of potential for educational transformation (García & Li Wei, 2014), or of interactional disalignment in the ethnomethodological/CA sense. By conformity and transgression we are not referring to necessarily conscious acts, but to specific interactional moves and the social and institutional norms established or challenged in them, which in turn might hint at what goes on in the children's schooling more generally. Here we take an ethnomethodological/CA approach in understanding that social and institutional norms, while traceable ethnographically, are also documented in the here and now of interaction, and that "if something 'external' can be shown to be proximately (or intra-interactionally) relevant to the participants, then its external status is rendered besides the point" (Schegloff, 1992, p. 197). By starting out in this article primarily from the micro-analyses of everyday interactional practices in order to discuss broader social and ideological processes documented in them, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of the linkages between the interactional, social and institutional orders (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001) in our particular research setting.

Practices of conformity

Certain practices of conformity within the program with those that would appear typical of the children's schooling have already been alluded to (e.g. use of classroom spaces, choice of reading material). Among these, despite there not being an overt language policy in the program, there is an implicit understanding by all involved that Catalan, as the main language of schooling in Catalonia, should also be the language that children read in within the program. In our field notes, we make constant reference to processes through which volunteers, including ourselves at times, try to seduce the children to choose a book in Catalan and to speak in that language. Thus, the hierarchies of language that are implicitly established in the program are, we argue, similar to what we expect in mainstream education.

The following set of data also provides support for this. As has been mentioned, as part of the research project, our student-teachers participated in producing materials for the program that would encourage children and volunteers to draw on their whole repertoires for making meaning. One group of student-teachers produced a version of a Catalan legend, 'La Llegendenda del Timbaler del Bruc', in which they highlighted certain words and asked the children to tell them how to say those same words in other languages they knew, by adding them to the page. As the children experimented with the materials, they were video recorded and they later filled out an evaluation form, all of which was returned to the student-teachers as feedback. One of the questions on the evaluation form asked children what languages they knew. Figure 2 is an excerpt from one of the forms, filled out by a 5th grade boy we shall refer to as Abdel, who had read the legend just described.

[Figure 2 about here: Excerpt from the evaluation form filled out by Abdel]

Translation of Figure 2:

The languages I know are: Catalan, Spanish, English, and a little French
Arabic (spelled something like “Arapic”)

I have read this story: Yes

On the form, Abdel, whose family is originally from Morocco, responds that he speaks Catalan, Spanish, English, a little bit of French, and Arabic. The first three are languages he learns at school, French is also a curricular language, and French and especially Moroccan Arabic are languages used at home and in the Moroccan community where he lives. It is interesting that he lists the school languages in an order that reflects their importance in the school curriculum. However what is most surprising is that he only adds his main home language to the list as a result of the interaction in Fragment 2, below.

Fragment 2 takes place while one of the researchers-volunteers (Emilee) is informally interviewing Abdel and another child (Jon), together with another volunteer (Maria), about the materials they have been testing. The fragment begins with Abdel showing Emilee what he had read and Emilee asking Abdel if he knows how to say the highlighted words on the page in other languages.

Fragment 2

1. AB: mira.
2. (0.6)
3. EM: sí:
4. (0.5)
5. EM: i tu aquestes paraules les saps dir en:
6. (0.3)
7. AB: sí.
8. (.)
9. AB: molts.
10. (.)
11. AB: xxxxx
12. EM: tu parles àrab no?
13. (0.6)
14. AB: onda no he posat marroquí!
15. (0.2)
16. AB: ((to MA) àrab.
17. EM: el marroquí:

18. AB: podem posar.
 19. (0.3)
 20. EM: clar.
 21. AB: ma- eh: àrab
 22. (0.2)
 23. AB: no l'hem posat.
 24. (0.4)
 25. AB: en les llengües.
 26. (1.8)
 27. EM: t'has oblidat del marroquí?
 28. (2.5)
 29. AB: ((to MA xx àrab.)
 30. (0.0)
 31. MA: àrab.
 32. ((writes "Arap" on page", 0.7))
 33. MA: clar.
 34. EM: clar.
 35. JO: vengà.

Translation of Fragment 2

1. AB: look.
 2. (0.6)
 3. EM: yes:
 4. (0.5)
 5. EM: and do you know how to say these words in:
 6. (0.3)
 7. AB: yes.
 8. (.)
 9. AB: a lot.
 10. (.)
 11. AB: xxxxx
 12. EM: you speak Arabic right?
 13. (0.6)
 14. AB: oh no I forgot Moroccan!
 15. (0.2)
 16. AB: ((to MA) Arabic.
 17. EM: Moroccan:
 18. AB: we can put it.
 19. (0.3)
 20. EM: of course.
 21. AB: Mo- eh: Arabic
 22. (0.2)
 23. AB: we didn't put it.
 24. (0.4)
 25. AB: in the languages.)
 26. (1.8)
 27. EM: you forgot Moroccan?
 28. (2.5)
 29. AB: ((to MA xx Arabic.)

30. (0.0)
31. MA: Arabic.
32. ((writes "Arap" on page", 0.7))
33. MA: of course.
34. EM: of course.
35. JO: come on.

In the fragment, after hesitating about what languages Abdel knows in line 5, in line 12 Emilee seeks confirmation from him about whether he speaks Arabic. From line 14, Abdel exclaims that he has forgotten to include Moroccan on his evaluation form. He addresses his regular mentor, Maria, who he had done the reading activity and evaluation with, informing her that they can include Arabic. Emilee asks incredulously in line 27 if he has forgotten Moroccan. In line 29, Abdel checks with Maria as to how to name the language, that has been called both Moroccan (the name he originally called it) and Arabic (the name the researcher called it) in the fragment, and following confirmation from Maria that it's called Arabic, he writes down Arabic. This prompts encouragement from the two adults and the other child, Jon, who are present. It is interesting that Abdel is encouraged to use the name of a standard language, Arabic, rather than the name he gave the language, Moroccan, suggesting the adults, including the researcher, align implicitly with standard language ideologies. It is also interesting that Abdel misspells Arabic when he writes it down, suggesting that it is not a word he has been exposed to much in Catalan, and that he places it spatially below his other languages on the form.

We are uncomfortable claiming that conformity with practices that our ethnographic research and interactional analyses would suggest are typical of the children's school is entirely problematic. Until systemic changes are made, at the end of the day, the children in the program will be tested on their mono-competences performing typical school tasks in school languages, and will continue to be considered at risk of school failure until they test

out of that category. However the practices of conformity we have observed do at least highlight the difficulty of breaking away from the educational status quo, as the program overtly sets out to do, even within non-mainstream learning contexts. They also help explain why, in most of our data, the languages that children and volunteers use are those that are validated in the school curriculum, while other languages we know they speak remain mostly hidden.

Practices of transgression

With the complexities just discussed in mind, in this section of the analysis we consider two fragments in which, we argue, subtle acts of transgression through translanguaging are taking place. Beyond their analytical interest for our research, we believe that practices such as the ones presented hold enormous potential for working with program coordinators, volunteers and future teachers towards transformative educational practices.

The first fragment, Fragment 3, involves Amaia, a 4th grade child, and Roser, a retiree who reads with her. Amaia's parents are both from Catalonia and she tells us she speaks many different languages at home, including French and Italian; the program coordinators tell us she just has a big imagination. In the fragment, Amaia has chosen to read a Shin Chan comic in Catalan (although being manga, it has some Japanese words), which is placed on the table in front of her. Claudia, one of the researchers, is present and sometimes participates in the interaction.

Fragment 3

1. AI: això ho llegeixes tu.
2. (0.3)
3. RO: molt bé. (0.5) hem fet analitzar (0.3) les restes de terra (.)
4. que hi havia (.) a les sabates (0.5) del fotògraf Federic. (0.3)
5. els resultats indiquen (.) que és d'aquí (.) de la zona (0.5)
6. Doku: (0.5) Doku: Si: Shibu (1.7) prefectura de Saitama. (2.9)

7. sospitem que podria haver viscut a la comarca (.) de les-
 8. (1.7)
 9. AI: Metes Cai[gudes.]
 10. RO: [de les] Metes Caigudes?
 11. (0.2)
 12. AI: però hi [és per aquí?]
 13. RO: [és per aquí?]
 14. (.)
 15. AI: és jo: [això.]
 16. RO: [és per] aquí això?
 17. (0.4)
 18. AI: hi és per a- això ho llegia jo:..
 19. (0.4)
 20. RO: eh?
 21. (.)
 22. AI: això llegia jo.
 23. RO: perdona.
 24. (0.3)
 25. AI: [hi és per aquí això?]
 26. RO: [em pensava que volies dir tot el] requadre.
 27. (0.3)
 28. AI: què és aquell edifici?

Translation of Fragment 3

1. AI: this you read it.
 2. (0.3)
 3. RO: very well. (0.5) we have them analyse (0.3) the remaining dirt (.)
 4. that was (.) on the shoes (0.5) of Federic the photographer. (0.3)
 5. the results indicate (.) he was from here (.) from the zone (0.5)
 6. Doku: (0.5) Doku: Si: Shibu (1.7) Saitama prefecture. (2.9)
 7. we suspect he could have been born in the county (.) of the-
 8. (1.7)
 9. AI: Falling [Metes.] (("metes" means boobs or markers))
 10. RO: [of the] Falling Metes?
 11. (0.2)
 12. AI: but is [it around here?]
 13. RO: [is it around here?]
 14. (.)
 15. AI: it's that I: [this.]
 16. RO: [is it] around here?
 17. (0.4)
 18. AI: it is around h- this I was reading it:..
 19. (0.4)
 20. RO: eh?
 21. (.)
 22. AI: I was reading this.
 23. RO: sorry.
 24. (0.3)
 25. AI: [is it around here?]
 26. RO: [I thought you wanted to say all the] vignette.
 27. (0.3)
 28. AI: what is that building?

In the fragment, we observe how the child, Amaia, initially assigns the parts of the comic to be read by herself and by Roser according to criteria that is clearer to her than to her tutor. As the pair begin to read, Roser displays difficulty reading manga, as she hesitates over the pronunciation of certain words in Japanese (line 6). Her self-interruption (line 7) and her rising intonation on "metes caigudes" (line 10) indicate both trouble and her bewilderment by the irreverent tone of the text, which is one of the characteristics of the Shin Chan series. Among the meanings of "metes" in Catalan is "boobs", which Amaia is very unlikely to know; she probably understands "markers". Amaia interprets Roser's hesitation as difficulty, and she supports her tutor by pronouncing the words in line 9.

Amaia, therefore, assumes the role of expert in reading manga and in guiding the volunteer. In lines 12 and 13, tension emerges as Roser reads a part of the text that Amaia had previously assigned to herself. According to Amaia's distribution, each person reads different voices, while Roser is reading by vignette. Amaia takes the lead in the repair sequence that unfolds in lines 15-28, thereby displaying her superior competence reading this particular genre – one not traditionally accounted for in school assessments of reading competence or considered to constitute good reading habit.

This redistribution of roles afforded by the imbalance in the child's and volunteer's competence at reading comics emerged thanks to the freedom given to the child to choose reading material and to structure the reading practice. The fragment highlights the learning potential afforded by bringing into the program literacy practices other than those that our ethnographic data would suggest are the dominant school ones, and which allow the children to display resources that would otherwise be invisible. During our observations we have been able to identify many similar cases of children actively seeking, negotiating and generating

conditions that allow them to mobilise their resources beyond what would seem to be normally validated in their school – by reading comics, dancing and singing, playing computer games, all using different languages. Following García & Li Wei (2014), we see such translanguaging as transgressive, in the sense that it destabilising language hierarchies and expands and extends the practices that would seem to be typically valued in the children’s formal education.

The final fragment to be considered in this article, Fragment 4, involves Abdel, the child, and Maria, his tutor, both of whom were already introduced in Fragment 2. In the interaction, the pair are playing hangman at the end of a reading session. Claudia, one of the volunteers-researchers, is seated with them and takes part in the interaction. Maria has drawn 7 lines, and before the fragment, Abdel has already guessed the letters r and e, meaning that the page reads “R e _ _ _ e”. The fragment begins with Abdel guessing the letters “d” (line 1) and “p” (line 5), neither of which is correct.

Fragment 4

1. AB: d?
2. (1.1)
3. MA: no?
4. (0.7)
5. AB: la p?
6. (0.4)
7. MA: ja me l'has dita.
8. (0.7)
9. MA: i no estava.
10. (0.4)
11. AB: la- la o::::?
12. MA: ((nods and writes an o on the corresponding line))
13. AB: reo reo,
14. (0.6)
15. AB: reo,
16. (0.3)
17. AB: re,
18. (0.3)
19. AB: ((looks at NU then looks away))
20. (0.8)

21. AB: ((looking at page) hh?)
 22. (3.1)
 23. AB: ((looking away from page and MA, smiles) hh?)
 24. (0.2)
 25. AB: ((looking away from MA, smiling) rellotge no puede ser.)
 26. (0.4)
 27. MA: ((looking at researcher) per què:?)
 28. (0.3)
 29. AB: ((looking at paper) perquè,)
 30. (1.0)
 31. AB: ((looking and pointing to lines on page) serien dos ls.)
 32. (0.2)
 33. MA: (shaking head, looking at researcher) no?)
 34. AB: ((looks at MA, smiling))
 35. (0.2)
 36. AB: ((looking away from MA) sí.)
 37. (1.4)
 38. AB: ((looking at MA) rellotge va amb dos ls.)
 39. MA: ((looking at AB) va amb dos ls?)
 40. AB: ((looks at MA and nods))
 41. MA: doncs llavors m'he equivocat jo.
 42. (0.2)
 43. MA: ((adds another line and writes 'rellotge'))
 44. AB: a: ha ha. ((claps))

Translation of Fragment 4

1. AB: d?
 2. (1.1)
 3. MA: no?
 4. (0.7)
 5. AB: the p?
 6. (0.4)
 7. MA: you already said it.
 8. (0.7)
 9. MA: and it wasn't there.
 10. (0.4)
 11. AB: the- the o::::?
 12. MA: ((nods and writes an o on the corresponding line)
 13. AB: reo reo,
 14. (0.6)
 15. AB: reo,
 16. (0.3)
 17. AB: re,
 18. (0.3)
 19. AB: ((looks at NU then looks away))
 20. (0.8)
 21. AB: ((looking at page) hh?)
 22. (3.1)
 23. AB: ((looking away from page and MA, smiles) hh?)

24. (0.2)
25. AB: ((looking away from MA, smiling) it can't be clock.)
26. (0.4)
27. MA: ((looking at researcher) why:?)
28. (0.3)
29. AB: ((looking at paper) because,)
30. (1.0)
31. AB: ((looking and pointing to lines on page) it would be two ls.)
32. (0.2)
33. MA: (shaking head, looking at researcher) no?)
34. AB: ((looks at MA, smiling))
35. (0.2)
36. AB: ((looking away from MA) yes.)
37. (1.4)
38. AB: ((looking at MA) clock has two ls.)
39. MA: ((looking at AB) does it have two ls?)
40. AB: ((looks at MA and nods))
41. MA: then i made a mistake.
42. (0.2)
43. MA: ((adds another line and writes 'rellotge'))
44. AB: a: ha ha. ((claps))

Some initial observations can be made about the interaction. Firstly, based on a normative description of his language use, it could be said that Abdel mixes Spanish and Catalan in his talk, while Maria uses only Catalan. Considering Abdel has been placed in the program for having insufficient competence at reading in Catalan, his mixing could be interpreted as a sign of difficulty speaking that language. From Abdel's own perspective, however, it is possible that he simply uses a repertoire according to his whim that includes resources from two languages, as the large majority of children and adults do everyday in Barcelona.

Focusing on the interaction from line 11 on more closely, Abdel guesses the letter "o", which is correct and added by Maria in the following line, meaning that the page now reads "R e o _ _ _ e". In lines 13-18, Abdel verbalises his word search. By line 23 it becomes clear, through his excited inhalations and his smile, that he thinks he knows the word, but there is a problem; Maria has not left enough lines for the word to be right. In line 25, looking away

from Maria, Abdel points out that the word he thinks it is – “rellotge” (clock/watch) – cannot be right. Maria, looking at the researcher as through seeking confirmation of her own spelling, asks Abdel why not. In lines 29-32, Abdel points out that there are not enough lines and correctly identifies the problem as being that Maria thinks the word is spelled with just one “l”. In fact, in the variety of Catalan that Maria speaks, it is very likely that what in Abdel’s school variety of Catalan is pronounced /rel^lodʒe/ is said as /relodʒe/, making her spelling appropriate from her point of view. This might explain Maria’s hesitation to accept Abdel’s spelling as correct, in line 33. All this time, Maria and Abdel have not made eye contact.

In line 34, Abdel looks at Maria for the first time in the sequence, smiling. In lines 36 and 38, Abdel insists on his spelling of the word. Maria shows her surprise in line 39 with the spelling, that Abdel confirms, and then admits to making a mistake in line 41. She adds a line to the page and writes to word, “rellotge”, after which Abdel laughs and claps.

Two potentially contradictory comments can be made about the fragment. On the one hand, we see a continuity of conformity with the standard variety of Catalan, with both participants concluding that Maria’s non-school spelling as a mistake. But on the other hand, we see how Abdel mobilises the very same repertoire in the very same way (i.e. by mixing/switching between resources from different languages) that probably led him to be categorised as an incompetent user of Catalan, not only to correct his tutor, whose competence is not questioned a priori, on her use of the school variety, but also to do so in a very competent way. That is, his repertoire also allows him to organise the interaction in such a way as to save Maria’s face, by avoiding eye contact with her and by allowing her time to self-repair. In this way, while Maria recognises her error in terms of the school standard, her self-image and the cooperative relationship between her and Abdel is maintained. Thus, in

Fragment 3 we observed how competence was re-distributed between child and adult thanks to flexibility in the selection of reading materials. In Fragment 4, we see how the interactional format affords opportunities for the child's superior competence in the school variety of Catalan to be displayed. All of this is what we consider part of the children's translanguaging and it subtly transgresses the status quo, in terms of re-organising the distribution of competence between the adults and the children. Both children have been placed in the program by their school due to being categorised as being deficient readers and language users, and both bring this categorisation into question in their interactional moves.

Discussion and conclusions

Our ethnographic observations and the in-depth analysis of interaction allow some initial observations to be put forward about the reading program described in this article. Firstly, it can be emphasised that in line with findings from past research, the interactional dynamics emerging in situated child-tutor interactions do seem to foster a redistribution of roles and less hierarchical relationships than those inherent to formal schooling (Cole, 1996; Cole & The Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006). The children take advantage of this configuration to mobilise plurilingualisms in general, and pluriliteracies in particular, that might otherwise be invisible. The interactions analysed call into question institutional categorisations of the children as lacking language competences. Our data suggests that deficiencies in the children's performance at school are as much attributes of the social and institutional context, as they might be of individual children and their developing repertoires (see also Varenne & McDermott, 1999). In our experience, the children's interest in reading or otherwise and their performance in the sessions is directly linked to the interactional dynamics established with

their mentors while participating in activities and to the possibility of positioning themselves and being positioned as competent readers, and language users more generally.

We have argued that while many of the practices emerging in the program allow for transgression from standard language use and dominant literacy practices, many others point to conformity with the very same practices that lead to the children being categorised as being at risk of school failure and needing extra support in the first place. We have also pointed out that we are uncomfortable claiming that such conformity is entirely problematic. We are fully aware that until systemic changes are made, the children with whom we work will be evaluated on their mono-competent abilities to perform typical school tasks, and will continue to be considered at risk until they test out of that category. This being so, we believe that a translanguaging approach, which not *only* but *also* accounts for children's other ways of being, knowing and doing, is necessary to help destabilise hierarchies, in striving for more equitable education for plurilingual and pluriliterate children.

Thus, as has been mentioned, this research aims not only to document, but to also validate subtle transgressive practices, such as those presented above, and to contribute to educational transformation, both within the program and beyond. We are cognisant of the limitations of the transformative power of the after-school program, including the limited time available each week, unstable funding structures, the rotation of volunteers and coordinators, and difficulties with working more closely with the school and families. However, by involving children, volunteers, program coordinators and student-teachers in this project, our aim is to influence more socially just educational practices in this particular site and at this particular time, and also to help transform the educational experiences of children like the ones we are working with in mainstream school settings, not just in the margins, in the future.

In terms of the children, we believe that endorsing their communicative repertoires in the very same spaces where they have been questioned is a significant act of resistance and self-validation. As ordinary members of civil society, the program coordinators and volunteers have an important role not only in implementing inclusive practices in the reading sessions, but also in challenging social categorisations of children such as those they work with when engaging with other people beyond the program. By collaborating with them to make children's hidden repertoires visible, we believe they will be better equipped to confront such conversations. For their part, the student-teachers will soon take charge of classrooms and schools where, whether sharing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the reading program or not, students should be educated in plurilingualisms and pluriliteracies oriented to globalised presents and futures. In short, we see research on translanguaging not only as requiring ontological changes in how we understand language, but also epistemological changes in terms of whose knowledge is counted, and methodological changes in how researchers engage with their sites and participants.

Transcription conventions

Intonation:

Rising: ?

Falling: .

Maintained: ,

Pause: (duration)

Lengthening: : :: :::

Self-interruption: -

Overlap: []

Comments: (())

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Figure 1

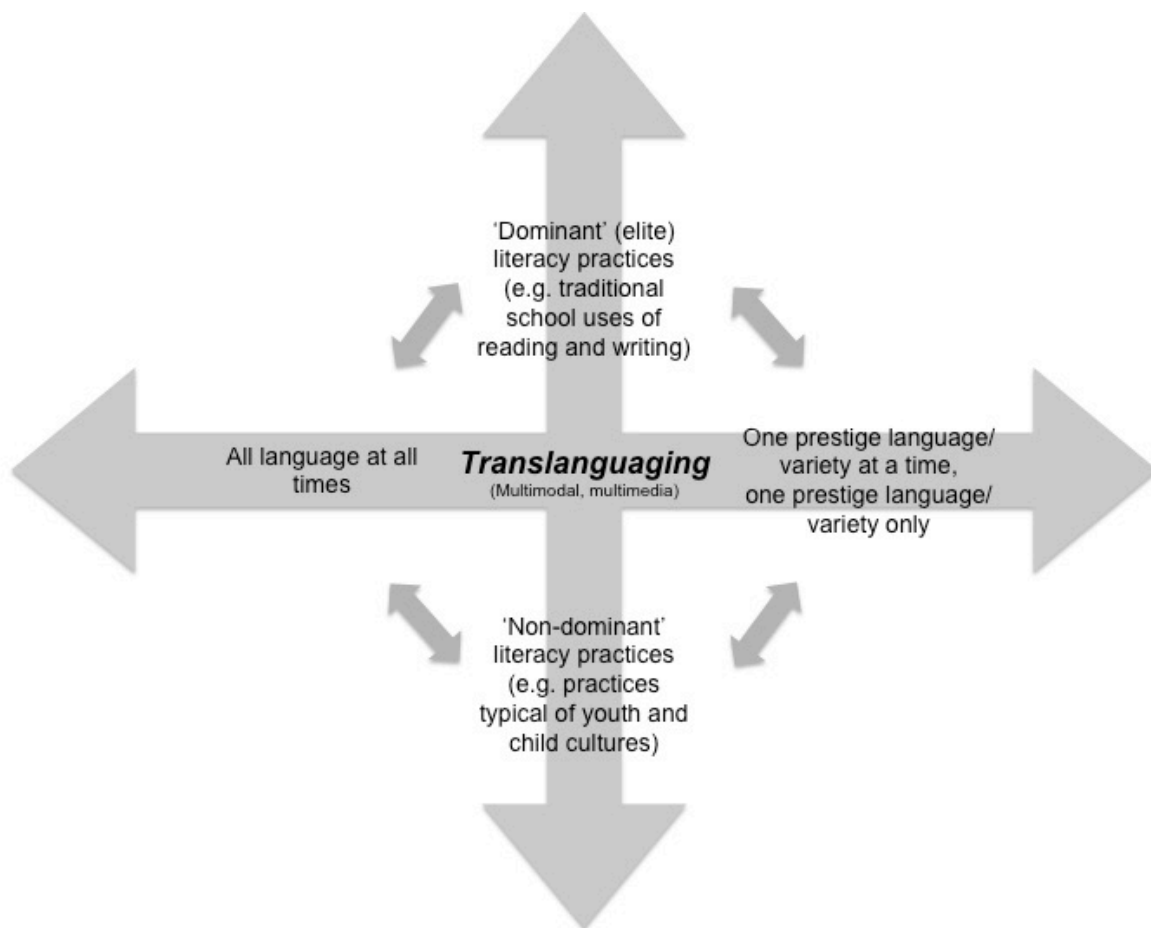


Figure 2

Les llengües que coneix són: Català, Castellà, Anglès, i una mica Francesc.

He llegit aquest conte: Si Drap