

Exploring language alternation and participation in an ‘in-between learning scenario’: A case study of a WhatsApp chat with secondary students of English

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The study of participation from a socio-interactional perspective relates to the exploration of the interactional practices displayed by interactants and the close examination of the multimodal resources they employ (Masats and Nussbaum 2022). Here we observe the language choices made by two teachers and ten students who participate in a *WhatsApp* chat over the summer break. Since language choice is a *social category-bound activity* (Gafaranga 2001) linked to social forms of participation, our analysis focuses on the negotiation participants engage in to determine their *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh 2012) and to select their *medium of interaction* (Gafaranga 1999). Our analysis reveals that language choices reshape and construct what we would refer to as an ‘in-between learning scenario’. This scenario creates tensions between the teachers’ and the students’ agenda, observed through their alignment with other interactants and their interpretation of the task at hand. Language selection is not a strict, personal choice. Instead, it is socially situated and depends on how speakers co-construct the communicative event they participate in and who holds the control of topic selection.

Keywords: language choice, practiced language policy, medium of interaction, community of practice, mobile-mediated communication

1. Introduction

The use of technology has blurred the boundaries between technology-mediated interaction within and beyond the classroom doors. This situation has an impact on language alternation and generates different scenarios that spark the interest of numerous researchers in education. To cite just some examples, Dooly and Masats (2020) pinpoint that technology in the classroom

contributes, with the mediation of the teacher, to the creation of a learning space that enables participants to simultaneously focus on meaning and form to adjust their language choices and the interactional patterns they recreate to the features of the task they are engaged in. Moore and Vallejo analyse technology-mediated non-formal educational settings and argue that learning is a transidiomatic practice that develops through ‘a bricolage of diverse linguistic codes, modalities and media’ (2021, 172). Dooly and Czura (2022) approach code-switching in the scenario of technology-enhanced collaborative Virtual Exchanges (VE) occurring in formal educational settings and argue that emoji should be understood as ‘an alternate code or language variant (albeit not a full-fledged language) and is an additional modality within the participants’ repertoire’ (p.201). Likewise, Pratginestós and Masats (2021) focus on how learners interact translocally through technology with a group of peer learners and observe that participants employ plurilingual and multimodal procedures to organise participation, construct meaning and build relational bonds.

In our study participants belong to the same community of practice (CoP, Lave and Wenger 1991) as they share the common interest of teaching/learning English. The *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh 2012) in this CoP, the regular English class, establishes that English is not only the language being learned formally, but also the language participants orient to while in class, thus, the agreed *medium of interaction*. However, students outside the class use their preferred language, either Spanish or Catalan, to address their peers or their teachers. The chat analysed here does not have the same number of participants as the regular L2 classroom because it is only addressed to a few students who will travel to Greece as part of the closure activity of a class project. Thus, we state that a new smaller CoP (with fewer participants, different interests, and different scenario) emerges. We examine technology-mediated interaction and, especially, participants’ language choices as activities bound to language

preference (Gafaranga 2001) to delve into how they jointly construct what we will refer to as an ‘in-between learning scenario’.

2. Language choice and alternation in learning settings

Learning in multilingual milieus takes a multimodal dimension and is shaped by how speakers co-construct the communicative event they participate in. Teachers and learners orient to plurilingual talk, understood as ‘the alternating use of more than one language in the same episode of talk’ (Musk and Cromdal 2018, 16). Language alternation has been approached from different perspectives for over three decades (Lin 2013). Research in language alternation as social practice (see Filipi 2019 for an overview on this field) has focused on the functions of language alternation (e.g. Eldridge 1996; Unamuno 2008), the distribution and frequencies in speakers’ use of their languages (e.g. Polio and Duff 1994; Kim and Elder 2005), the impact of language alternation on learning (e.g. Masats, Nussbaum and Unamuno 2007; Macaro 2009; Llompart-Esbert and Nussbaum 2023), and the role of language alternation in indexing identities and social inequalities (Prego Vázquez 2000), among others. On different terms, Filipi and Markee (2018) divide the studies in this field into two broad research strands: those focusing on learner-peer perspective and those on the teacher’s perspective. The former turns their attention to the L2 learning opportunities created by language alternation (Kasper 2004; Mori 2004), to how language alternation fosters engagement in interaction (Cheng 2013); and to the link between language alternation and task development (Markee and Kunitz 2013). The latter focuses on the pedagogical implications of language alternation (Üstünel and Seedhouse 2005), on the way language alternation is involved in establishing epistemic status (Cheng 2014; Filipi

2018), and in enacting language policing (Amir and Musk 2013) and practised language policies (Bonacina-Pugh 2012), among others.

Additionally, research has also focused on the goal of language alternation in talk-in-interaction. In this vein, Auer (1984), following Gumperz's work, argues that bi-/plurilingual talk relies on alternation either as a discourse-related activity (e.g. as a 'contextualization cue'; Gumperz 1982), or as a participant-related resource indexing speakers' preference for a particular language or 'medium' (Gafaranga 1999). In this paper, following Gafaranga (2001), we argue that *language preference* (Auer, 1984) should be understood as a *membership categorisation device* (Sacks 1974). In other words, 'speakers ascribe each other to a 'language preference' category (Gafaranga 2001) and use therefore that language in interaction' (Bonacina-Pugh 2013, 299). That is, participants' language choices co-construct their *practiced language policy*. The term was coined by Bonacina-Pugh (2012) to refer to Spolsky's idea (2004) that there is *a policy within practices*, where speakers orient themselves to interactional norms they have observed or co-constructed with other interactants as they 'draw on a set of implicit rules that they have deduced from their observation of patterns of language use' (Spolsky 2004). That is, a policy -which has traditionally been conceptualized as a notion separate from that of *practice*- can actually be found in language learning practices themselves. In turn, enacting *practiced language policy* is closely bound with what conversation analysts refer to as *doing being*, in this case *doing being* the student or *doing being* the teacher (also referred to as *teacher-hood* in Bonacina-Pugh 2013).

3. Data and methods

Our data stems from a transnational classroom project between two groups of secondary students -one in Catalonia and one in Greece-, who participated through English in various virtual exchanges in class to get to know each other's culture and lifestyle. Inside the classroom

Catalan students orient to English when addressing the teachers, but outside they address them in their preferred language, either Spanish or Catalan. Students also use one of these languages (or others) to address their peers both in and outside the classroom.

At the end of the school year, the cohort underwent a recruitment process to be able to participate in a trip to Greece to meet their partners. Ten students were selected and over the summer they were assigned the task of organizing fund-raising activities to pay for the trip. To monitor this task, their English teacher (TEACHER 2) and a researcher (TEACHER 1) who had assisted him throughout the whole academic year organized face-to-face meetings developed in their habitual *medium of interaction* (bilingual talk in Catalan/Spanish) outside the classroom. Prior to the organization of the first meeting, students were summoned through a WhatsApp chat created by the researcher to have a direct instant communication channel with the recruited Catalan students. This chat constitutes our corpus since it constructs a new scenario that reshapes the *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh 2012) of the regular English classrooms.

A first analysis of participants' language choices allowed us to observe that although the primary purpose of the WhatsApp chat is not teaching/learning English, participants' actions are still bound to the *teacher-hood* (Bonacina-Pugh 2013) or *student-hood* categories they enact when *doing being* in the regular English class. We have named it 'in-between learning scenario' for several reasons. First, interaction does not unfold as a process strictly derived from the regular classroom agenda, yet participants categorize one another as they did in the English classroom. Second, interaction occurs beyond the physical and temporary space of the classroom (after the academic period), and teachers are not expected to assign pedagogical tasks, assess students' performance or to provide pedagogical feedback. Third, learning cannot be regarded as taking place 'in the wild' (Clark et al. 2011) as the interaction does not spring spontaneously; instead, it is initiated and mediated by the teacher. Thus, this 'in-between

learning scenario' is task-oriented (raising funds to subsidize the trip), goal-oriented (managing face-to-face activities and actions, including meetings), teacher-mediated (the two teachers create the WhatsApp chat and monitor the interaction), local (only Catalan students participate), exclusive (only for those students who will travel abroad) and occurring beyond the physical and temporary limits of the classroom (outside the school, during summer holidays).

In this paper, we aim to explore how, in the WhatsApp chat, participants' language choices and alternation co-construct what we have called an 'in-between learning scenario' and shape the *practiced language policy* they implicitly and explicitly adopt. We will focus on

- 1) how participants negotiate the *medium of interaction* in the chat and set the norms of the practiced language policy.
- 2) the purposes language alternation serves.

3.1. Our corpus

The WhatsApp chat in the single-case study presented here hosted 12 participants (2 English teachers and 10 Catalan students of English) and was created to monitor the task of raising funds to subsidise a trip to Greece and it ended upon participants' return. Thus, it was active for a total of 3 months and half. Excerpts for this article only illustrate the planning of the trip. They are presented and analysed chronologically and there is a time span of three months between excerpt 1 and excerpt 5. During this period, communication did not occur exclusively via chat, as participants had face-to-face meetings on a regular basis. Thus, the chat serves three purposes. First, it allows all participants to arrange face-to-face meetings to discuss possible fund-raising activities. Second, it serves the students not present in a particular face-to-face meeting to notify their absence and to be informed of the agreements reached. Third, it allows

students to give one another and their teachers an account of the actions they, individually or in small groups, are engaged in between meetings.

The first excerpt illustrates how the teachers describe the purpose of the group. The second excerpt exemplifies and how participants arrange the first meeting. The third excerpt shows participants arranging another meeting and summarising the agreements taken once it is over. In the fourth excerpt students inform about their fund-raising actions. These four instances illustrate how participants construct the ‘in-between learning scenario’ drawing on the emerging norms of the *practiced language policy* they set as a new community of practice.

Ethical approval to use this data was obtained by UAB Research Ethics Committee CEEAH (ref. No. 3670) and all the names of the participants have been duly anonymised.

3.2. Methodology for analysis

WhatsApp provides the feature of downloading the chat in a .txt format. We chose this option for two reasons: (a) to keep track of the exact time (minutes: seconds) every message had been posted and (b) to be able to edit the text to mark the languages being used. We use underlining for Catalan and **bold** for Spanish. We use *italics* to include researchers’ comments such as translating the text produced in Catalan or Spanish, indicating who responds to each message or informing of the type of file participants post to the chat. Teachers mark their language shifts in the text either with parenthesis or quotation marks. We have left these symbols as they were posted.

The selected excerpts are analysed sequentially following the premises of the Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (EMCA) as a research apparatus. However, considering the digital nature of our data, we have taken into account the special features of the channel of the interaction analysed, i.e. an online text-based interaction. Multiple researchers have taken the challenge of using CA to approach both data produced online (both

audiovisual or text-based) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) or interaction (CMI). Most studies place a special focus on sequence organization and turn-taking in CMC in comparison to well-established findings of such aspects in face-to-face oral communication (see for example Giles, Stommel, Paulus, Lester and Reed (2015) and Tudini and Liddicoat (2017) for a review of some influential research on the field). Several authors have also turned their attention to the unique interactional resources deployed by users to participate and interact on different social media platforms and video games (Thorne, Hellermann, Jones, and Lester 2015; Androutsopoulos 2010, among others) as well as to the affordances and opportunities offered by every specific medium and how users manage each medium's potential constraints (see, for example, Hutchby 2001; Meredith 2019). Among other aspects, the investigation of L2 CMC and CMI (and by extension, mobile-mediated interaction and communication: MMI or MMC) from a CA perspective (González-Lloret 2011; Kitade 2005; Negretti 1999; Thorne and Hellermann 2022; Balaman and Sert 2017; Pekarek-Doehler and Balaman 2021; Pratginestós and Masats 2021; among others) has focussed on learners' participation and task accomplishment and have also problematized the use of the traditional devices of CA to analyse data produced online by L2 learners, such as turn-taking, sequence organization or repair.

In this paper, we draw on Pratginestós and Masats (2021)'s proposal on how to analyse Turn Construction Units (TCUs) in the context of mobile-mediated interaction. The authors expand Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) categorisation of TCUs' components proposal by including visual (pictures, gifs, giphys and emojis), audial (instant recorded oral messages), audio-visual (videos) and hypertextual (links to other (multimodal) texts) units added to the already established lexical (words), phrasal (phrases), clausal (clauses) and sentential (sentences) units. As for the turn organisation, the authors make a distinction between *compact message unit* (no other participant takes the floor while the message is being produced and

delivered), and *split message unit* (the message is broken into different units and other participants may take the floor before the message is fully delivered).

Finally, some accountable features of a WhatsApp chat are to be underscored. The exact time the turn is posted to the chat is registered by the system, which informs us of the overlapping and the transition time between turns (which is not as relevant and informative as it would be in a face-to-face interaction as participants might not answer straight away for multiple reasons). Currently, WhatsApp also offers a feature to refer to the exact previous adjacent turn the participant are responding to, even if this turn has been posted long before, which is a peculiarity that helps the user organize the sequences better and avoid misunderstandings. This device, which differs from the one that someone would use in face-to-face oral interactions to refer to a previous adjacent turn, favours what has been referred to as the *virtual adjacency* (Schönfeldt and Golato 2003). However, as we will see in the analysis, not all users use this mechanism to respond to a previous turn, which can generate ambiguity when different sequences are occurring simultaneously (and constitutes a limitation to our study).

4. Analysis

To understand how participants jointly construct the *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Plugh 2012) governing the ‘in-between learning scenario’ they co-create, first we draw our attention to the negotiation participants engage in to determine the *medium of interaction* (Gafaranga 1999) in the chat. Then, we examine how through language alternation teachers enact *doing being* the teachers (Sacks 1992), the identity they typically adopt in the regular classroom. Finally, we describe how language choice and alternation on the students’ part indexes their alignment with other interactants and their interpretation of the task at hand and/or the actual scenario.

4.1. *Negotiating the medium of interaction*

The chat is initiated by TEACHER 1 to manage the actions students need to organize during the summer to raise funds for the school trip. To observe how participants engage in it and select the *medium of interaction* we first focus on how she directs the conversation. In excerpt 1, from line 1 to line 18, she self-initiates topics (lines 1, 7 and 13) that generate 3 sequences which serve different communicative purposes: (a) to greet everyone and announce the reason for creating the group (lines 1-6 and 11), (b) to add new members (lines 7-10 and 12) and (c) to assign the task in a qualified manner (lines 13-15 and 17-18):

Excerpt 1. Setting the *medium of interaction* in a new Community of Practice

- 1 [Jun. 27 9:49:06] TEACHER 1: Good morning, everyone!!
- 2 [Jun. 27 9:49:55] TEACHER 1: We are creating this group so that we can start planning
- 3 your trip to Greece 😊
- 4 [Jun. 27 9:50:43] MAR: Okey 😊
- 5 [Jun. 27 9:50:53] ANN: Okey
- 6 [Jun. 27 9:50:59] LUZ: 👍
- 7 [Jun. 27 9:51:06] TEACHER 1: Could anyone add Zoe, please?
- 8 [Jun. 27 9:51:14] ANN: Yes
- 9 [Jun. 27 9:51:31] ANN attaches Zoe's contact with a nickname
- 10 [Jun. 27 9:51:51] ANN: Its Zoe 😊
- 11 (in response to lines 2-3) [Jun. 27 9:52:00] NOA: okey 😊
- 12 [Jun. 27 9:52:13] Teacher 1 adds ZOE
- 13 [Jun. 27 9:53:58] TEACHER 1: We should also start thinking of some activities we
- 14 could do to earn some money for the trip!
- 15 [Jun. 27 9:54:32] ANN: Okey
- 16 [Jun. 27 9:54:44] TEACHER 1: Maybe we could meet one day and do a brainstorming 😊
- 17 (in response to lines 13-14) [Jun. 27 9:54:47] NOA: but what we have to do?
- 18 [Jun. 27 9:55:37] ANN: We should think about ideas

Although this is a mobile-mediated interaction that occurs outside the temporary/spatial limits of the ordinary class, TEACHER 1 opts to initiate the chat in English, the same language she would habitually use to address her students in the regular L2 classroom. Her first turn opens a sequence directed to greet students (line 1) and to state the purpose of the chat (lines

2-3). She is responded within the split of 16 seconds by three learners, MAR, ANN, LUZ (lines 4-5-6) and 2 minutes later by NOA (line 11), who clearly approve her initiative of creating the group chat. Participants' responses to TEACHER 1's first two turns adopt different formats. For example, MAR (line 4) participates with a compact message unit consisting of a lexical ('Okey') and a visual (a winking face emoji) unit (line 4), ANN simply produces a lexical unit ('Okey', line 5), and LUZ's answer (line 6) takes the form of a visual unit (a thumbs-up emoji). We draw our attention to the fact that students signal their acceptance to both the creation of the chat and the *medium of interaction* adopted by the teacher in two different modes (visual and verbal). The spelling 'okey' (instead of 'okay') in our corpus does not signal a change of medium. This is specially supported by observing ANN's actions. Two of her message units contain the discourse marker 'okey' (lines 5 and 15), but her other compact turns, which are more elaborated, are produced in a unilingual mode in English (lines 8 and 18) or accompanied by a visual unit (a face laughing with tears, line 10). So ANN contributes to the development of the topics raised in two modalities, while aligning to the medium of interaction used by the teacher.

The second sequence initiated by TEACHER 1 (line 7), serves to request students to add a new member. The action is accepted (line 8) and executed (line 9) by ANN who adds Zoe's (see line 10). Again, this sequence is conducted in English. In lines 13-14 TEACHER 1 initiates a new sequence to expand the task instruction given in lines 2-3. Learners again respond in English either with an approving utterance (line 15) or by requiring further details (line 17), and even when ANN, *doing being* the expert, responds to NOA's request for clarification (line 18). Thus, what it is significant to highlight in excerpt 1 is the fact that participants at this point do not challenge English as the *medium of interaction* in this newborn CoP. This will, however, occur in excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2. Co-constructing the acceptance of the medium of interaction

- 19 [Jun. 27 9:55:45] TEACHER 1: What about meeting tomorrow morning or one day
20 next week to talk about it?
21 [Jun. 27 9:57:00] NOA: the next week better please, at least for me
22 [Jun. 27 9:57:11] ANN: Yes tomorrow morning
23 [Jun. 27 9:57:30] ANN: Or as you want
24 [Jun. 27 9:59:10] ZOE: **Podemos hablar en castellano que nos entendemos bien?** 😊
ZOE: *Can we speak Spanish so that we understand each other well* 😊
25 [Jun. 27 9:59:45] ANN: No
26 (*in response to line 21*) [Jun. 27 10:00:03] MAR: Yes, please
27 (*in response to line 24*) [Jun. 27 10:00:10] KAI: In English better, in this way we can practice the language a bit more
28 [Jun. 27 10:00:22] ANN: Yes
29 (*in response to line 26*) [Jun. 27 10:00:38] ZOE: I'm in Bulgaria i can't
30 [Jun. 27 10:00:43] ZOE: Videocall
31 [Jun. 27 10:00:50] ANN: Yes
32 (*in response to line 19-20*) [Jun. 27 10:01:26] KAI: I don't care, the day that more
33 partners can come, I'm totally free 😊
34 [Jun. 27 10:05:34] TEACHER 1: Let's see how many of you could make it tomorrow
35 (let's say at 11.30 at the school) and we could also meet again one day next week.
36 [Jun. 27 10:06:05] ANN: I can't go
37 (*in response to 35-36*) [Jun. 27 10:06:27] KAI: Okey, I can go the two days 😊
38 (*in response to 37*) [Jun. 27 10:06:50] NOA: me neither
39 [Jun. 27 10:07:05] ANN: Next day
40 [Jun. 27 10:07:23] ANN: Netx week
41 [Jun. 27 10:07:27] ANN: Next*
42 (*in response to 35-36*) [Jun. 27 10:20:21] ZOE: I can't go any day, when you meet, I'll
43 make a video call with someone from the group and I'm informed
44 [Jun. 27 10:32:28] TEACHER 1: Ok, let's see what the others say and we'll decide

The proposal to negotiate how and when to meet is, again, initiated by TEACHER 1 in line 16 (see excerpt 1) and reformulated in lines 19-20 (excerpt 2). NOA (line 21), ANN (lines 22-23) and MAR (line 26) again participate in English. However, in line 24, ZOE intervenes for the first time to negotiate the *medium of interaction*, and therefore, in turn, challenges the *practiced language policy* adopted so far by the CoP (**Podemos hablar en castellano que nos**

entendemos bien? 😊). ZOE's suggestion to use Spanish to facilitate understanding is enacted with a compact message composed of sentential unit and a visual unit (an emoji of a face laughing with tears 😂). Emojis serve a broader range of communication functions beyond just expressing feelings (Kelly and Watts, 2015). In this case it "orchestrates the interaction" (Dooly and Czura, 2022, p. 200) by softening her proposal, which involves breaking the set norm and her alignment with the other participants. Interestingly, her request is responded to by two peers, but not by the teachers (lines 25, 27 and 28).

ANN takes a stronger stance by refusing ZOE's proposal with a blunt negative (line 25). KAI also reacts to ZOE's request (lines 27) misaligning with her, albeit, not with a direct openly disagreeing response but with an explicit expression of preference for English, and an account that contributes to the language policy negotiation (i.e. the opportunity for practicing the language). ANN reaffirms (line 28) KAI's justification for the use of English (lines 27) and the other participants, by not aligning with ZOE and continuing using English in their subsequent turns, implicitly align with the established *practiced language policy*. ZOE herself aligns back with the group by returning to English in her immediately subsequent turn (line 29); and in lines 43-44, where she produces a long utterance also entirely in English.

This excerpt illustrates that up to this point, learners have aligned with TEACHER 1 in the understanding that, although the interaction is taking place beyond the temporary and physical limits of the classroom, the same norm regarding the *practiced language policy* in the bigger CoP still prevails and therefore the exchange develops in English. Even though the chat was not created as a resource to learn English, it emerges as an 'in-between learning scenario' in which learners display a genuine, agentive interest in practising the lingua franca they will need to employ with their Greek counterparts (see Pratginestós 2022 to observe how Catalan and Greek students carry out a face-to-face pedagogical task in English while in Greece).

4.2. *Suspending the medium of interaction*

The conversation initiated by TEACHER 1 in excerpts 1 and 2 continues 5 days later when she sends a reminder of a previously scheduled face-to-face meeting. In the first part of the interaction on this particular day (not presented here for sake of brevity) participants negotiate the best time and place to meet. Later, JES, BEA, EVA and NOA excuse their presence at the meeting and request to be informed of the decisions taken (lines 154 and 157). This whole conversation still develops entirely in English and continue in excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3 shows the conversation occurring before (up to line 161) and after the face-to-face meeting (from line 162 onwards). In this latter case it serves to report on the agreements reached at the face-to-face meeting. It is worth noting that *practiced language policy* established for this small CoP in the chat group was broken at the face-to-face meeting, in which the conversation developed in Catalan and Spanish, accordingly to the participants' preferred language. Yet, when the interaction moves back to the chat, English is again the *medium of interaction* until Catalan is used by teachers to provide a digest of the meeting.

Excerpt 3. Suspending the medium of interaction

- 154 [Jul. 3 14:34:58] EVA: I can't go, when you can, informed me pliss💕
155 [Jul. 3 14:38:21] KEV: In the bar the zoo at four?
156 [Jul. 3 14:40:52] TEACHER 2: Yes, Kev
157 [Jul. 3 14:41:48] NOA: i can't go. can you informed please
158 [Jul. 3 14:42:32] TEACHER 2: Those of you who are not coming today will be informed, no problem👍
159 [Jul. 3 14:42:45] NOA: thanks💕
160 [Jul. 3 15:57:36] TEACHER 1: I'll be 5 minutes late. Sorry🙏
161 [Jul. 3 16:03:38] TEACHER 2: Ok
162 [Jul. 3 20:05:01] BEA: what you said in the meeting?
163 [Jul. 3 20:07:05] EVA: yes plis, can you summarize what do you speak?
164 [Jul. 3 22:01:41] TEACHER 2: Summary: we talked about ideas to raise money. For
165 next week, each of you think of 2 shops you know in Badia.
166 You have to ask them if they want to participate in helping you by giving discount
167 tickets. Then we make a package (**típica cesta de sorteo**) full of discount tickets and we
(*typical raffle basket*)
168 sell numbers for the people who want to help you. The winner of the raffle (**rifa, sorteo**)
(*raffle*)
169 gets the package.
170 [Jul. 3 22:02:15] BEA: Okay
171 [Jul. 3 22:03:08] EVA: okay
172 (*in response to line 165-170*) [Jul. 3 22:29:23] TEACHER 1: Great summary!😄😄
173 [Jul. 3 23:26:32] MAR: I don't understand 🤔
174 (*in response to line 174*) [Jul. 4 16:22:16] TEACHER 1: Mar, you all need to think of two or three
175 shops in Badia or near Badia that would like to collaborate with you by offering a discount or free
176 products/services (**vales de descuento o vales para algún producto o servicio gratis**) to add in the
(*discount coupon or vouchers for some free product or service*)
177 'panera' that will be raffled in September.
(*'raffle basket'*)
178 [Jul. 4 16:24:10] TEACHER 1: We are meeting next Monday 8 Jul. at 4pm again so
179 that we can already give you the document with the information you can give the shops
180 when you ask for their collaboration
181 [Jul. 4 16:24:35] EVA: ah okeyy perfect💕
182 [Jul. 4 16:24:35] BEA: Okay
183 [Jul. 4 16:24:57] TEACHER 1: Once we have 'convinced' some sponsors we will start
184 selling the raffle tickets at the price of 2€
185 [Jul. 4 19:31:53] JESS: Okey

In lines 164-169 TEACHER 2, in a self-allocated long turn, provides the summary of the meeting. On doing so, he enacts *being doing* the teacher with a plurilingual turn in which Spanish (the preferred language of socialisation amongst students) becomes a resource to clarify the meaning of English words he assumes will hinder comprehension. It is interesting to notice that he marks his language switches with parenthesis. As we can see in lines 170-171, TEACHER 2's summary receives a simple validation of the learners that had requested the progress update (both with a single lexical unit: okay) and, also, the positive appraisal of his colleague through a compact message unit consisting of a sentential and two visual units: the emojis of a happy face and a face with sunglasses (line 172). MAR, however, takes her epistemic stance by overtly recognizing she does not understand what has been said (line 173). On doing so, she shows misalignment and breaks intersubjectivity with the other participants, but still accommodates with the agreed practice language policy and uses English as the *medium of interaction*.

At this point, TEACHER 1 (lines 174-177) self-selects a turn and uses the turn-allocation mechanism available in WhatsApp to do so (signalling the selected turn being answered) and redundantly addresses MAR to reformulate for her the information TEACHER 2 provided. TEACHER 1 also enacts *doing being* the teacher and relies on language alternation to clarify meaning. She signals her language switch into Spanish with parenthesis, as TEACHER 2 had done, and her switch into Catalan with single quotation marks. Interestingly, her assumptions of which English words in TEACHER 2's summary are obscure for learners may differ from those of her colleague. For example, in line 168 TEACHER 2 introduces the word 'raffle' and immediately translates it into Spanish in brackets. TEACHER 1 recycles the term and uses it as a verb in line 177. However, TEACHER 1's enactment of doing being is clearer when her discursive actions differ from those of her colleague. For instance, TEACHER 2 employs the concept 'discount tickets' in lines 166 ('ask them if they want to participate in

helping you by giving discount tickets’) and 167 (Then we make a package [...] full of discount tickets’) without making it salient. However, in lines 174-177 TEACHER 1 opts to paraphrase the idea expressed by his colleague (‘think of two or three shops in Badia or near Badia that would like to collaborate with you by offering a discount or free products/services’) and, in line 176, she translates into Spanish the word ‘discount ticket’ (‘**vales de descuento**’ o ‘**vales para algún producto**’ o ‘**servicio gratis**’). Hence, both her reformulation and the resource to Spanish enables her to clarify the instructions of task they are describing. Another example of the intertwined bond between language alternation and meaning making can be observed in how the two teachers deal with TEACHER 2 use of the word ‘package’ to refer to a ‘gift basket’. Since the choice is seen as problematic, in line 167 TEACHER 2 immediately reformulates it in Spanish as ‘**típica cesta de sorteo**’ (typical raffle basket) and, when paraphrasing for NOA the information provided her colleague, TEACHER 1 avoids it and uses ‘panera’ (line 177), a Catalan term that clearly stands for the object they are describing.

Teachers’ choice to resort to Catalan and/or Spanish and suspend the medium of interaction is a common trait of plurilingual talk in educational settings in Catalonia as the mobilisation of a plurilingual repertoire can enhance the comprehension of complex terms (Moore 2016). Thus, when confronted to a possible lack of understanding on the students’ part, teachers resort to micro-alternations to enact *doing being* the teacher. That is, although teachers created the chat as a managing tool, they adjust to their pedagogical agenda and offer students the necessary scaffolding for the task to progress by strategically introducing unrequested and unplanned clarifications in Spanish and/or Catalan. In classroom settings teachers typically display their affiliation to the educational institution (Cots and Nussbaum 2008) and use Catalan, not Spanish, when interacting with students or solving language problems in the case of the English class. In this excerpt, though, teachers seem to resort to Spanish to align to students’ preferred language (ZOE’s request in excerpt 2 was an attempt to establish Spanish

as the *medium of interaction*). The accommodation norm (by which Catalan speakers often switch to Spanish to address interlocutors who clearly show their preference for Spanish) typically describes the complex dynamics of language alternation in Catalonia (Woolard 2016). Catalan in this excerpt is only used by TEACHER 1 to label the object they are discussing with the most precise term in students' repertoire.

Excerpt 3, therefore, serves to illustrate that teachers' language choices are accountable. Catalan and Spanish serve the purpose of clarifying meaning whereas paraphrasing these terms in English serves to align to the *practiced language policy* and offers learners a model on how to overcome a possible intercultural misadjustment, which, in turn, is an attempt to favour the development of their intercultural competence. This move is a resource to ensure the inclusion of all participants (Seedhouse 2004) in their explanation, but it also serves to construct the communicative event as an 'in-between learning scenario.'

4.3. Reporting on the actions taken

So far, the *practiced language policy* of this small CoP in the WhatsApp chat has legitimized English as the preferred medium of interaction, and alternation to Catalan and Spanish is allowed when teachers support students' understanding. However, as we can observe in excerpt 4, at a certain point, the *practiced language policy* changes. It is important to note that excerpt 4 occurs only 15 minutes after the face-to-face meeting has ended. Face-to-face meetings occur in public spaces (cafeteria or library) in the town, where the members of this CoP abandon their enactment of *doing being* the teacher or the students. Thus, as they mostly did during the school year when they socialised at school outside the classroom, they co-construct a *practiced language policy* that legitimates a bilingual (Catalan/Spanish) medium of interaction that does not include English.

Excerpt 4. Challenging the language policy

- 248 [Jul. 8 17:42:32] MAR: **La luz y yo ya tenemos 3 tiendas**
MAR: Luz and I already have 3 shops (original in Spanish)
- 249 [Jul. 8 17:44:27] KAI: Ja tinc el primer vale, de la merceria M^aLuisa, és de un vale per un arreglo de 6€
KAI: *I already have the first voucher, from the haberdashery M^aLuisa, it's a voucher for a 6€ arrangement*
- 250 [Jul. 8 17:47:12] TEACHER 1: **Olé!!** 🍌🍌🍌
(in response to line 248) [Jul. 8 17:47:26] TEACHER 1: Which ones, girls?
- 252 [Jul. 8 17:48:01] MAR: **Optica, un estanco y el centro digital** (in response to line 252)
MAR: *Optician's, a tobacconist's and digital centre*
- 253 [Jul. 8 17:48:22] TEACHER 1: Wow!! What did they offer?
- 254 [Jul. 8 17:48:49] MAR: **Nos han dicho que les demos los papeles de descuento y los rellenan**
MAR: *We have been told to give them the discount papers and they fill them out*
- 255 [Jul. 8 17:49:43] TEACHER 1: Cool!!!! 🍌🍌
256 [Jul. 9 11:40:15] BEA attaches a photo of a voucher
257 [Jul. 9 11:40:15] BEA: We have another shop (+attaches a photo of a voucher)
258 [Jul. 9 11:53:18] EVA attaches a photo of a voucher
259 [Jul. 9 11:53:23] EVA attaches a photo of a voucher
260 [Jul. 9 11:53:30] EVA: another
261 [Jul. 9 11:56:21] BEA attaches a photo of a voucher
262 [Jul. 9 11:56:24] BEA attaches a photo of a voucher
263 [Jul. 9 11:58:58] TEACHER 1: Well done, everyone!!! 🥳
264 [Jul. 9 11:59:27] KAI: Upload it to the Instagram @bea @eva
265 [Jul. 9 12:08:16] ANN attaches 3 photos of a list of shops
266 [Jul. 9 12:09:31] EVA: l'armari de la Silvia també col·laborarà
EVA: *The armari de la Silvia (name of the shop) will also collaborate*
- 267 [Jul. 9 12:09:47] EVA: pero ha dit que pasem ha buscar el vale el divendres
EVA: *but has told us to come and pick up the voucher on Friday*
- 268 [Jul. 9 12:12:43] KAI: Poseu els vales al compte d'instagram @bea @eva
KAI: *Post the vouchers to the Instagram account @bea @eva*

Excerpt 4 serves students to announce they have already obtained vouchers from three shops to include in the prize for the raffle they aim to organize to raise money for their trip (line 248). We observe that MAR (line 248) and KAI (line 249), with a span of 2 minutes, send

a message to the chat reporting their achievements. MAR (and Luz, as a ratified participant virtually included by MAR in the interaction) do so in Spanish and KAI does it in Catalan. We cannot explain why MAR and KAI challenged the agreed *practiced language policy* in the chat by breaking the norm of using English only. We could argue that the short time span between the face-to-face meeting (held in Catalan and Spanish) and their first turns in the chat right after favours such change. The choice of Spanish (in the case of MAR) or Catalan (in the case of KAI) is an individual preference for a particular medium of interaction that is beyond the scope of this article. It is important to notice that KAI is the student who explicitly had refused to accept ZOE's proposal of not using English in the chat (see excerpt 2). His acceptance now of MAR's language shift into Spanish and his own into Catalan indexes the adoption of a new norm in the *practiced language policy* (the embracement of a plurilingual medium of interaction) and signals the occurrence of another change, related to who (the teachers or the students) controls the conversation.

In the previous excerpts, teachers were in control of the conversation in the chat because they had managed the conversation topics, had assigned tasks, had been in possession of the information needed for the progression of the interaction and had selected the ratified medium of interaction. Thus, we would argue that English was the medium of interaction because it is the teachers' preferred language and students accommodate to the norm. Students' refusal of ZOE's earlier proposal (line 24, excerpt 2) to use Spanish in the chat proves English is also the students' preferred language while the chat serves students to get informed of the actions they are expected to take. However, when the students start reporting on the actions they are taking, they are the ones who have the information and can start managing the topics themselves. On doing so, they cease to envisage the chat as an 'in between learning scenario' and break the existing language policy by participating in their preferred language, either Catalan or Spanish.

TEACHER 1's language alternation in her split message (lines 250-251) serves two purposes. First, she momentarily suspends the English only norm accepted by all participants as their *practiced language policy* and endorses the learners' achievements with a Spanish interjection representing an exclamation of approval or encouragement (line 250). Second, she immediately signals her interest in maintaining English as the *medium of interaction* when she requires further information (line 251) in English. Turn 250 is constructed multimodally with a lexical unit in Spanish followed by a visual unit consisting of 3 hands applauding. In participation activities, multimodal resources play a key role, as participation is reflected through all the actions interactants perform, including the use of gestures, gaze, images or emoji, among others (Goodwin and Goodwin 2004). Thus, signalling approval in two codes (textual and emoji) stresses the positive feedback learners receive. As Dooly and Czura (2022) point out, the two codes reinforce one another as verbal and gesture communication do in face-to-face communication. Yet, the fact that the emoji is posted after the lexical unit 'Olé' in Spanish in turn 250, and just before the message TEACHER 1 addresses in English to MAR and LUZ, serves as a discourse marker to signals the transition from one language to the other. TEACHER 1' turn 251 is explicitly addressed to MAR and LUZ (the teacher uses the mechanism provided by the app to select a previous message and the vocative *girls* to address them) and performed in English. Yet, this language switch does not trigger MAR's return to English as the medium of interaction and she responds in Spanish (line 252). In line 253 TEACHER 1 sticks to English but receives another response in Spanish by MAR (254), which, in line 255 she acknowledges, again, in English. TEACHER 1' use of the same emoji she had used in line 250 to mark her shift from Spanish into English indexes her interest in maintaining the intersubjectivity without deviating from the implicitly agreed *practiced language policy*. This move is understood as such by BEA who, after sending a picture of one of her vouchers (line 256), she switches back to English to report on this action verbally (line 257). BEA's

alignment with TEACHER 1's language choice and the agreed *practiced language policy* is also supported by EVA (line 260) while the two of them share more pictures of their vouchers.

At this point students seem to have accepted TEACHER 1's attempt of recovering English as the medium of interaction and this explains why, after TEACHER 1's new turn congratulating everyone for their achievements (with a sentential unit and a visual unit in line 263), KAI also intervenes again in English. He requests BEA and EVA (by addressing them specifically through the turn-allocation mechanism available in the app with the symbol @ in line 264) to upload the photos of the vouchers to the Instagram account purposely created for the task. It is then when a new change of the medium of interaction occurs. EVA, unlike what she had done earlier (line 260), intervenes in Catalan, now through a split turn (lines 266-267) in which she ignores KAI's request, and provides information on one of the collaborating shops she has managed to engage in the project. This language switch into Catalan triggers KAI's next turn (line 268) in which he reproduces, 44 seconds after his previous turn in English, the same request he makes in line 264 (again addressing BEA and EVA), but this time in Catalan (line 268). KAI's turn, thus, resort to a participant-related code-switching in favour of the task progression and to avoid a breakage in intersubjectivity. By observing KAI's interventions in this excerpt, we can conclude that Catalan is his preferred language, and he uses it when other students intervene in their preferred languages (either Catalan or Spanish) but stick to English when other participants do so.

Excerpt 4 illustrates that KAI and EVA's last turns in Catalan in excerpt 4 constitute a turning point in terms of language choices in the chat. From then on, although TEACHER 1 and 2 stick to the initial *practiced language policy* and produce their turns in English, the fact that they do not correct the students use of Catalan and Spanish to report their actions indicate they accept a new *practiced language policy*: the use of plurilingual talk. For the rest of the summer, students will use their preferred language in the chat (either Catalan, Spanish or

occasionally English in the case of KAI). TEACHER 1 and TEACHER 2 will stick to English except when they deal with crucial information regarding the trip, in this case they will accommodate to students' preferred language, as we see in excerpt 5 when participants are discussing how to travel to the airport.

Excerpt 5. Constructing a plurilingual medium of interaction

- 745 [30/9/19 12:54:14] JES: **Porque es una tontería ir si no llevo a nadie**
JES: Because it is silly to go if I am not taking anyone with me
- 746 [30/9/19 12:55:23] ZOE: La Meva Mare ha guanyat el tercer premi, que es guanya amb aquest premi?
ZOE: My Mum has won the third prize, what do you win with this prize?
- 747 [30/9/19 12:58:02] TEACHER 1: Si tothom té clar amb qui va, cap problema! Si algú no ho té clar,
 748 que ho digui ara 🙏😅
TEACHER 1: If everyone is clear about who they are going with, no problem! If anybody is not clear about that, please say so now 🙏😅
- 749 *(in response to line 746)* [30/9/19 12:58:43] TEACHER 1: 🙌🙌🙌 !!
- 750 [30/9/19 12:58:56] TEACHER 1: Jorge must know
- 751 *(in response to line 746)* TEACHER 2: Encara l'he de preparar, seran uns 3-4 vales
TEACHER 2: I still need to prepare it; it is going to be around 3-4 vouchers
- 752 [30/9/19 13:01:21] TEACHER 2: Monday 7th will be ready 😊
- 753 [30/9/19 13:07:06] TEACHER 1: Thanks 🙌🙌

The discussion on how to get to the airport is conducted in Spanish even when TEACHER 1 takes the floor to contribute to a discussion conducted by the students in Spanish (for the sake of brevity, we only present here JES's turn 745). Yet, TEACHER 1 closes this exchange in Catalan (line 747-748). Her switch is triggered by ZOE's compact message, in Catalan, to introduce another topic (line 746). Later, TEACHER 1 reacts to ZOE's contribution with a visual unit (clapping hands, line 749) and a verbal compact message in which she switches back to English (line 750). Similarly, TEACHER 2 first aligns with ZOE's language choice (line 751) and then also switches back to English (line 752). ZOE's use of Catalan in this excerpt is interesting because she is the student who had asked to establish Spanish as the *medium of interaction* in the chat. In excerpt 2 she had addressed her request to both her teachers and their peers, and this may explain her language choice. Yet, in this case she is

clearly addressing the teachers and somehow showing ‘affiliation to the educational institution’ (Cots and Nussbaum, 2008). Thus, this excerpt shows how participants preferences for a particular language are not stable in the chat and contribute to the construct of a new *practiced language policy* sustained in the acceptance of a plurilingual *medium of interaction* that will last until WhatsApp communication ceases after the trip.

5. Conclusions

New technologies have opened the classroom doors allowing teachers to propose pedagogical tasks that may be performed in and outside the spatial and temporary boundaries of the educational institutions and calendars. Research on the use of mobile-mediated technology in language learning contexts has shown that WhatsApp opens up opportunities for participation and collaboration both within and beyond the classroom setting, nurturing a more personal and direct connection between educators and learners, while also fostering interaction among learners themselves (Sauro 2009). Tragant et al. (2021), who used WhatsApp to set a group of EFL learners language learning tasks, argue that as both on-task and off-task messages trigger students to use English beyond the walls of the classroom.

In our data, however, the WhatsApp chat is not created by two secondary teachers with a strictly pedagogical purpose, but as a communication channel with a small selected group of Catalan students to prepare an immediate trip to Greece as the culmination of the school project conducted in the English class with the whole cohort. Our analysis of the interaction in the chat is presented chronologically and it covers a time span of three months. At the beginning, the adults still enact their *teacher-hood* (Bonacina-Pugh 2013) by creating the chat to manage the organisation of the trip, a school-related activity, by taking the necessary actions to engage students in the preparation of the trip (calling meetings, giving instructions, summarising the

decisions taken, etc.) and specially, by participating in the chat in English, the language they orient to in class. The enactment of their *teacher-hood* is ratified by the learners, who welcome the teachers' initiative of creating a space to give them support in the preparation of the trip, and who initially collectively accept the English only norm as they envisage their participation in the chat as an opportunity for practicing English in light of using it as a lingua franca once in Greece. Interaction in the chat unfolds in summer beyond the physical and temporary space of the classroom and, therefore, it does not depend on the regular classroom agenda nor take places *in the wild*. In this 'in-between learning scenario' co-constructed by participants of this newly created *community of practice* (CoP, Lave and Wenger 1991), language choices are activities bound to language preference (Gafaranga 2001). Thus, we examine how interactants set, negotiate, suspend, and reshape the norms of the *practiced language policy* and the selection of the *medium of interaction* in the WhatsApp chat. To do so, we also explore the purposes language alternation serves.

Our results outline that participants understand the space of communication differently as the interaction unfolds. At the beginning, English is set as the *medium of interaction* in the chat because it is created by the teacher to instruct and guide the students on how to complete the school-related non-pedagogical task of raising funds for the school trip abroad (see excerpt 1). On doing so, she addresses the students in English, the language of instruction in the regular classroom. Students accept English as a *medium of interaction* and the *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh 2012) of this CoP is set. First, students' acceptance of English as a *medium of interaction* is implicit: they respond to the teacher in English (see excerpts 1 and 2). Then they make it explicit when they do not back up (excerpt 2, lines 25-27) the proposal of one of the students to switch into Spanish (excerpt 2, line 24). Their argument reveals they see the chat as a space for learning (KAI: In English better, in this way we can practice the language a bit more; excerpt 2, line 27). The conversation unfolds in English until one of the teachers,

anticipating possible linguistic intercultural obstacles, suspends the *medium of interaction* and resorts to plurilingual talk. TEACHER 2 uses Spanish to scaffold the task progression and attempts to paraphrase in English some very local culturally bound terms. TEACHER 1 follows the same strategy, alternatively using Catalan and Spanish to build on the meaning of these key concepts (see excerpt 3). So, as in any other classroom contexts in multilingual settings, plurilingual talk serves to maintain the intersubjectivity among participants and to avoid disengagement from either the task or the interaction (Llompert and Nussbaum 2023).

Our data also reveal that those who hold control of topic management in the chat determine the *medium of interaction*. Control is gained by who is in possession of the information that needs to be shared. When the chat starts, teachers are responsible for calling meetings, giving instructions, summarising the decisions taken, etc. (see excerpts 1, 2 and 3) and the conversation develops in English. However, when students start reporting on the actions performed to raise funds for the trip, they gain control of the chat (see excerpt 4). At this point, they self-assign the responsibility for managing the organisation of their talk. On doing so, they challenge the agreed *practiced language policy* and use Catalan and Spanish. For a while, teachers still stick to English as the *medium of interaction*, which causes ambiguity to determine the legitimised language (excerpt 4). As students' participation increases significantly through the posting of both visual and textual messages, any of the participants' preferred languages (Catalan, Spanish or English) or visual codes employed becomes accepted (see excerpt 5). This new *plurilingual medium of interaction* reveals that the *practiced language policy* in this CoP incorporates a new norm, according to which multiple languages can be employed. This new norm is also enacted when teachers do not correct those students who participate in Catalan or Spanish and even align, occasionally, with learners' language preferences, as TEACHER 1 does in excerpt 5. Teachers' alignment to the students' preferred language when they are not using English breaks their affiliation to the educational institution

(which establishes Catalan as the *medium of interaction* in and outside the classrooms). Yet, students like ZOE *DO* affiliate with the institution when they address their teachers in Catalan (excerpt 5) despite their use of Spanish (excerpt 2) with their peers (Masats and Nussbaum 2022). Other students, KAI and EVA for example, are reluctant to suspend English as the *medium of interaction* (excerpt 4) and only switch into Catalan when they do so. On the contrary, some other students (MAR in excerpt 4) immediately switch from English to Spanish when they get control of the topic selection in the chat.

Our results suggest that technology-mediated activities outside the classroom are only perceived as language learning activities if the right conditions are created for this to occur. Such conditions should include students' willingness and need to practice the target language outside the classroom and the teachers' interest in enacting *doing being* the teacher. When such conditions change and the students focus on the completion of a task that is not linguistic and occurs in a setting that does not require English, they fail to see the need to keep using English and stop perceiving the chat as a language learning space. We would therefore argue that technology-mediated meaningful tasks *per se* do not solve a challenging situation that most language teachers face on a daily basis in regular language classrooms: getting their students to use the target L2 language naturally (and see the need to do so) when both the teacher and the learners share the same L1s. Participants in our study created an 'in-between learning scenario' in which to practise English naturally and achieved to do so for some time. However, maintaining that scenario was not sustainable when the communication purpose changed. Thus, researchers and educators still need to keep on reflecting on the most adequate practices to ensure students are provided with meaningful proposals that can engage them in the use of the target language in an agentive manner. As we have demonstrated mobile-mediated communication technologies used strategically can help maximise (albeit not guarantee) interaction in the target language when all participants share one (or two) L1(s).

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