Creating a plurilingual space through talk-in-interaction

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Introduction

In the late 1950s British scholars of the so-called Language Awareness movement supported the idea that school curricula should foster explicit reflection on the nature and functions of language(s) as a means to favour the development of learners' metalinguistic competence (Hawkins, 1984). Such viewpoint was not widely accepted until a few decades later, when the conclusions of a symposia held by the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CCC) to promote understanding on educational and cultural matters between the members of the Council of Europe supported the acceptance that the observation of languages would enable learners to construct linguistic and cultural knowledge and to overcome misconceptions about language and learning (Committee for General and Technical Education, 1973). At the turn of the century, several members of the Research Centre for Plurilingual Education & Interaction (GREIP) took part in various European projects based on this premise, which resulted in the development of a pluralistic approach to languages and cultures known as 'éveil aux langues' (Candelier, 1998; Noguerol, 2000; Masats, 2001). The proposal was constructed upon the belief that in order to contribute to 'opening up classrooms to linguistic and cultural diversity' (Perregaux, 1995) teachers should create multilingual spaces, that is, opportunities for learners to 'awaken to languages' (Candelier, 2003a, 2003b), to embrace all the languages and varieties in their repertoires – regardless whether they were taught at school or not – and to appreciate the value of plurilingual practices as a procedure to construct knowledge (de Goumoëns et al, 2013).

In this chapter we want to examine the development of a class activity proposed by two primary teachers who opened up their classrooms to linguistic and cultural diversity and invited a mother of one of their students to tell a story in Moroccan Arabic. Our analysis will focus on how participants create a plurilingual space while they negotiate and enact the norms of language use they co-construct while they manage and conduct the activity at hand. Before presenting the analysis of our data, we will briefly relate current language policies in compulsory education in Catalonia and review the literature

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that allows us to understand and analyse plurilingual talk in schools and society. The chapter will end with some concluding remarks on our findings.

Plurilingual education and practice

Global migration movements at the turn of the century altered the linguistic landscapes of schools and societies worldwide and resulted in a renewed interest in a more holistic view of languages that triggered the need to promote plurilingual education. Today plurilingual education is at the root of European educational guidelines, such as those proposed in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001, 2018), as well as in the latest language policy documents in Catalonia. In this sense, the language model of the Catalan educational system (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018: 6) establishes:

the mastery of linguistic and communicative competence [is] constructed on the basis of interrelations and interaction between different languages [...] (and) that all languages, both curricular and native, contribute to the development of each student's communicative skills, meaning that they can use them to gain knowledge and achieve effective communication in different languages as well as in different situations and circumstances.

As stated in the introduction to this volume, Catalan (and Occitan in Aran, in northwestern Catalonia) are the "official languages of reference and the languages normally used in the instructional, administrative and communicative fields, and form the cornerstone of a plurilingual education project" (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018: 14); Spanish and one (or two) foreign languages are also part of the curriculum as objects or vehicles of instruction. Finally, the languages of students "play a role of integration and equality by raising awareness, respect, recognition, and openness toward the learning of all languages" (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018: 14) and occasionally can be studied as optional (non-)curricular subjects.

Plurilingual education is sustained in the principle that "teaching languages means helping pupils to develop a plurilingual repertoire, a repertoire that includes practices as well as representations" (Castellotti and Moore, 2002: 21). Opening up classrooms to a variety of languages means enacting some sort of language policy that reveals how languages are represented and (re)configured in the speakers' social ideal. Spolsky (2004: 217) argued that language policy

may be discovered in the linguistic behaviour (language practices) of the individual or group. It may also be discovered in the ideology or beliefs about language of the individual or group. Finally, it may be made explicit in the formal language management or planning decisions of an authorised body. That is, according to the author, language policy relates to (1) 'language management' actions as identified in texts and discourses, (2) speakers 'beliefs' and ideologies related to the values assigned to language varieties and features and (3) 'practice' or actual linguistic behaviours displayed in talk-in-interaction. Bonacina-Pugh (2012) coined the term 'practiced language policy' to refer to Spolsky's idea that "there is a policy within practices." Thus, 'practiced language policy' relates to the idea that speakers in talk-in-interaction orient to interactional norms they have deduced from their observation of language practices or they have co-constructed with other interactants. The author suggests that the role of the analyst is to unveil these norms and make them explicit. Among the norms employed by speakers who orient to plurilingual talk we find those regulating language alternation, or "the alternating use of more than one language in the same episode of talk" (Musk and Cromdal, 2018: 16).

Code-switching and language selection are resources that allow participants in a communicative event to create the 'practical status' (Unamuno, 2015) of the languages they use to interact and to co-construct their 'practiced language policy'. Following Gumperz's work, Auer (1984, 1998) argues that the sequential development of what he calls 'bilingual conversation' (here plurilingual talk) relies on two kind of language alternation ends. The first one is a 'discourse-related' activity employed by a speaker as a 'contextualisation cue' (Gumperz, 1982) to signal the other interactants a change of orientation in the discursive activity at hand. The second one is a 'participant-related' resource that indexes speakers' preference for a particular language or 'medium' (Gafaranga, 1999), either because they or other interactants lack competence, enact a particular identity or display their 'affiliation to the educational institution' (Cots and Nussbaum, 2008) by accommodating to the norms of language use present at schools.

To contextualise our data, we need to relate to previous studies that described the complex dynamics of language alternation in Catalonia. Woolard (1989, 2016) observed that people who opt to refer to their interactants in Catalan (ingroup norm) generally switch into Spanish (accommodation norm) if the response is offered in this language and then proceed in Spanish only (monolingual norm) or combine the use of both languages (bilingual norm). The accommodation norm also prevails in the language choices of students during leisure time at school (Vila and Vial, 2000; Galindo, 2008) and has not been altered by the presence of students of immigrant origin in Catalan schools (Vila, Sigués, and Oller, 2009). Studies conducted by several GREIP members (see, among others, Masats, Nussbaum, and Unamuno, 2007; Nussbaum and Unamuno, 2006; Unamuno, this volume) have illustrated that in the Catalan and English classrooms the medium of instruction and the medium of communication do not always coincide. Broadly speaking, learners conduct the tasks in the target language, but typically address their teachers in Catalan and their peers in Spanish to socialise, manage the task or solve communication problems. This does not occur in the Spanish lessons, where students tend to orient towards a monolingual norm (Spanish only).

In classrooms such as the one in our study, in which teachers want to create a plurilingual space open to the array of languages and cultures present in the students' repertoires, unveiling speakers' norms of language selection and language alternation becomes necessary to understand 'practiced language policy'.

Methodology

The data we present here illustrates a communicative event that took place in the late 2010s in a primary school sited in the city of Barcelona. Every year the school takes part in a national school musical festival, Cantania, in which organisers propose the participating schools a collection of songs they will perform together. That year the songs revolved around terror stories. Two fourth grade teachers from one of the schools participating in this music festival prepared a series of activities to get the children in their groups become familiar with the topic of Catania and to encourage them to narrate terror stories. GREIP members took part in the experience and engaged the groups in an Erasmus+ KA2 project (ref. 2015–1–ES01–KA203–016127) consisting in exchanging plurilingual and pluricultural experiences with children from other schools in Europe (see Vallejo and Noguerol, 2018). In this context, some children presented a few Arabian tales and, as most students seemed to be interested in the proposal, the two teachers decided to invite the mother of one of them to the school to tell a horror story.

The sequence we will analyse here takes places on the day the mother visited the school. The whole interaction lasts for about 45 minutes and was video-recorded and transcribed by one of the researchers who co-authors this chapter. As we cannot provide the transcription of the full length of the sequence, we have selected several excerpts in which participants engage in activities of language negotiation, language alternation and negotiation of meaning. When the activity starts, the two groups of ten-year-old children are sitting on the floor or on chairs forming a U-shape ready to listen to the story of Sulaymān. The mother sits at the front, on a chair facing the students, and in her hands she holds a text — written in Catalan — with the story she has selected for the occasion (see Figure 3.1). The two teachers sit at the back and the researcher holds the camera and is off screen.

The data we present here is particularly interesting because the classroom activity is led by a person, a mother, who does not form part of the group and who attempts to develop it in a language she does not master (Catalan) while is invited to do it in Moroccan Arabic, the family language of some students in the group. We will examine participants' co-construction of the 'practiced language policy' of this event. Our analysis will focus on how language alternation develops sequentially as the interaction unfolds, revealing the norms of language choice participants (teachers, students and the mother) affiliate with and how they rely to plurilingual talk to convey and construct meaning.



Figure 3.1 Seating arrangement

Enacting diversity

Excerpt 1 starts when one of the teachers invites the mother to tell the story in Arabic. She speaks Darija, a form of vernacular Arabic spoken in Morocco, but has already informed she has prepared the story in Catalan, a language she does not master.

Excerpt 1. Participants: The mother (MOT), two teachers (TE1 & TE2) and some students, including Alex (ALE), Adib (ADI), student 1 (ST1), student 2 (ST2, students in choral voice (STS) and unidentified speakers (PPP)

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la contessis en àrab i en català (.)
         you told it in arabic and in catalan(.)
10 MOT: mmm en CATALÁ:N/ no en: l'origen (.)
         mmm in CATALÁ: N/ no in: the origin (.)
11 TE1: sí en árabe (.)
         ves in arabic (.)
12 MOT: no (.) en ÁRABE/ (.)
13 PPP: sí (.)
         ves (.)
14 TE2: [hi ha molts que ho saben hi ha molts que XX]
         [there are a lot who know a lot who xxx]
15 STs: [sí (.) sí (.) sí XX hay muy pocos XX]
         [yes (.) yes (.) yes xxx there are few xx]
         ((children are very noisy and FTE interrupts the conversation to take
         control of the situation))
16 TE2: yo te animaría a explicarla (.) primer en àrab perquè els que
         I would encourage you to tell it (.) first in arabic so that those who
17
         t'entenguin ho puguin captar (.)i després el contem en castellà (.)
         can understand you could grasp it (.) and then we tell it in Spanish (.)
1.8
         [perquè després XX]
         [because after xxx]
19 TE1: [en català] en català porque lo [tienes en català]
         [in catalan] in catalan because you[have it in catalan]
20 TE2: [en català en català (.) en català sí perdona]
                                 [in catalan in catalan(.)in catalan yes sorry]
21 TE1: sí, pero estaría bien que primero (.)
         yes, but it would be nice that first (.)
22
         mira nois (.)us he demanat des del començament que calleu\ (.)
         come on boys (.) I have asked you from the start to be quiet\ (.)
23 TE2: ((directs gaze to the students the female teacher has scolded))
24 TE2: adib
25 ADI: es que me dise que lo tradusca/ (.)
         hmm he asks me to translate it for him (.)
26 TE2: ((signals Adib to approach))vine\ .. m'ho traduiràs a mi\ (.)
                                     come\.. you will translate it for me\ (.)
27 ALE: es que xxx que quiero que me lo traduzque (.)
         hmm xxx I want him to translate it for me (.)
28 TE2: que t'ho tradueixi\(.) vine (.) ((again signals Adid to approach))
         that he translates it for you\ (.)come (.)
29 TE1: que si lo quieres explicar primero en árabe (.) porque habrá
         that if you want to tell it first in arabic (.) because there would be
         muchos que lo entiendan (.) y después lo lees en catalán para
         many who would understand it (.) and then you read it in catalan for
31
         los [que no] lo han entendido del todo
         those [who haven't] understood it completely
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32 MOT: [vale] vale vale porque en árabe si:/ (.) voy a contar en árabe (.) eh
[ok] ok ok because in arabic yes:/ (.) I'm going to tell in arabic (.) eh

33 (..) bueno piensa que (.) poco más larga (.)
(..) well bear in mind that (.) a bit longer (.)
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Before the excerpt starts the mother has informed the two teachers that she has the text written down in Catalan, but if she had to do it again, she would write the story in Spanish (line 1). The two teachers reply that she could do it in Arabic (lines 2–3), which she does not accept (line 4). This short exchange triggers a discussion, which reveals the agenda of the participants and how they attempt to construct the 'practiced language policy' for this particular event.

First, we can observe that the mother perceives the language policy of the school does not legitimise the use of Arabic to tell the story and refuses to do so (lines 4, 12). On doing so, she is indexing that she attributes to Catalan the 'status of legitimate language' to carry out a pedagogical activity. This is clearly shown in line 10, when she hesitates and then produces the word 'Catalan' in a loud voice and rising intonation in opposition to the normal tone she uses when she refers to Arabic as 'the original' language of the story. Her affiliation to Catalan as the 'institutional language' contradicts the agenda of the two teachers who want to construct a plurilingual space in which heritage languages are accepted, in line with the language policy as described in the Catalan curriculum. To do so, TE1 modulates her proposal by inquiring about the length of the story (line 7) and encouraging the mother to tell it in Arabic if it is not too long (lines 8-9). This proposal, which as we have seen is not accepted by the mother (line 10), is received with surprise as shown by her raising intonation when pronouncing the word 'Arabic' (line 12), but welcomed by the other teacher (line 11) and the students (line 13). To persuade her to tell the story in Arabic, TE2 argues that there are a lot of children in the group who would understand the story in this language (lines 14–18) and children confirm so (line 15). Then TE2 proposes the solution of telling the story first in Arabic and later in Spanish (line 16-18). With his proposal TE2 is accommodating to the language the mother is using in this exchange. Yet, TE1 intervenes to point out that it should be retold in Catalan (not Spanish), asks the mother to confirm she has the text in this language (line 19) and reformulates the proposal of TE2 (lines 21, 29-31), who has already acknowledged his mistake (line 20). In this case, TE1 is affiliating to Catalan as the 'institutional language', as the mother had been doing. The affiliation of the two teachers to Catalan as the 'medium of interaction' when they are not interacting with the mother is also clear if we examine the embedded exchange in which they both address students who are being a bit noisy (lines 22-28) or the instances in which they address each other (line 20). Finally, the mother gives in, verbalises she accepts telling the story in Arabic (line 32, but makes a last attempt to negotiate the language in which she has to tell the story when she warns the teachers she will take long (line 33) in reference to the question TE1 had formulated in line 5 to suggest to her she could tell the story in Arabic and Catalan if it was not very long (lines 7–9). This

move clearly illustrates she is not satisfied with the agreement and explains her discourse behaviour when the task starts (see excerpt 2).

This excerpt is interesting because it illustrates the 'practiced language policy' the adults are negotiating for this particular communicative event and the local meaning given to each of the instances of language alternation that emerge in the interaction. So, while the adults are negotiating the use of either Arabic or Catalan as the 'preferred' languages for the activity, the language choices and alternations all participants display are set on a broad array of norms. The mother affiliates to Spanish as her 'preferred' medium of interaction but understands Catalan (bilingual norm) and negotiates that Catalan is her 'preferred' language to tell the story. Students also affiliate to Spanish either to accommodate to the mother's preferred language or as their own language of preference. The two teachers affiliate to Catalan as the medium of communication between each other and with the children (ingroup norm) but enact less fixed (bilingual) norms when they address the mother. In the case of TE1, all her switches from Spanish to Catalan in this excerpt are contextualisation cues that signal a change in the activity and in the addressee: she corrects TE2 in Catalan (line 19) and formulates a confirmation check addressed to the mother in Spanish (line 19) or she ceases to negotiate language with the mother in Spanish (line 21) and starts to solve classroom management issues with the children in Catalan (line 22). Language choices and alternation in the case of TE2 are sustained on more unstable norms. At the beginning of the excerpt he also accommodates to the mother's language of preference, Spanish, but soon switches into Catalan in the same turn (lines 7-8). The same situation occurs a few minutes later (lines 16–17), which indexes he seems to struggle between aligning himself with his addressee's 'preferred' language or with the institutional 'preferred' medium of communication.

As we will see in excerpt 2, once the task starts, the situated meaning of code alternation and the norms of use deployed by participants are modified and reconfigured sequentially in talk-in-interaction.

Excerpt 2. Participants: The mother (MOT), two teachers (TE1 & TE2) and some students, including Alex (ALE), Adib (ADI), student 1 (ST1), student 2 (ST2, students in choral voice (STS) and unidentified speakers (PPP)

```
MOT: eh کان عندو بزاف (kan eindu bizzaf) mujeres (.)
8.5
          eh he had a lot women (.)
          kan eindu bizzaf} de کان عندو بزاف
86
          he had a lot of
          mujeres (.) muchas mujeres عندو كان kan eindu} (.) فهمتى (fhamti} más de
87
           women (.) a lot of women he had (.)
                                                          ok / more than
           cinquenta (.) mujeres (.) فهمتی / {fhamti}
88
           fifty (.) women (.)ok /
           هذا الملك سيد نا سليمان كان مزوج بهم
89
           that king our lord sulaymān was married to them
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90
          casado con eh quen con cincuenta mujeres/(.)sulaymān/(..)
          married to eh to to fifty women/(.) sulaymān/(..)
91
          puedes explicar así/ mejor/ si/
          can you tell it like this/ better/ yes/
92
    TE2:
          [como XX]
          [as xx]
93
    TE1:
         [como tú lo hagas más cómoda]
          [as you do it more comfortable]
         eh سيمان قال لهم. رجل hadha sayyidna sulaymān kan eindu} muchas chicas (.)
94
    MOT:
          eh this our lord sulaymān had many girls (.)
          hijas no tiene hijos (.) solo chicas (..) más de quinientos (.)
95
          daughters he didn't have sons (.) only girls (.) more than five hundred (.)
96
          muchos muchos muchos chicas (.)
          (.) {sayyidna sulaymān kalihum}
97
          our lord sulaymān told them (.)
          soy un hombre (.) uno رجل {rajel}
98
          I am a man (.) one man
99
          ((the mother makes a gesture indicating strength
          and children imitate her: see Figure 3.2))
100
101
          hombre es رجل en árabe رجل {rajel} رجل {rajel}
          man is رجل (rajel) in arabic رجل (rajel)
102
          tengo que ten- que que (.) tengo que
          (.) I have to I ha- to to (.) have to
103
          tener un un niño y puedes que tengo un niño (2) el el demonios + \{jinn\}
          have a a boy and you may that I have a boy (2) the the devils devil
104
          ((caughs and looks at a child while she pretends she is scaring demonds))
105
          entiendes/(.)
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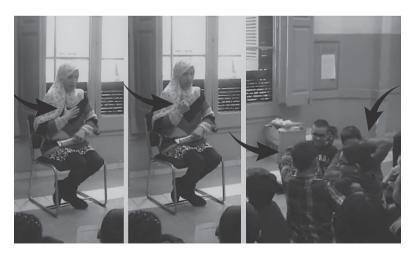


Figure 3.2 Students reproducing the gestures made by the mother

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(...)
328 MOT: ((reading her notes)) que ningún tenia (.) els (.) mateixos (..)
                                that nobody has (.) the (.) same (..)
329
          pot (.) e::h (.) podre
          po (.) e:hh (.) poe
330 ALE: poder\(.)
          power\(.)
331 MOT: podre (.)
          poer (.)
332 TE2: poders\(.)
          Powers\(.)
333 MOT: ((looks at the teacher)) poders poders que déu (2) ell va dir que si ningú
                                  powers powers that god (2)he said that if nobody
331
          <ho (.) havia (.) entès (.) di (.) miri (.) el meu (.) +0kzampla+>
          <it (.) had (.) understood (.) say (.) look (.) my (.) example>
          ((looks at the children and at her paper)) +0kzampla +
335
          ((looks at the teacher))
336
337 STS: +0gzempl0+ XXX
338 MOT: +0kzampla+
339 TE2: +0gzempl0+
340 MOT
          +0gzem:pl0 0gzempl0+
341 TE2: eso \(.)
          that's it\ (.)
    (...)
413 TE1: XXX unes preguntes/ (.)
          a few questions/ (.)
414 MOT: pero en castellano eh
          but in spanish eh
415 TE1: algú té una pregunta:/ (.)
          has anyone got a question:/(.)
```

 had prepared for such a purpose. On doing so, she very often hesitates when reading (e.g. she lengthens some of the sounds or repeats words, as in line 329) or requests for help with her gaze (line 335–336). These cues trigger hetero-repair moves initiated by the children (lines 330 and 337) and confirmed by TE2 (lines 332 and 339) to scaffold her discourse. The mother willingly accepts those lexical (lines 330 and 332) and phonetical (lines 337 and 339) repairs, as indicated by her repetition and incorporation of the repair items (lines 333 and 340).

When children become too noisy, she progressively stops reading and switches into Spanish to interact with the audience and complete the story. At the end, children give her a round of applause and TE1 invites students to ask questions (line 413). At this point, both adults align to their preferred medium of interaction: the mother to Spanish as the shared language she manages (line 414) and TE1 to Catalan (line 415) as displaying affiliation to the institution. Thus, 'practiced language policy' is again enacted through the norms of language choice and alternation described in excerpt 1

Conclusions

In this chapter we have examined a classroom task lead by a mother who has been invited to the class of her primary school child to tell an Arabic tale. Before and during the task participants engage in activities of language negotiation that reveal the complex norms of language use constructed in Catalan schools and society. Our data reveals that participants orient to different norms of 'practiced language policy' depending on whether they are conducting the activity or managing it. In this classroom event, in which the teachers want to create a plurilingual space open to the family language of some students in the group, both Arabic and Catalan are reconfigured as 'legitimate' languages to conduct the activity, but Spanish is not (excerpt 1, lines 16–20). When this norm becomes a 'practiced language policy', Spanish emerges because the mother, who is not proficient in Catalan, employs it as a scaffolding mechanism to ensure that the teachers and those students who do not speak Arabic can understand her.

The negotiation of the 'preferred' language to tell the story is not easy because the mother affiliates with her perceived language policy in the institution and insists on telling it in Catalan, which she pretends to do by reading it from a paper she brought with her (see excerpt 2, lines 328–340). As she does not master this language, Spanish is her 'preferred' language of interaction and uses it to negotiate with the teachers the language in which she will tell the story. The teachers following an accommodation norm quite widely spread in Catalan society when someone replies in Spanish, also address her in this language (excerpt 1, lines 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 15, 21, 29–31; excerpt 2, lines 92–93 and 341); and students do that too (excerpt 1, line 15). Yet, TE2 affiliation to the accommodation norm is less stable and she occasionally switches into Catalan to address the mother (excerpt 1, lines 14, 17, 18), which shows affiliation to

the institution. This ingroup norm (Catalan only) is strictly adopted by both teachers when they address each other (excerpt 1, line 20) or the children (excerpt 1, lines 22, 26 and 28; excerpt 2, lines 413 and 415). Our data, thus, reveal a tension between the speakers' 'declared language policy' (what they say/want to do) and the actual 'practiced language policy' (what they do as the interaction sequentially unfolds), explained by the affiliations to which interactants orient to (institutions or other participants) in talk-in-interaction.

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