Chapter 8

Doing 'being sociolinguists'

Students' envisagement of languages, varieties and uses

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Introduction

Migration movements to and from Catalonia have been common along various historical periods. In 2000 foreign-born citizens constituted 2.8% of the total population in Catalonia; the figure rose to 15.95% in 2010 and decreased to 15.11% in 2019 (Idescat, 2020). Such diasporas have had a great impact in shaping the linguistic and cultural composition of Catalan schools and society. Language education, therefore, must establish links between learners' actual language experiences and language learning. Giving the floor to learners and letting them do 'being sociolinguists', that is, allowing learners to verbalise how they categorise languages, varieties and their users, seems to be necessary to understand their linguistic practices and to establish the aforementioned link to how languages are used and learnt at home and at schools.

People's linguistic and cultural competence is socially-situated, rooted in action and constantly reconfigured. In this chapter we will observe samples of talk-in-interaction in episodes in which Catalan-born primary students of Moroccan ancestry engage in discursive activities of categorising and attributing values to the languages they know. In turn, this will allow us to understand how they envisage otherness in the linguistic practices they engage with their mothers at home or with their peers at school. First, we will theoretically ground the notion of sociolinguistic competence and category building. Next, we will provide methodological information about our study. Then, we will analyse how two groups of learners from different schools engage in the task of describing their plurilingual repertoire and practices. Our analysis will allow us to draw some conclusions with regards to plurilingual education in multilingual settings.

Action-situated competence

In multilingual schools and societies, people face the need to take part in communicative events in more than two languages, which enable them to develop their 'plurilingual and pluricultural competence' (Coste, Moore and Zarate,

1997). In this sense, Catalan language policies (see Departament d'Ensenyament, 2018), following European recommendations in language education (see Council of Europe, 2001, 2018), have taken the challenge to envisage schools as learning spaces which must take advantage of the linguistic and culture diversity of their community members (teachers, students, families, etc.). To fulfil such a purpose, classroom practices are expected to enable learners to 'awaken to languages' (Candelier, 2003) and take part in learning tasks that include some sort of access to languages the school does not intend to teach, and which may or may not be the heritage languages of some students in the group. This is particularly important to acknowledge the plurilingual repertoire of all learners and prepare them to participate in many and diverse 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) along their lives.

Thanks to their participation in various communities of practice, plurilingual speakers become social actors who have varying degrees of proficiency in several languages, constructed through the development of "a range of general competences, usually in close conjunction with pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences" (Council of Europe, 2018:53). The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) associates general competences with the acquisition of trans- and inter-linguistic and cultural knowledge (*savoirs*), skills (*savoir-faire*) and attitudes (*savoir être*). According to Candelier et al (2012), these *savoirs* enrich plurilingual speakers' potential for learning as they allow them to develop metalinguistic awareness, that is, those cognitive capacities that, among others, enable speakers/ learners to perceive patterns in the use of language, compare linguistic features of different languages, display sensitivity to linguistic and cultural similarities/ differences, talk about / explain certain aspects of one's own language and assume one's own (linguistic / cultural) identity with confidence/ pride while respecting other identities. The CEFR also establishes that sociolinguistic competence is concerned with the social dimension of language use and with the development of knowledge and skills required to socialise and to recognise, understand, appreciate and/or make use of linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, register differences, and dialect and accent features. Similarly, Nussbaum and Unamuno (2006) describe learners' sociolinguistic competence as the ability to recognise language varieties and use linguistic forms adequately to each communicative situation they participate in.

The social construction of the self and of the other is also closely linked to the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Norton (1997: 420) argues that "social identity refers to the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated through institutions such as families, schools, workplaces, social services, and law courts". Hence, identity building includes 'affiliations' (Coulon, 1993) of one kind or another. Additionally, people categorise each other in social interaction (Fitzgerald, 2015). The study of how categories are built and constantly reconfigured through talk-in-interaction is

particularly interesting to understand how children in our study enact their sociolinguistic knowledge of and about the languages in their repertoires. In his work on Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), Sacks (1992) postulated that categorisations are resources for meaning-making and rely on social categories (e.g. mother, interviewer, correct, deviant) that provide inferences concerning typical associated activities, knowledge or behaviours. Categorising often entails recognising two parties (e.g. adult/child; teacher/student) that lie at the ends of two opposite poles and who, depending on their respective membership, adopt different discursive roles (e.g. expert/non-expert, inquirer/respondent, information seeker/information user) at different moments in talk-in-interaction. Identifying the categories participants orient to in the process of performing a social action provides information regarding to the values they attribute both to the relationship between language and identity, and to the languages in their own repertoires or in the repertoires of others (Llompart, 2016), as we will see in this chapter. Additionally, it informs on their envisagement of otherness and on how they built their social and cultural bonds. Such information is necessary to embrace diversity in the classrooms. Our chapter expects to be a contribution in this field.

Catalan schools as plurilingual and pluricultural educational milieus

Data for this study was collected in two distinct periods by the researcher who signs this chapter. In 2001 she visited, once a week for a whole academic year, a school in the city of Barcelona which hosted more than 90% (first and second generations) of students of immigrant origin. She carried out fieldwork as a teacher assistant of a Year 6 teacher in the areas of mathematics, Spanish and Catalan. As part of the deal with the school board, the researcher also took the role of a school lunch assistant. The data from this school (school 1) presented here was gathered during recess time for lunch. Children were curious regarding the role of the researcher as she was present in their classroom, in the canteen and in the playground. Here we examine part of an informal exchange (excerpt 1) in which a group of three Catalan-born children of Moroccan ancestry spontaneously start singing a popular pop song, imitating how their mothers speak Spanish. Then the conversation revolves around this language variety, which they coin as "Hispamarroc" (Moroccan-Spanish), and their language practices at home and at school. The researcher, a school lunch assistant and other children also take part in the discussion. Our analysis focuses on how children co-construct their representations and categorisations of the variety of Spanish used by their mothers.

Seven years later, the researcher worked for a period of three years with the board of a school (school 2) sited in a village about 60km inland from the city of Barcelona in the development of a Comenius initiative on language

education and video production (see Masats, Dooly and Costa, 2009). Her task often implied assisting Year 6 teachers. In the excerpt we analyse here (excerpt 2) she is in charge of developing a project whose final outcome is a video documentary to report and illustrate language diversity in the village. At the time, the school hosted 2% of students of immigrant origin. In the class we examine here there were three Catalan-born children from Moroccan families, one girl born in Ghana and 20 other Catalan-born children from Catalan or Spanish ancestry. It is important to note that the families of the children in excerpt 2 come from Nador, a town in the Riff region in northern Morocco, and speak Riffian Berber (a variety of Amazigh). Darija (Moroccan Arabic) in this area is not widely spoken. Most Moroccan families in the Catalan village where the school is located, as well as in neighbouring towns, also come from Nador and, therefore, they speak Riffian Berber to one another. On different grounds, it is also worth mentioning that since 2000 Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh have gained recognition in Moroccan language policies, which up to that moment, and since the country had gained independence, had promoted the used of Fusha (Modern Standard Arabic) and maintained French in the administration, education and economic domains (Moustaoui, 2020). In 2011 Amazigh gained the status of co-official language in Morocco together with Modern Standard Arabic. Moroccan Arabic is regarded as the national language. In excerpt 2 we find Fatima, her cousin Ahmed and Tarik talking to Mar, the researcher, and a classmate, Joan, about Riffian Berber and Moroccan Arabic and comparing them with Catalan and Spanish. Our analysis will focus on how they categorise these languages.

Oral data in school 1 was audio-taped whereas in school 2 it was video-taped. In both cases they were transcribed and examined sequentially from an emic perspective based on the principles of MCA.

Analysis and discussion

Plurilingual education should provide learners with opportunities to gain the ability to describe languages and their use. Nussbaum and Unamuno (2006) argue that the development of speakers' sociolinguistic competence is the result of a long learning process only possible thanks to their participation in multiple communicative events through which they access language forms in action, become aware of linguistic variation and acquire communicative expertise (Kasper, 2004; Hall, Cheng and Carlson, 2006). This is clearly observable in excerpt 1, where during an informal and spontaneous interaction during recess time, three children display a great ability in identifying and reconfiguring two varieties of Spanish, theirs and that of their mothers. To do so, they sing a song in accented Spanish, using phonetic traits similar to those in Moroccan Arabic. For sake of brevity, we have not presented the song here (see Llompart, 2013 for an analysis of this song).

Excerpt 1. Participants: The researcher (MAR) and three students from school 1, namely Hanna (HAN), Ikram (IKR) and Rasha (RAS). Other children and adults are present but they do not intervene at this point

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6    MAR:  de què es tracta això/ (.) què fareu/ va (.)
            what is it about/ (.) what you would do / go (.)
7    HAN:  doncs:[primer] xx
            well: [primer] xx
8    IKR:       [és una cançó] (.) és una cançó que:: em::
                 [it is a song] (.) it is a song that:: em::
9                 és normal però nosaltres hem
                  it is normal but we have
10          canviat una mica les paraules (.) i com les nostres mares parlen malament
            changed a little bit the words (.) and as our mothers speak wrongly
11          l'espanyol (.)doncs nosaltres ens riem (..) llavorens hem tret de: de:
            spanish (.)then we laugh (..) then we have taken fro:m fro:m
12          com parlen les nostres mares(.)hem tret(.)
            how our mothers talk (.)we have made up (.)
13          la llengua que es diu hispamarroc
            the language called hispamarroc
14   ((students sing the song))
     [..]
17   MAR:  i en què consisteix aquesta llengua/ (.)
            and what does this language consist on/ (.)
18   HAN:  doncs: doncs: mi: és com un joc (.) és com un joc (.)
            well: well: me: it's like a game (.) it's like a game (.)
19          ae:: nosaltres fem com si fos un joc (..)
            a:: we act as if it was a game (..)
20          ae:: parlem així perquè ens agrada perquè:: (.)
            a:: we talk like that because we enjoy it because:: (.)
21          mira per divertir-nos una miqueta (…) per divertir-nos (.)
            look to have a bit of fun (..) to have fun (.)
22   MAR:  i la vostra (.) i les vostres mares ho saben (.) o no/ (.)
            and your mother (.) and your mothers know about it (.) or not/ (.)
23          ((students respond positively))
24   HAN:  però quan jo esti:c la meva mare està parlant (.)
            but when I a:m my mother is talking (.)
25          i parla: i parla malament doncs jo
            and spea:ks and speaks wrongly then i
26          i la meva germana ens mirem (.) comencem a riure i la meva diu
            and my sister look at each other (.) start laughing and my mother says
27          ((starts speaking Hispamarroc)) (.) qué estáis riendo de mi(.) i jo no
                                             (.) hey are you laughing at me (.) and i no
28          ((laughing)) (.) i ja està \ (.)
            ((laughing) (.) and that's it\ (.)
     […]
35   MAR:  per què creieu que és diferent/ (.)
            why do you think it is different/ (.)
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36   HAN:   perquè:: parla:: no només espanyol (.) parla malament i de:: i:
            becau::se spea::ks not only spanish (.) speaks wrongly and o::f a:nd
37          també (.)de vegades està parlant en castellà (.)
            also (.)sometimes she is speaking spanish
38   RAS:   i barregen (.)
            and (they)mix (.)
39   HAN:   i fiquen una una paraula en àrab (..) i després una altra vegada (..) i
            and (they) insert a a word in arabic (..) and then again (..) and
40          de vegades no li surten les paraules que tenen que dir (…) per exemple (.)
            sometimes she can't utter the words they have to say (…) for example (.)
41          volen dir:: eh::a la cesta on pose:s la roba
            they want to sa::y eh::in the basket where you put the clothes
42          i diuen al cub de basura (.)
            and say dustbin(.)
43          i eh::
            and eh::
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What we can observe in excerpt 1 is that students enact 'being sociolinguists' as they describe how they have identified a language variety and given it a name ("hem tret la llengua que es diu hispamarroc" / "we have made up the language called hispamarroc", lines 12–13). They categorise their use of this variety as "a game" ("és com un joc", line 18) they like to play ("parlem així perquè ens agrada"/ "we talk like that because we enjoy it", line 20) as 'a form of entertainment' ("per divertir-nos una miqueta" /"to have a bit of fun", line 21).Yet, they do not attribute this variety a positive value as they categorise the linguistic practices of their mothers as being "wrong" ("les nostres mares parlen malament l'espanyol", lines 10–11; "parla malament", lines 25 and 36). This negative categorisation is co-constructed by two of the learners when they describe that their mothers resort to code-mixing mechanisms ("està parlant en castellà" /"she is speaking spanish", line 37; "i barregen"/"and mix", line 38; "i fiquen una paraula en àrab i després una altra vegada"/"and insert a word in Arabic and then again", line 39) or make mistakes in their lexical choices ("de vegades no li surten les paraules"/ "sometimes she can't utter the words", line 40; "volen dir la cesta on poses la roba i diuen el cub de basura" /"they want to say in the basket where you put the clothes and say dustbin", line 41–42).

Children's discourse in excerpt 1 illustrates a reverse procedure of language transmission in families of immigrant origin. Children here affiliate with their identity of Spanish speakers and categorise themselves as 'expert users' of the language as opposed to their mothers who are envisaged as 'non-experts'. Discussing whether the process of language resocialisation of immigrant women may be complex due to the attitude family members adopt towards their linguistic practices is beyond the scope of this chapter.Yet, our data suggest that if plurilingual education should help children embrace diversity, classroom tasks should enable learners to develop their plurilingual and pluricultural competence to their full potential, that is, not only by guaranteeing the construction

of knowledge and skills but also the adoption of attitudes that make it possible to categorise as 'positive learning practices' the kind of plurilingual modes of interaction children are describing when they characterise "Hispamarroc", the Spanish language variety of their mothers (see chapter 3 in this volume for an example of such pedagogical practice).

The study of speakers' sociolinguistic competence sheds light on how participants in a communicative event categorise languages and their use. Yet, such categorisations, that are configured through talk-in-interaction, rely on how speakers construct the particular context in which the interaction unfolds, that is, by taking into account what the situation is and who the interactants are. This is clearly observed in excerpt 2, where Ahmed, Fatima, Tarik and Joan are doing group work and exchange information regarding the languages they know.

Excerpt 2. Participants: The researcher (MAR) and four students in school 2, namely Ahmed (AHM), Fatima (FAT), Tarik (TAR) and Joan (JOA)

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129 AHM:  per exemple (.) el català i el castellà: (.) doncs l'àrab seria
          for exemple (.) catalan and spanish: (.) then arabic would be
130       el català (.)i el riff seria el castellà (.)
          catalan (.)and riffian berber would be spanish (.)
131 FAT:  no\ (.) al revés (.)
          no\ (.) the other way round (.)
132 AHM:  ((frowning as if showing surprise))no (.)
133 FAT:  sí (.)
          yes (.)
134 AHM:  no (.)
135 JOA:  ((to Ahmed))tu m'has dit a mi que l'àrab es parla en castellà (..)
                      you told me arabic is spoken in spanish (..)
136 FAT:  sí (..) mira (.) l'àrab és com castellà\ (.)
          yes (..) look (.) arabic is like spanish\ (.)
137 MAR:  però què vol dir que l'àrab és com castellà/ (.)
          but what does it mean that arabic is like spanish/ (.)
138 FAT:  doncs (.) perquè el català: (.)
          well (.)because catala:n (.)
139 AHM:  pues que hi ha-
          that there is-
140 FAT:  que hi han dos idiomes com català (.) castellà (.)
          that there are two languages like catalan (.) spanish (.)
141 MAR:  només hi havien dos idiomes/
          were there only two languages/
142 FAT:  no tres (.)
          no three (.)
143 MAR:  tres (.) quins són (.) a veure (.)
          three (.)which ones (.)let me know (.)
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144 FAT:  quins/(.)un: que(.)que surt molt la televisió que no sé com es diu(.)
            which ones/ o:ne that(.)that is often on TV but I don't know its name(.)
145        i l'altre els dos més són l'àrab (.) i e:l riff (.)
            and the other the two more are arabic (.)and riffian berber(.)
146        per exemple (.)és quan hi ha més ritme (..) i quan hi ha_
            for example(.)it is when there is more rhythm (..)and when there is_
147 AHM:  normalment les cançons_ (.) com que el riff té més ritme (.)
            normally the songs_ (.) as riffian berber has more rhythm (.)
148        les cançons les fiquen en riff (.)
            songs are played in riffian berber (.)
149 FAT:  riff (.) riff és català i castellà és àrab (.)
            riffian berber (.) riffian berber is catalan and spanish is arabic (.)
150 MAR:  però això (.) què vol dir / per què ho dieu /
            but this(.) what does it mean / why do you say that/
151        perquè compares l'àrab
            why do you compare arabic
152        amb el castellà (.) i el riff amb el català/
            with spanish (.) and riffian berber with catalan/
153        per què ho compares/ (.)
            why do you compare that/(.)
154 FAT:  perquè com que=
            because it is as=
155 MAR:  = quina diferència hi ha (.) entre el català i el castellà (.)
            = what are the differences (.) between catalan and spanish(.)
156        o entre l'àrab i el riff/ (.)
            or between arabic and riffian berber/(.)
157 FAT:  el riff que són més agut les paraules=
            riffian berber that has acuter words=
158 TAR:  =parlem així (.)
            =we talk like that
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The excerpt starts after Ahmed has informed Joan that Fatima, Tarik and he speak (Moroccan) Arabic and Riffian Berber. Joan then inquiries about these languages and in reply, Ahmed proposes a categorisation in which he compares (Moroccan) Arabic with Catalan and Riffian Berber with Spanish (lines, 129–130). Fatima categorically contradicts him (line 131) by pronouncing the negative adverb in falling intonation followed by the proposition that the 'correct' comparison is the opposite. Ahmed shows surprised, as signalled by frowning and the use of the negative adverb to reject Fatima's proposition (line 132). The two engage in a short competition for the attribution of an 'expert' role on the matter (lines 133–134). After Joan's intervention (line 135) to tell Ahmed he had previously also made the association as proposed by Fatima, the girl self-attributes the 'expert' role and is about to provide and explanation (line 136), when Mar intervenes to ask for a clarification (line 137). Fatima and Ahmed compete again for the 'expert' role and justify the comparison by co-constructing a parallelism between the linguistic situation in Morocco and

in Catalonia (lines 138–140) and by categorising these territories as spaces in which "there are two languages" ("que hi han dos idiomes com català castellà). Mar displays her identity as a sociolinguist and also adopts an 'expert role' when she questions Fatima's statement by asking the girl if there are only two languages in Morocco (line 141). This triggers the opening of a side sequence in which Fatima, who holds to her self-assigned 'expert role', accepts the correction (she responds there are three, line 142), admits she does not remember the name of the third language, but acknowledges she knows which one it is by providing, again, sociolinguistic information regarding the use of this language ("un que surt molt a la televisió" / "one often on TV", line 144). Her answer confirms Moustaoui's (2020) finding that a vast population of Moroccan Arabic or of Amazigh speakers are unable to speak Modern Standard Arabic as it is not "the mother tongue of the Moroccan people" (p. 534). Fatima, who only travels to Morocco to visit her family, cannot even name it. Yet, the categorisation of Moroccan Arabic as Spanish and Riffian Berber as Catalan that Ahmed and Fatima adhere to repeatedly along this exchange can only be understood as an alignment move that orients to a communal feature or a contextual situation that Joan and Mar can understand and that reveals, although she does not make explicit, the girl has sociolinguistic knowledge regarding the use of these languages: Moroccan Arabic and Spanish are regarded as the national languages of Morocco and Spain respectively; Riffian Berber and Catalan are minority languages even though they hold a status of co-officiality in those territories.

Parallel to this, we cannot ignore that the categorisations the two children construct are made explicit in a context in which they can identify themselves as speakers of Riffian Berber, as Tarik makes explicit in line 158, by using the plural pronoun "we" in "parlem així" ("this is how we talk"). Their identity as Riffians is also apparent when Ahmed and Fatima compare Riffian Berber and Moroccan Arabic by assigning 'positive' traits to the former. For example, Fatima categorises Riffian Berber as a language that "has more rhythm" ("és quan hi ha més ritme", lines 145–146) and Ahmed confirms this categorisation by providing new sociolinguistic information of its context of use ("les cançons es fiquen en riff" / "songs are played in riffian berber", lines 147–148). After this positive description of Riffian Berber, Fatima reaffirms her categorisation of Riffian Berber as "being similar to Catalan" and (Moroccan) Arabic as "being similar to Spanish" ("riff és català i castellà és àrab" line 149), which indexes a positive categorisation of Catalan too, which aligns to the school as an institution and social context in which Catalan is the medium of instruction and communication. When Mar asks Fatima again to clarify the comparison she is constructing (lines 150–153; 155–156), Fatima provides a new category and describes words in Arabic as "being acuter" compared to Riffian Berber ("el riff que són més agut les paraules", line 157). Tarik also accepts this categorisation by affiliating to this language when, as we said, he affirms "this is how we talk" ("parlem així", line 158). This new categorisation reveals that Fatima, apart from possessing sociolinguistic knowledge and competence in (re)constructing

the context in which languages are used, has also developed the metalinguistic ability of analysing and defining formal aspects of the languages that compose her repertoire. In turn, by sharing this information with Joan and Mar, the children are also contributing to the development of the sociolinguistic competence of their peer and the adult, as they offer them the possibility of gaining socially-constructed knowledge – *savoirs* – about the target languages.

Conclusions

Plurilingual and pluricultural education entails actions other than helping learners develop their linguistic repertoire. It also relates to the process of establishing connections between language practices in and outside classrooms to prepare students to participate in multilingual and multicultural societies. Therefore, in classrooms hosting students of different origins and backgrounds, becoming familiar with students' everyday use of languages and understanding how they categorise them is essential for teachers to contribute to the creation of nurturing and inclusive learning environments.

In this chapter we have analysed how two groups of Catalan-born children of Moroccan ancestry do 'being sociolinguists' and spontaneously engage in processes of metalinguistic reflection to provide the researcher and their classmates with sociolinguistic information regarding how they describe and categorise language and their use. Children in our data display great expertise in recognising accent traits or phonetical features of the languages in their repertoire. Yet, such ability does not prevent them from legitimising certain language varieties and disregarding others. For example, in excerpt 1, Hispamarroc, the name the children coin to refer to the Spanish variety spoken by their mothers, is categorised as "speaking wrongly" because it relies on plurilingual modes of communication. This is particularly problematic as plurilingual talk is inherent to the process of language learning. Our results, thus, seem to suggest it is important to 'didacticise' plurilingualism (Llompart et al, 2020) and legitimise plurilingual models of communication in the classrooms as a procedure to scaffold language learning.

We have also discussed how categorisation also relies on how speakers identify themselves and on how they orient to their interactants. In excerpt 2, children were comparing and categorising the languages in their repertoire and their contexts of use by establishing parallelisms between the social status of Moroccan Arabic and Riffian Berber in Morocco and between Spanish and Catalan in Catalonia. As they identified themselves as Riffians, they also assigned 'positive' categories to this language, and, indirectly to Catalan, the medium of instruction and communication in schools, when they declared that "Riffian Berber was like Catalan" and "Moroccan Arabic was like Spanish".

If we belief that the mission of schools today is to guarantee that students will grow into citizens open to cultural and linguistic diversity and able to communicate and succeed in a multilingual and multicultural society, it is important

to create the conditions for them to embrace diversity. This task entails taking advantage of learners' plurilingual and pluricultural competence as well as facing the challenges of promoting acceptance towards diversity.

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