

Draft chapter for ‘[Multilingualism & Education: Researchers’ Pathways and Perspectives](#)’, edited by Gail Prasad, Emmanuelle Le Pichon, Nathalie Auger, published by Cambridge Publishers (2022).

In the first part of this chapter, we reflect separately on our language biographies. In the second part, we discuss different concepts that have been relevant to both of our research trajectories, in relation to our different biographies.

Language biographies – Mercè Bernaus and Emilee Moore

Mercè’s language biography

I was born in Catalonia, a bilingual region in Spain, in 1945. My home language was Catalan and the official language imposed by Franco’s dictatorship was Spanish/Castilian. At school we were taught in Spanish, Catalan was forbidden, although outside the classroom the language we used to communicate with our friends and teachers was Catalan.

Probably due to that exceptional situation, I started very soon to be interested in learning languages. When I was a child and I listened to the radio, the only language I could hear was Spanish that was not my natural language, it was something exotic for me. I imagined that those people were foreigners and when we played games with other children we tried to imitate those people, inventing that strange language that we could only hear on the radio and that later on we learnt at school.

At the age of 5, I went to school where the only official language I was allowed to use in class was Spanish. When I was 12, I started to learn Latin and French. Later on, classical Greek was introduced. Teachers never mentioned any similarities between Latin, Greek, Spanish, or French, which were the languages we used and learnt at school.

I liked Latin and Greek, because deciphering the puzzle of texts in one of those languages was exciting and rewarding when I could place all the elements of the puzzle in the right place to clarify and explain what that text was about. Although that was an interesting exercise, what I most liked about languages was the fact that I could communicate and share my opinions and feelings with other people. However, in that regard, Latin and Greek were not the most appropriate languages to help me to achieve my goals.

At the age of 14, I had the opportunity to spend a month of my summer holidays in France, where I was able to put in practice my very elementary knowledge of French. I realised how fast I could advance in my knowledge, by being immersed in a place where the language used to communicate was one that I had only seen until then in grammar exercises in books that were not much help for holding a real communication. My interest in that language increased even more after that experience, which I repeated a year later.

At school, I started to attend a few English lessons as an extracurricular activity, which were taught in the same erroneous way as my curricular French lessons, and I dropped out after a few lessons.

It was time to decide what studies I wanted to continue on to at university. It was clear that I wanted to study languages, but what languages? Classical languages or modern languages? As I said before, my main interest was to learn languages in order to communicate with other people who spoke those languages and this helped me to decide in favour of a bachelor’s degree in Romance Languages. For the first time in my education I was able to learn Catalan at university when it was still forbidden at schools.

I also attended Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese language lessons, and Spanish and French literature lectures.

My interest in the French language was growing, and I attended a summer course at the Catholic University in Paris when I was a student at the University of Barcelona. When I finished my bachelor's degree, I spent a whole academic year in Paris (19967-1968) where I improved my oral skills and I learnt a lot about French culture during that famous May of '68.

Back home, I started to teach French in a primary and secondary school. I had to change my profile to become an English teacher after 3 years of preparation and of taking summer courses for teachers in Great Britain, so studying at the same time as I was teaching. Later on, I completed my PhD thesis in the faculty of English and German Philology about motivation, attitudes and second language learning. When I finished with my doctoral thesis, I started to learn German, which I loved, although my knowledge is very basic. I do use it, however, whenever I have the occasion to do so.

My professional work has always been connected to teaching and learning second/foreign languages in schools and later on at the university, in the Faculty of Education. At the university, I taught second/foreign language teaching and learning methodology to student-teachers and in-service language teachers.

Emilee's language biography

I was born in Australia in 1981 and was raised in a monolingual English-speaking family. However, my ancestors had not always been English speakers – while most had come to Australia from the British-Irish Isles, my great-great grandfather arrived in Sydney in 1890, after making the voyage from his native Lipari.

Of course I never met my great-great grandfather, the last Italian-speaker in my family. I do remember the stories my grandfather and my mother have told me over the years, passed down to them, about life as an Italian migrant in Australia at the turn of the 20th century. From these stories I learned that my great-great grandfather decided not to speak Italian on migrating to Australia, and not to teach Italian to his children, in order to assimilate.

I also heard stories of my grandfather's and my mother's own lives as Australians with Italian ancestry. My grandfather would tell me about the letters that Italian workers at the factory he managed would receive, written in Italian dialects that were not comprehensible to colleagues who spoke others. He would also tell me about how Italian workers would quickly learn Australian rhyming slang on the job. Or how in the war and post-war years, some Australians considered others of Italian ancestry to be enemies, leading the latter to chose anonymity to avoid ethnic slurs.

From my mother, I learned that in the 1970s, when she attended high school, having an Italian name still carried stigma, and her schoolmates would taunt her because of it. She, like her sisters, yearned to get married to change their surname to a more Anglo one.

As a young monolingual Australian, with an Anglo surname, pale skin and blue eyes, I longed to learn about other places, like the place my great-great grandfather had come from, and about people who were different from me. Times had changed, and Australia had started to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity as something positive. My ancestors' surname now conferred exoticism rather than stigma.

In primary school I took Indonesian, which was my first real contact with a language other than English. In high school I learned Spanish, and I remember crying to my father as a teenager, at a point in my life when I had to make decisions about what to do after school, telling him the only passion I had was language. I decided I wanted to be a humanitarian worker, either in an indigenous community in Australia or

in Latin America, so that I could be amongst linguistically and culturally diverse people.

While I was at high school, in order to feed my thirst for other cultures and languages, my mother agreed to host three exchange students in our home, all of them from Spain. On finishing high school I took up the invitation from one of the families whose son we had hosted, to visit them in Barcelona. As a 17 year old, I spent 3 months in the city, and not only realised that I still had a lot to learn beyond my high school Spanish, but also experienced, more as an observer, what it meant to live in different languages – Catalan, Spanish, and others – at the same time.

On returning to Australia I continued my studies in Spanish at university, and also took Italian classes sporadically. I returned to Barcelona again as an exchange student in the final year of my undergraduate degree, began teaching English as a foreign language, and also took basic Catalan classes. On returning to Australia at the end of this trip, I decided to become a teacher to allow me to continue to travel, and so completed a Graduate Certificate in TESOL and a Masters in Applied Linguistics. I also trained and registered as a volunteer in the Adult Migrant English Program.

On my second trip to Barcelona, I met the person who would eventually become my husband. On finishing my MA, I was granted a scholarship to continue my PhD studies in Catalonia, where I have lived ever since. Upon settling in Catalonia, I decided that being proficient not only in Spanish, but also in Catalan was a priority for me for two reasons: on the one hand, I wanted to support the right of speakers of minority languages to live and learn in their languages; and on the other, I did not want language to be a barrier for my full participation in social and academic life. My work at the university has also meant I have learned some French and German.

I became a mother in 2017 and again in 2020, and am now raising trilingual children to be curious about and appreciative of the culturally and linguistically diverse world they are growing up in. Working as a teacher educator, I am conscious that while my children's three languages – English, Spanish and Catalan – will all be part of their school curriculum, most of the over 300 languages spoken in Catalonia will not. I hope that those families, unlike my great-great grandfather, do not feel the need to surrender their languages in order to feel included in the place they are living.

Our research and teacher education practice

Our trajectories as researchers and as language teacher educators have followed separate yet complementary paths, which at times have crossed as we have worked on shared projects.

For both of us, the notion of *repertoire* has been central to our work. Gumperz was key in introducing the concept of the linguistic repertoire, within which he included the totality of the dialects, language varieties, styles, genres, speech acts and frames of interpretation used by people and groups (Gumperz 1982, p. 155). The concept of linguistic repertoire might be seen as expanding that of 'language' – in the sense of 'named language x', 'named language y', 'named language z' – for describing people's communicative knowledge and practices. Identifying, delimiting, and describing languages has been a useful enterprise for linguists, and also for language teachers, but the categories used are not necessarily accurate ones for describing what language users actually know and do. The Italian workers on the factory floor that Emilee's grandfather spoke of, while supposedly all knowing 'Italian', had very different linguistic repertoires. While presumably sharing some similar features across their varieties and dialects of Italian, Emilee's grandfather noticed that the label 'Italian' was not really a useful one for describing his colleagues' linguistic resources. 'Spanish' would also not be the most useful category for describing how Mercè and her childhood friends

mimicked the unfamiliar language they heard on the radio. Rather, they picked out both familiar and strange features of that language to create their own hybrid variety.

As both researchers and teacher educators, we have both primarily worked in the field of *plurilingual and pluricultural education* (Bernaus, 2005; Moore & Nussbaum, 2016). In this regard, the notion of repertoire has been fundamental for avoiding preconceived ideas about how speakers and learners should and do use and acquire linguistic resources, as well as cultural ones. Our approach to plurilingualism, and also to pluriculturalism, concurs with that put forward in the Common European Framework of Reference to Languages (2001, 2018). This perspective differentiates between multilingualism and multiculturalism, which acknowledges the existence of different named languages in society, which are often uncritically linked to named cultures, so ‘Spanish’ and ‘Italian’ language and culture in the examples introduced above, and plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, which seek a more complex description of the resources that make up individuals’ shared and at the same time unique, fluid, and dynamic linguistic and cultural repertoires.

Some of our research on plurilingual and pluricultural education has included Mercè’s coordination of the ECML’s Language Educator Awareness (LEA) and Content Based Teaching + Plurilingual/Pluricultural Awareness (ConBaT+) projects. The former developed proposals for enriching language teacher education that included the competences required for promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, in order to build democratic citizenship, social cohesion, and mutual understanding and respect in schools and beyond (Bernaus, et al., 2007). The latter explored how to embed plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in content-based teaching (Bernaus, et al., 2011). Similarly, Emilee has participated in projects such as the EU’s 6th Framework Programme project Language Dynamics and Management of Diversity (DYLAN). Much of her work has been concerned with how the introduction of ‘global’ languages such as English across curricular subjects might be achieved in harmony with the linguistic and cultural diversity that characterises educational institutions and their students in this day and age (Moore, 2016), and with how students’ whole linguistic repertoires, including languages not taught at schools, might be included in educational practices (Moore & Vallejo, 2018). We have both incorporated plural approaches to language and culture, inspired by our research and that of our colleagues (e.g. Candalier, et al., 2012; Nussbaum, 2013), in our work as teacher educators charged with helping to develop critical and creative (language) teachers able to accomplish inclusive educational practices in contexts of diversity. We are currently both involved in the Erasmus+ Key Action 3 project Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in all Classrooms.

Part of this research and practice as teacher educators has focussed on the notion of *intercomprehension* (e.g. Meißner et al., 2011). This has been the case in research by Emilee in international higher education settings, where scholars of Romance-language backgrounds, with heterogeneous linguistic repertoires, creatively find solutions to understand each other, without needing to recur to simultaneous interpreting services, or English as a lingua franca, two of the solutions available to them (Moore, 2017). Intercomprehension might also refer to using one’s full linguistic repertoire for making and testing hypotheses about the meaning of spoken or written texts in supposedly unknown languages. Thus, when reflecting on her language learning experiences, Mercè regrets that her teachers never encouraged students to draw on the other linguistic resources available to them when completing language exercises. In our work as teacher educators, inspired by complementary traditions such as *language awareness* (Bernaus et al., 2007), we have helped developed our students’ knowledge of how their existing repertoires might support their access to, and acquisition of, new linguistic resources.

Our approach to plurilingualism and pluriculturalism is also similar to other notions that have been proposed for talking about repertoire. We have both recently engaged with the notion of *translanguaging* (García & Li, 2014) to refer to resources and practices for communicating, learning and being similar to what we have already referred to plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires. We have also engaged with translanguaging to designate a culturally and linguistically inclusive pedagogical practice that we understand as being almost synonymous to plurilingual and pluricultural education (Moore & Vallejo, 2018). In Emilee's recent work (e.g. Moore & Bradley, 2020), part of the Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities (TLANG) project, she has also used the notion of translanguaging as a way to talk about *multimodality*, or communicative resources beyond spoken and written language. In our work as researchers and teacher educators, and also as mothers and grandmother, we have been witness to how people, and children and young people in particular, communicate both through and beyond spoken and written codes, to incorporate semiotic resources that are not strictly linguistic: gesture, ways of dressing, references to mass media, dance moves, etc. Thus we, like other researchers and educators (e.g. Rymes, 2014) are seeking ways to research, and teach our students about, how expanded semiotic repertoires contribute to semiosis and to learning.

Finally both our research and teaching education practice have been intrinsically socially situated, and concerned with the role of different sociocultural dynamics in the educational process. Mercè has extensively researched the influence of students' and teachers' motivation and attitudes in language learning processes (e.g. Bernaus & Garder, 2008; Bernaus, et al., 2004). The research framework that she has developed might help explain why Emilee's great-great grandfather found it necessary to abandon his use of Italian on arriving in Australia, or our own reasons for learning the languages we both know. It was this interest in attitudes and motivation that first brought us to work together, exploring the affective factors influencing plurilingual students' acquisition of Catalan in a linguistically and culturally diverse high school in downtown Barcelona (Bernaus, Moore & Cordeiro, 2007). Much of Emilee's research has been ethnographic and sociolinguistic in nature, exploring linguistic and cultural diversity not just as phenomena in schools, but also in society more generally, and asking how schools might both include that diversity and also impact on it. In this sense, she has incorporated critical, collaborative and activist approaches, both in her research and her teaching (e.g. Moore, forthcoming; Moore & Vallejo, 2018).

Both of us also volunteer in formal and non-formal educational programs in contexts of diversity, in order to put into practice what we understand as sound plurilingual and pluricultural education, being education that is inclusive of students' whole semiotic repertoires.

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