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# AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LEARNERS' PARTICIPATION, LANGUAGE CHOICE AND AGENCY ENACTMENT IN PLURILINGUAL INTERACTIONS



CÈLIA PRATGINESTÓS



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PhD Dissertation  
supervised by Dr Dolors Masats  
Doctorate in Education  
UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA 2025



# UAB

## Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LEARNERS' PARTICIPATION, LANGUAGE CHOICE AND  
AGENCY ENACTMENT IN PLURILINGUAL INTERACTIONS

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**Tesi doctoral per compendi de publicacions**

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Departament de Didàctica de la Llengua i la Literatura, i de les Ciències Socials

Facultat de Ciències de l'Educació

**Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona**

Any de dipòsit: 2025

I em vas dir: "Com més gran em faig  
Menys entenc qui ho té tot clar  
Qui no es permet dubtar  
No es deixa espai per canviar  
Ni avançar"

I de tot el que em vas dir  
Quan 'navem a caminar  
L'hivern passat  
El que més em va ajudar  
És que quan hi ha dubte  
Entre el cervell i el cor  
L'estómac és la clau

Extracte de la cançó *Cervell vs Cor*  
Pau Vallvé, 2024

And you told me:  
"The older I get  
The less I understand those who have it all figured out.  
Those who don't allow themselves to doubt  
Leave no room to change  
Nor to move forward."

And of all the things you told me  
When we went walking  
Last winter,  
What helped me the most  
Was that when there is doubt  
Between the mind and the heart,  
The stomach holds the key.

Excerpt from the song *Cervell vs Cor*  
Pau Vallvé, 2024

“[Studying L2 learning] is in many ways similar to painting a chameleon. Because the animal’s colour depends on its physical surroundings, any one representation becomes inaccurate as soon as that background changes”

*Taken from Masats (2008), who took it from Ortega (2007<sup>1</sup>) who adapted it from Tucker (1999, p. 208-209) who found it in Donato (1998) who took it in Hamayan (n.d. given) and, according to Ortega (2007), it could also have been written by Tarone.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ortega, L. (2007). Social context in task-based language learning: (How) Does it matter? In refereed colloquium Towards an educational agenda for research into task-based language teaching, Martin Bygate convener. Conference on Social and Cognitive Aspects of Second Language Learning and Teaching, University of Auckland, New Zealand, 12-14 April 2007.

## Acknowledgements

Escriure aquests agraïments, ara que per fi veig culminar-se aquest trajecte, em genera una barreja d'alleujament i de satisfacció personal, però també d'emoció. Ha estat un viatge acadèmic i professional molt important, però també un repte personal i, sobretot, una aventura plena d'aprenentatges i d'equilibrismes.

En primer lloc, vull agrair molt sincerament a la meva directora de tesi, la Dolors, tot aquest camí compartit. Encara recordo quan, un dia després d'una classe del Màster en Estudis del Discurs, em vaig apropar a ella per proposar-li —gairebé com qui fa una petició de matrimoni— que dirigís el meu TFM. Des d'aleshores ja han passat uns quants anys, plens de primeres vegades (per mi) que he compartit amb ella: el primer congrés, la primera ponència, les primeres publicacions, la primera participació en un projecte de recerca o el primer viatge en el marc d'un projecte. Tots aquests moments, tot i que no han estat exempts de nervis i emocions, han resultat sempre enriquidors i me'n guardo un record valuós. Moltes gràcies, Dolors, per acompanyar-me no només com a directora, sinó també com a amiga, en tot aquest procés. Gràcies per posar-hi la teva genialitat amb tanta generositat. Gràcies també, en aquest tram final, per la revisió tan detallada i acurada d'aquesta tesi.

També vull donar les gràcies a totes les companyes del GREIP, per acollir-me amb tanta calidesa des del primer dia i donar-me l'oportunitat d'entendre què vol dir fer recerca, compartir-la i viure-la. He après tant de totes vosaltres: la vostra manera de treballar, però també la vostra manera de ser, tant en els moments més distesos i divertits com en els més estressants. Amb vosaltres he descobert que es pot ser brillant professionalment i generosa i empàtica alhora. Gràcies, Claudia, pels mil àudios de WhatsApp que sovint han estat com teràpia, i per la teva empatia; Emilee, per ensenyar-me que el mestratge i la generositat poden anar de la mà; Júlia, per escoltar-me i tenir-me en compte sempre; Melinda, per fer-me partícip de tantes activitats i projectes que has organitzat impecablement; i, Xavier, també company del GREIP, per tots els teus consells, sempre encertats. Faig extensiu el meu agraïment a moltes altres persones del Departament de Didàctica de la Llengua i la Literatura i de les Ciències Socials, en especial a tots aquells i aquelles que han estat membres dels tribunals dels meus seguiments de la tesi per les seves idees i paraules d'ànim, amb una menció especial a la Cristina Aliagas, per la seva amabilitat i per regalar-me la bonica idea d'incloure la noció de *dislocated scenarios* en aquesta tesi; a totes les persones de la coordinació del doctorat i de la UISAD que m'heu fet un cop de mà en moments clau; i als companys de trajecte en aquest doctorat, com la Klaudia i el Diego, entre tants d'altres que en algun moment m'heu donat aquell ànim i ajut

necessari fins i tot sense saber-ho. Totes i tots heu estat una font d'inspiració i m'heu donat l'impuls per continuar.

També vull esmentar persones que, potser sense adonar-se'n, m'han ajudat molt en moments clau. Gràcies a la Luci Nussbaum, que, amb aquells apunts providencials que em va enviar després d'una sessió de dades—entre molts d'altres savis consells—, em va ajudar a trobar el camí; a l'Artur Noguerol, per ser el millor exemple de bon mestre; als professors Olcay Sert i Johannes Wagner, per les idees que em van donar en la primera sessió, en una escola doctoral del GREIP, en què vaig presentar les meves dades; la Carme Bach i l'Encarna Atienza, per mostrar-me per primer cop, durant el màster, com és això d'ensenyar a fer recerca i animar-me a fer-ne. Un agraïment especial als revisors i revisores de les publicacions que presento en aquest compendi per ajudar-me a millorar els textos i donar-me l'impuls per continuar. Molt especialment també a la Florence Bonacina-Pugh i a l'Eulàlia Borràs per accedir a ser les avaluadores externes d'aquesta tesi i ajudar-me a millorar-la, i al Xavier Fontich per ser part del meu tribunal.

Gràcies a les persones que m'heu deixat formar part de projectes inspiradors—el DATE (Dolors Masats), d'on va néixer aquesta tesi; l'IEP (Emilee Moore); el CULT (Júlia Llompart-Esbert); i el DIGITASK (Dolors Masats, Ufuk Balaman i Karmen Konzett-Firth)—, i a totes les que hi he conegut, com l'equip fantàstic del CULT, i els companys amb qui vam compartir feina i riures a Ankara.

Un agraïment especial també als *protagonistes* d'aquest estudi, l'alumnat adolescent que va participar en el projecte i que generosament va accedir a formar-ne part, en especial a algunes d'aquelles persones joves, com el KAI (el seu pseudònim en aquest estudi), que em van robar el cor. Sempre us recordaré amb aquella il·lusió adolescent, en especial quan pujàvem a aquell avió cap a Grècia, però també en tants altres moments a l'institut, que em van fer tornar una mica a la meva adolescència.

Gràcies al Jorge per deixar-me entrar a la seva aula i *deixar-me fer* amb tanta confiança i predisposició. I a tot l'institut, la direcció, la Queralt, i la resta de membres de la comunitat educativa, que em van acollir i van accedir a la insensata aventura d'emportar-se un grup de joves de 16 anys a Grècia. A l'Ivan, que ens hi va acompanyar per posar seny. A la Maria, la professora de l'institut de Chrysoupoli, i els seus companys, que van fer el possible perquè el viatge amb aquest grup de joves fos un èxit. També a la FAS i la seva gent, com en Jordi, l'Andy i l'Elsa, i a totes les voluntàries, que també van contribuir-hi amb els recursos necessaris, els ànims i l'actitud per fer-ho possible.

Gràcies a les estudiants que he tingut aquests anys al Grau de Primària per ajudar-me a ser millor mestra i a confiar esperançada en les generacions futures de docents. També gràcies a la Gina, pel seu bonic cop de mà tecnològic i creatiu en una de les publicacions, i a la Maria i l'Stelios per fer-me de traductors exprés del grec que utilitzen els joves a Instagram.

Gràcies als meus companys i companyes de l'Euncet, en especial als meus *teachers*, l'Eva i el Toni, que m'han acompanyat, sostingut i, fins i tot, cobert quan ha calgut durant tants anys. A la Carolina i a la Mireia, per ser-hi, i per compartir reflexions, bogeries i riures que m'han ajudat a afrontar moments en què el ritme intens m'ha superat una mica. A la resta de companys i companyes, per fer-ho fàcil.

A totes les dones poderoses de qui tinc la sort d'estar envoltada i de qui aprenc cada dia. Amigues que són casa i teràpia, com moltes de les que ja he mencionat en aquest text, però en especial a les de SEMPRE –la Mònica, la Carla, la Marta i la Mei– i també aquelles que han anat arribant i que vull que es quedin PER SEMPRE, com la Carme C., l'Eva, la Noe i la Carme D., entre moltes altres que sou la meva tribu i m'inspireu cada dia.

A tota la meva família, especialment als meus pares, pel seu exemple, per la confiança i seguretat que sempre m'han donat i per ensenyar-me a creure en mi. A la meva mare, la millor possible, que sempre hi és, sobretot en aquells moments en què més ho he necessitat, també com a iaia. Al meu pare, protector, que sempre m'aguanta els discurssets —encara que sovint no els comparteixi— i que és el millor avi del món. I al meu germà i la seva família. Gràcies per ser-hi. Us vull tenir per sempre.

A l'Àlex, per ser-hi des que érem encara més joves, en tots els moments bons i no tan bons que hem viscut junts, fins i tot quan he mostrat la meva cara més vulnerable i menys simpàtica, especialment en els moments en què m'he sentit més encallada en tot aquest procés.

Finalment, gràcies als amors incondicionals de la meva vida, a qui he robat una pila d'hores aquests darrers anys, en Pol i la Martina, que m'omplen el cor cada dia i que són, al capdavall, el millor que he fet.

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<sup>2</sup> The tables, figures and excerpts from the different publications comprised in this compendium follow their own pagination and are not included in this index.

## Abstract

This thesis takes the form of a compendium of four publications and explores, from a sociocultural perspective, how learners mobilise their linguistic repertoire in both task-based and authentic communicative situations in local and translocal plurilingual settings. It contributes to research on plurilingual interaction in three key areas: (a) learners' *participation* as a means for language learning, showing how interactional and plurilingual competence develops in the interplay of progressivity and intersubjectivity; (b) learners' *language choices*, understood as co-constructed and evolving procedures of establishing and changing discourse norms shaped by participants' communicative ends and contextual settings; (c) learner *agency*—enacted in its behavioural, cognitive, and relational dimensions—as a discursive action that shapes the different learning scenarios.

The data of all four publications stems from a telecollaboration classroom proposal, codesigned and implemented by the author of the dissertation in collaboration with two secondary school teachers of English, one sited in Catalonia and the other one in Greece. The classroom proposal, which culminated in an in-person encounter between the two groups of students, provided rich opportunities to generate episodes of authentic communication in various contexts and formats. Those occurrences constitute the corpus of this study. Rather than addressing the design of the proposal or the nature of the collaboration, this dissertation focuses on the interactions it generated. By studying learners' participation, language choice, and agency together, as they emerge in *talk-in-interaction*, this thesis offers a comprehensive view of the interactional architecture of plurilingual interactions learners take part in, building on but also going beyond those approaches that treat these three aspects separately. Methodologically, it applies CA-for-SLA, that is, *Conversation Analysis* to plurilingual and digitally mediated data and combines ethnographic and micro-analytic approaches to the analysis of the corpus. Pedagogically, it supports the idea that in order to foster meaningful participation and autonomy, teachers need to acknowledge the value of learners' plurilingual practices as a scaffolding tool for communication, the need to link formal and informal learning spaces, and the importance of designing tasks that align with young learners' everyday communication.

Each study examines interaction within a different scenario and is grounded in distinct theoretical frameworks, but they are interrelated. As a whole, they contribute to a holistic understanding of how interaction unfolds across the different learning scenarios. Importantly, these scenarios are characterised by spatial and temporal dislocation from the strictly conventional, classroom-based interactions. Publication 1 analyses face-to-face peer

interactions, showing how learners negotiate meaning in *English as a lingua franca* while strategically drawing on plurilingual and multimodal resources to keep the communication flow. It highlights the importance of *progressivity* and *intersubjectivity* as triggers to the development of their *interactional competence*. Publication 1B focuses on Instagram chats, where learner agency is expressed through topic selection, collaboration among participants, code-switching, and multimodal resources. Findings underline how informal, digital environments, not mediated by teachers, can turn into learning scenarios as they foster authentic engagement and relational cohesion among learners. Publication 2 examines a WhatsApp group used for task coordination. Initially teacher-led in English, the space evolved into a hybrid *in-between* scenario where students' plurilingual practices became the norm, showing how participation frameworks shape language use in mobile-mediated settings. Publication 3 examines both virtual and face-to-face tasks, revealing how learners balance task *progressivity* with mutual understanding. *Agency* is enacted behaviourally, cognitively, and relationally, as students manage turn-taking, repair breakdowns, and maintain inclusive participation. This integrated analysis contributes to research in the acquisition of additional languages by showing how learners' use of multilingual and multimodal resources, agency, and collaborative scaffolding serve as mechanisms that support the development of the target language while also offering teachers insights into how learning can be fostered across diverse learning scenarios.

**Keywords:** Talk-in-interaction; Learning Scenarios; CA-for-SLA; *Practiced Language Policy*; Online communication; Progressivity; Intersubjectivity, Peer Interaction, Task-based Language Learning

## Resum

Aquesta tesi es presenta com un compendi de quatre publicacions i examina, des d'una perspectiva sociocultural, com els i les aprenents mobilitzen el seu repertori lingüístic tant en situacions comunicatives basades en tasques com en interaccions autèntiques en contextos plurilingües locals i translocals. El treball contribueix a la recerca sobre la interacció plurilingüe en tres àmbits principals: (a) la *participació* com a mitjà per a l'aprenentatge de llengües, mostrant com la competència interaccional i plurilingüe es desenvolupa en la interrelació entre la progressivitat i la intersubjectivitat; (b) les *tries de llengües* de qui aprèn, enteses com a procediments co-construïts i en constant evolució per establir i transformar normes discursives segons els seus objectius comunicatius i els contextos en què es troben; (c) l'*agentivitat*—en les seves dimensions conductuals, cognitives i relacionals—com a acció discursiva que configura els diferents escenaris d'aprenentatge.

Les dades de les quatre publicacions sorgeixen arran d'una proposta de telecol·laboració a l'aula, co-dissenyada i implementada per l'autora de la tesi juntament amb docents d'anglès de secundària, un a Catalunya i l'altra a Grècia. La proposta, que va culminar en una trobada presencial entre els dos grups d'alumnes, va generar nombroses oportunitats en les quals es van produir episodis de comunicació autèntica en diversos contextos i formats. Aquestes interaccions constitueixen el corpus d'aquest estudi. En lloc d'analitzar el disseny de la proposta o la naturalesa de la col·laboració, la tesi se centra en les interaccions que aquesta proposta va propiciar. En examinar conjuntament la participació, les tries de llengües i l'agentivitat de l'alumnat, tal com emergeixen en la parla en interacció, la recerca ofereix una visió integral de l'arquitectura interaccional de les pràctiques plurilingües de qui aprèn, contribuint així a l'avenç dels enfocaments que han tractat aquests aspectes de manera separada. Metodològicament, s'aplica el que en anglès s'anomena CA-for-SLA, és a dir, l'Anàlisi de la Conversa a dades plurilingües i mediades digitalment, en combinació amb els principis dels enfocaments etnogràfics i microanalítics. Des d'un punt de vista didàctic, es defensa la necessitat de reconèixer el valor de les pràctiques plurilingües com a bastida per a la comunicació, d'enllaçar els espais d'aprenentatge formals i informals i de dissenyar tasques alineades amb les formes de comunicació quotidiana del jovent. Cada estudi analitza la interacció en un escenari diferent i parteix de marcs teòrics específics, però tots estan interrelacionats. En conjunt, contribueixen a una comprensió global de com es desplega la interacció en contextos d'aprenentatge diversos. Un tret rellevant d'aquests escenaris és la seva dislocació espacial i temporal respecte a les interaccions convencionals d'aula. La publicació 1 analitza interaccions presencials entre iguals

i mostra com es negocien significats en anglès com a llengua franca, a través de recórrer estratègicament a l'ús de recursos plurilingües i multimodals per mantenir la fluïdesa de la comunicació. Es destaca la importància de la progressivitat i la intersubjectivitat com a procediments que impulsen el desenvolupament de la competència interaccional de qui aprèn. La publicació 1b examina converses a Instagram, on l'agentivitat es manifesta a través de la selecció de temes, la col·laboració, el canvi de codi i les estratègies multimodals. Els resultats mostren com els entorns digitals informals, no mediatitzats pel professorat, poden esdevenir escenaris d'aprenentatge, ja que afavoreixen la implicació autèntica i la cohesió relacional. La publicació 2 estudia un grup de WhatsApp utilitzat per coordinar tasques. Inicialment conduït pel professorat en anglès, aquest espai evolucionà cap a un escenari híbrid on les pràctiques plurilingües de l'alumnat es van normalitzar, fet que posa en relleu com els marcs de participació influeixen en l'ús lingüístic en entorns digitals. La publicació 3 analitza tasques virtuals i presencials, i revela com els i les aprenents equilibren el progrés de la tasca amb la comprensió mútua. L'agència es desplega de manera conductual, cognitiva i relacional en la gestió dels torns de parla, la reparació de malentesos i el manteniment d'una participació inclusiva. Aquesta anàlisi integrada contribueix a la recerca en adquisició de llengües addicionals en mostrar com l'ús de recursos multilingües i multimodals, l'agentivitat i les bastides col·laboratives funcionen com a mecanismes que afavoreixen el desenvolupament de la llengua meta, alhora que ofereixen orientacions al professorat per donar suport a l'aprenentatge en contextos diversos.

**Paraules clau:** parla interactiva; escenaris d'aprenentatge; *CA-for-SLA*; *política lingüística practicada*; comunicació en línia; progressivitat; intersubjectivitat; interacció entre iguals; aprenentatge de llengües basat en tasques.

## Resumen

Esta tesis se presenta como un compendio de cuatro publicaciones y examina, desde una perspectiva sociocultural, cómo los y las aprendices movilizan su repertorio lingüístico tanto en situaciones comunicativas basadas en tareas como en interacciones auténticas en contextos plurilingües locales y translocales. El trabajo contribuye a la investigación sobre la interacción plurilingüe en tres ámbitos principales: (a) la *participación* como motor para el aprendizaje de lenguas, mostrando cómo la competencia interaccional y plurilingüe se desarrolla en la interrelación entre la progresividad y la intersubjetividad; (b) las *elecciones lingüísticas* de quien aprende, entendidas como procedimientos co-construidos y en evolución para establecer y transformar normas discursivas según el contexto y los objetivos comunicativos; (c) la *agencia*—en sus dimensiones conductuales, cognitivas y relacionales—como acción discursiva que configura los distintos escenarios de aprendizaje.

Los datos de las cuatro publicaciones surgen de una propuesta de telecolaboración en el aula, co-diseñada e implementada por la autora de la tesis junto con docentes de inglés de secundaria, uno en Cataluña y otra en Grecia. La propuesta, que culminó en un encuentro presencial entre los dos grupos de estudiantes, generó numerosas oportunidades para producir episodios de comunicación auténtica en diversos contextos y formatos. Estas interacciones constituyen el corpus de este estudio. En lugar de analizar el diseño de la propuesta o la naturaleza de la colaboración, la tesis se centra en las interacciones que esta propició. Al examinar conjuntamente la participación, las elecciones lingüísticas y la agencia de los aprendices, tal y como emergen en el habla en interacción, la investigación ofrece una visión integral de la arquitectura interaccional de las prácticas plurilingües de quien aprende, avanzando más allá de los enfoques que han tratado estos aspectos de manera independiente. Metodológicamente, se aplica lo que en inglés se denomina *CA-for-SLA*, es decir, el Análisis de la Conversación a datos plurilingües y digitalmente mediados, combinado con procedimientos de los enfoques etnográficos y microanalíticos. Desde un punto de vista didáctico, se defiende la necesidad de reconocer el valor de las prácticas plurilingües como herramienta de andamiaje para la comunicación, de vincular los espacios de aprendizaje formales e informales y de diseñar tareas alineadas con las formas de comunicación cotidiana de la gente joven.

Cada estudio analiza la interacción en un escenario distinto y parte de marcos teóricos específicos, pero todos están interrelacionados. En conjunto, contribuyen a una comprensión global de cómo se desarrolla la interacción en contextos de aprendizaje diversos. Un rasgo relevante de estos escenarios es su dislocación espacial y temporal respecto a las interacciones

convencionales de aula. La publicación 1 analiza interacciones presenciales entre iguales y muestra cómo se negocian significados en inglés como lengua franca, recurriendo estratégicamente a recursos plurilingües y multimodales para mantener la fluidez comunicativa. Se destaca la importancia de la progresividad y la intersubjetividad como procedimientos que impulsan el desarrollo de la competencia interaccional de quien aprende. La publicación 1b examina conversaciones en Instagram, donde la agencia se manifiesta a través de la selección de temas, la colaboración, el cambio de código y las estrategias multimodales. Los resultados muestran cómo los entornos digitales informales, no mediados por el profesorado, pueden convertirse en escenarios de aprendizaje, ya que fomentan la implicación auténtica y la cohesión relacional. La publicación 2 estudia un grupo de WhatsApp utilizado para coordinar tareas. Inicialmente conducido por el profesorado en inglés, este espacio evolucionó hacia un escenario híbrido donde las prácticas plurilingües del alumnado se normalizaron, evidenciando cómo los marcos de participación influyen en el uso lingüístico en entornos digitales. La publicación 3 analiza tareas virtuales y presenciales, y revela cómo los y las aprendices equilibran el progreso de la tarea con la comprensión mutua. La agencia se despliega de manera conductual, cognitiva y relacional en la gestión de los turnos de habla, la reparación de malentendidos y el mantenimiento de una participación inclusiva. Este análisis integrado contribuye a la investigación en adquisición de lenguas adicionales al mostrar cómo el uso de recursos multilingües y multimodales, la agencia y el andamiaje colaborativo funcionan como mecanismos que favorecen el desarrollo de la lengua meta, al mismo tiempo que ofrecen orientaciones al profesorado para apoyar el aprendizaje en contextos diversos.

**Palabras clave:** habla en interacción; escenarios de aprendizaje; *CA-for-SLA*; política lingüística practicada; comunicación en línea; progresividad; intersubjetividad; interacción entre iguales; aprendizaje de lenguas basado en tareas.

## Foreword

My path in the research field began with two intensive years as a research technician for a project—DATE<sup>3</sup>—conducted by my thesis supervisor, followed by my participation as a junior investigator in another project—IEP<sup>4</sup>—led by a fellow researcher from GREIP<sup>5</sup> (Research Group for Education, Interaction and Plurilingualism). During those years, I engaged in long-term ethnographic work within the high school where I conducted the study I present here. Consequently, this thesis emerged from a journey that has been both professional and personal. My involvement in these two wide-ranging projects offered me not only the opportunity to gain one of my first insights as a researcher but also the privilege of immersing myself in a school community that, over time, became much more than just a research site. Both undertakings did not only spark my interest in the field of language learning research but also inspired me to begin my own investigations and encouraged me to take on the challenge of developing this thesis.

Although certain methodological decisions were shaped by the overarching agendas of the broader studies—such as the so-called *co-labor* (Leyva & Speed, 2008; Ballena et al., 2020) approach to educational research and the adoption of project-based learning (PBL) as both a teaching methodology and means for data collection—, the classroom proposal framing this thesis, as well as the research questions it pursues, emerged from the lived experiences, relationships, and reflections that I gathered while being part of the community at every stage of the process. Thanks to the time I spent in the school and the active role I assumed, my involvement was not limited to that of an external observer, as I felt like an active member of

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<sup>3</sup> [Els docents com a agents transformadors de les pràctiques educatives gràcies a la seva participació col·laborativa en un projecte interdisciplinari d'innovació docent a les aules d'anglès de dos instituts de secundària del Vallès Occidental \(DATE\)](#). RecerCaixa. Obra Social La Caixa (2016ACUP-001, 2017-2020): 28/02/2018 – 27/02/2020. IP: **Dolors Masats**.

<sup>4</sup> [IEPI Prácticas extraescolares de aprendizaje del inglés y epistemologías inclusivas](#). Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades: Proyectos I+D de Generación de Conocimiento y Proyectos de I+D+i Retos Investigación (PRPPGC2018-099071-A-100): 01/02/2019 – 31/01/2021. IP: Dra. Emilee Moore.

<sup>5</sup> Grup de Recerca en Educació, Interacció i Plurilingüisme (GREIP): <https://webs.uab.cat/greip/>

the school, sharing the aspirations and challenges of the other members of the school community. This two-fold position meant that I could not only contribute to the design and implementation of many of the classroom proposals but also that I became one of the participants in the study. Although this thesis does not address the impact of my presence or my positionality, reflecting on these aspects has been a meaningful exercise and even a potential source of inspiration for future investigations. This insider perspective, in any case, unavoidably shaped the interactions and its analysis, but at the same time, it also allowed for deeper, more affective engagement with the research process.

For all these reasons, therefore, this thesis represents not only an academic endeavour but also a significant stage in my professional and personal trajectory.

### **Note on the Author's Voice**

The pronoun (*we*) is used intentionally in this thesis to acknowledge and give credit to the many participants and stakeholders who made this work possible, reflecting the collaborative nature of much of this research. The first-person pronoun (*I*), however, is also used on some occasions to refer to my direct experience and positionality in the research process and its interpretation. The combined use of (*I*) and (*we*) is then not only stylistic but aims to reflect the dual nature of the research as both an individual ethnographic and analytical work and a collaborative research process.

# ■ CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Research Relevance and  
Contextualisation

Significance of the Study,  
Research Objective, and  
Research Questions

Structure and Organisation  
of the Thesis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Approaching research on language learning requires a previous understanding of how different perspectives and disciplines conceptualize the notions of *language* and the actual meaning of *learning*—and, by extension, *teaching*—a language. These concepts, far from being universal or static, have been shaped and reshaped through continuous debates and evolved influenced by different linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural theories. This section briefly reviews a few of these theories to situate the research topic historically and academically. It then highlights the significance of the current study and present the research objective and the guiding research questions. Finally, it outlines the structure of this dissertation.

### 1.1. Research Relevance and Contextualization

Traditionally, structuralist theories—with Saussure as its main representative in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—conceptualized *language* as a system of signs and emphasised the relationships between these signs within a structured system. From this perspective, the meaning of linguistic elements—such as words or phonemes—derives not from their individual characteristics, but from their position within a larger linguistic structure (Saussure, 1916). In contrast, Chomsky's described language as an innate, universal faculty of the human mind, which explains why humans can generate (produce and understand) an infinite number of sentences from a finite set of rules and vocabulary, highlighting the creative and rule-governed nature of language. His postulations,—which gave rise to the generative theory—also proposed that humans possess an innate capacity to make judgements about the grammaticality (or lack of it) of speakers' utterances (Chomsky, 1965). A key feature of early generative language models is the distinction Chomsky drew between *linguistic competence*—the ideal knowledge of those grammatical rules—and *performance*—the application of those rules when using language in real contexts. However, this dichotomy was later criticised by several language researchers who argued that it was insufficient to explain how a language is used socially,

particularly when people take part in communicative events in different cultural and interactional settings. In response to this, Hymes (1972a) introduced the notion of *communicative competence*, which expanded the scope of Chomsky's linguistic competence by incorporating the social and cultural dimensions of language use. Accordingly, Hymes' notion of communicative competence encompasses not only the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences but also the capacity of interpreting them appropriately within the communicative context in which they are produced. The author illustrated this challenge with the well-known SPEAKING acrostic, which highlights that, when communicating, speakers need to adapt their discourse to various factors: the **S**etting (place and scene), the **P**articipants (speakers and listeners), the **E**nds (purposes and outcomes), the **A**ct sequence (form and order of speech), the **K**ey (tone or manner), the **I**nstrumentalities (channel and code), the **N**orms (social rules of interaction), and the **G**enre (type of communicative event). Expanding Hymes' work, Canale & Swain, (1980) proposed a model of communicative competence with three key components: *grammatical competence* (which relates to Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence –the ability to recognise and use lexical, morphosyntactic and phonological features of language), *sociolinguistic competence* (the ability to communicate appropriately taking into account the context and the participants), and *strategic competence* (the ability to overcome communication barriers). Canale (1983) refined the model by adding a fourth component, *discursive competence* (the ability to structure texts using cohesive devices and patterns of discourse organization) and later Bachman (1990) further developed the model by distinguishing organizational (grammar and text) and pragmatic (functional and sociolinguistic) components, highlighting the strategic and assessable aspects of communicative competence. The notion of communicative competence also gave rise to the concept of *interactional competence* (Kramsch, 1986; He & Young, 1998; Young, 2000, 2011). The construct aligns with a socially grounded theoretical perspective that views language learning not as an isolated

cognitive act, but as an inherent socially co-constructed process. In this vein, learning occurs dynamically through interaction, with participants actively (re)shaping the communicative context in which they take part. As Hall and Pekarek-Doehler (2011, pp. 2-3) argue in this regard, interactants rely on a set of “routinised yet context-sensitive procedures” to navigate the moment-by-moment unfolding of social interaction. In multilingual milieus, the notion of *plurilingual competence* should also be considered, as it has influenced contemporary understandings of the terms communicative and interactional competences and has challenged traditional beliefs—such as the existence of an ideal native speaker—that idealise monolingual competences while ignoring the different and complex ways in which plurilingual individuals use their communicative resources (Masats, et al.,2025)<sup>6</sup>.

These changes in the conceptions of language have directly influenced the understanding of language learning, and consequently, language teaching. Behaviourist theories (Skinner, 1957) proposed that language learning occurs through the imitation, repetition, and reinforcement of language patterns. Errors are viewed as habits that need correction. In contrast, innatist/cognitivist perspectives—closely associated with Chomsky’s generativist theory—are based on the belief that humans possess a “universal grammar” that consists of a set of universal fixed principles common to all languages. Each principle (i.e. languages have subjects) is composed of two parameters (i.e. subjects are overt/non-overt). Learning entails using the information obtained by being exposed to the target language through interaction to set the parameter that corresponds to that particular language. Cognitivists, such as Piaget (1952), argued that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner through interaction with

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<sup>6</sup> In line with this perspective, in this study the term *additional language* is preferred over the traditional L1/L2 labels, as the latter reflect a monolingual view of language competence. However, the terms L1/L2 are occasionally used in the theoretical framework when discussing established *second language learning* theories and models, since this terminology is well-established in the existing literature and ensures greater expository clarity.

the environment—a view often referred to as *cognitivist constructivism*. In Piaget's theory, the individual's cognitive processes are the primary trigger for learning, with social context playing a more secondary role. This contrasts with *social constructivism*, which holds that human development is socially situated, and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Vygotsky (1978), a key proponent of social constructivism, claimed that learning involves constructing new knowledge, storing it in memory, and retrieving it through meaningful activity. His views laid the foundation for the *sociocultural theory*. While both social constructivism and social cultural theory emphasise the contextual and interactive nature of learning, sociocultural theory places emphasis on the mediating role of historically and culturally situated tools and artifacts—including language, through which learning is facilitated. Thus, from the sociocultural view, learning occurs through action, that is, by participating in meaningful social activities shaped by cultural, institutional, and historical settings.

As noted by Wertsch (1998), the term *sociocultural* is broad and not limited to a single discipline, which makes it useful to describe research on learning in different social and cultural contexts. Building on this broad understanding, sociocultural perspectives comprise numerous multidisciplinary approaches that collectively explore the relationship between social, cultural and contextual factors in learning. These include the *sociocultural theory* (e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Thorne & Hellermann, 2017); the *critical sociocultural perspectives* (e.g. Norton, 2013; Pennycook, 2006); the *situated learning theory* (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998); the *ecological* approaches (e.g. van Lier, 2000), the *translanguaging pedagogy* (e.g. García & Wei, 2015); the *plurilingual* and *pluralistic* approaches (e.g. Dooly & Moore, 2017; Llompарт et al., 2020; and Candelier, et al., 2012); the strong *socio-interactionist* perspective (e.g. Mondada & Doehler, 2004; Pekarek-Doehler, 2013), and *conversation analysis for second language acquisition* (CA-for-SLA) studies (e.g. Markee & Kasper, 2004; Seedhouse, 2005a; Kasper &

Wagner, 2014; Markee et al., 2021). Some of these postulations will be explored in greater detail within the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2.

The evolution of language learning theories has, in turn, significantly influenced language teaching methodologies. Behaviourist theories inspired several teaching methods, such as the *audiolingual* method and the *Total Physical Response* (TPR) method. Both see learning as a process of memorisation and repetition and teaching as the procedure of engaging learners in language production through mechanical practice exercises (e.g. drills). Innatist/Cognitivist theories led to the development of Krashen's (1977) *Monitor Theory*, which consists of five hypotheses. One of the most influential is the *Input Hypothesis*, which claims learners acquire language by being exposed to input just beyond their current level of competence. Krashen's views were later expanded by Swain's (1985) *Output Hypothesis*, which argues that access to modified input does not suffice and that "the act of producing language (speaking or writing) constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning" (Swain, 2005, p. 471).

In parallel, Hymes's (1972) views on *language*, and Swain's (1985) view of *language learning* resulted in the emergence of an approach known as *communicative language teaching* (CLT), which emphasises the need to plan meaningful activities that reflect real-life communication and engages learners in processes of negotiating meaning. Thanks to the growing influence of interactionist perspectives in *second language acquisition* (SLA) research (e.g. Hatch, 1978; Gass & Varonis, 1994; Pica, 1994; Long, 1996), the communicative approach evolved into other learner-centred, goal directed, and context-based teaching approaches, such as *project-based learning* (PBL) and *task-based language teaching* (TBLT). Although these approaches are often confused—mainly because both are focused on meaning and aim for clearly defined outcomes beyond mere language form practice—, they differ in important ways. The key distinction lies in their scope and their connection to real-life (Dooly, 2013). A *task*

involves the meaningful use of language, focuses on specific linguistic or communicative outcomes, and is often only indirectly related to real-world contexts. In contrast, a *project* has a wider scope and usually consists of a sequence of interconnected tasks that culminate in a final product or presentation, often addressed to a real audience outside the classroom. Dooly and Sadler (2013) further highlight that projects that integrate digital tools and telecollaboration—as is the case of this study—offer a robust teaching methodology in which tasks can be situated and, therefore, enable scaffolded language development through continued collaboration and authentic communication.

This thesis is composed of four publications that stem from a series of sequential tasks embraced in a telecollaborative project that twinned the two translocal groups of learners in this study. It should be noticed that a *task* is both a pedagogical notion and a research construct (see Section 2.1.2 on the “split personality” of the task [Seedhouse, 2005b, p. 533] underscoring the task’s potential, as both a structured teaching tool and a meaningful site for investigating social interaction). This study is framed around the notion of task as a research construct. Two of the publications analyse how learners participate in specific instances of performing a pedagogical task, while the other two examine learners’ communication during their engagement in a real-world task.

## **1.2. Significance of the Study, Research Objectives and Research Questions**

*Talk-in-interaction*—in line with the premises of *Conversation Analysis* (CA)—constitutes the primary analytical focus of the present study and provides a theoretical foundation that integrates sociocultural, interactionist, and plurilingual perspectives, situating learning as a dynamic process that develops through participation, task engagement, and learners’ agentic use of their multimodal and plurilingual repertoires. This framework strengthens the study’s contribution to the broader academic field of second language learning by addressing a gap in the integrated examination of participation, language choice, and learner agency. While existing

research has often treated these dimensions separately—considering participation, agency, or plurilingual practices as isolated phenomena—, this dissertation adopts a comprehensive perspective that highlights their interplay and how they mutually shape the language learning experience. By examining multiple communicative scenarios—including in-class and out-of-class task-oriented interactions, both online or face-to-face, and even in an *in-between learning scenario* (see publication 2 for the study on this hybrid scenario)—this dissertation also addresses the underexplored complexity of *dislocated* learning environments, characterised by shifting spaces, times, and participant constellations, which emphasises the learners’ learning experiences as dynamic and situated. This comprehensive approach, which encompasses different angles and particular scenarios, underscores the relevance and value of this compendium to the research field.

Building on this significance, then, the objective of this thesis is to examine how learners’ participation, language choice, and agency are co-constructed and interrelated during the execution of both pedagogical and real-world tasks in multilingual settings. Using Conversation Analysis (CA), the study investigates how these dimensions emerge in real time through talk-in-interaction, across different communicative learning scenarios. By analysing these dimensions together, rather than separately, the thesis aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how learners organise participation, mobilise their plurilingual repertoires, and enact agency when working collaboratively on pedagogical and real-world tasks. In doing so, the research seeks to contribute to second language learning research by deepening understanding of the sociocultural mechanisms that shape L2 learning in plurilingual settings, and by highlighting the pedagogical potential of integrating plurilingual and digitally mediated practices to foster both plurilingual and interactional competence in language education.

To pursue these objectives, the study is guided by the three following research questions, focused on a key dimension each: participation, language choice, and agency.

*RQ1: How do learners organise participation in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?*

This question explores the ways in which learners engage, negotiate roles, and manage interaction when working collaboratively in plurilingual settings.

*RQ2: How does learners' language choice emerge in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?*

This question investigates the dynamics of language selection in talk-in-interaction, and how choices are shaped by various sociocultural and contextual factors.

*RQ3: How do learners enact agency in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?*

This question explores the ways in which learners make choices, act autonomously, and shape the architecture of talk-in-interaction in plurilingual contexts.

The publications included in this compendium address these research questions in depth, as I will present in Chapter 4 and further consider in the conclusions in Chapter 5. In addition, the methodological section (Chapter 3) complements these general research questions with sub-questions that are used as a guide for structuring and interpreting the findings in the last chapter.

### **1.3. Structure and Organisation of the Thesis**

Following the first two subsections of this introductory chapter, which outlines the academic interest in the research topic, contextualises the study within the broader framework of SLA research, and briefly presents the goal and questions guiding the investigation, the thesis is structured as follows:

- Theoretical framework: Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical basis of this study. The first section examines interaction as a site for learning, focusing on the development of learners' competence through interaction, the role of tasks as contexts for learning, and the value of peer interaction. The second part contrasts different communicative scenarios, such as online versus face-to-face exchanges, and in-class versus out-of-class settings. Finally, the chapter presents the integrative analytical framework guiding the study and focuses on participation, language choice, and agency as the three interrelated central dimensions displayed in this study to understand how learners co-construct and reshape talk-in-interaction.
  
- Methodological framework: Chapter 3 outlines the methodological decisions adopted to conduct the research. It begins with the research design, explaining the qualitative single-case approach presented here, the research questions guiding the study, the classroom project that provided the data, and the participants in the study. The next section presents the data sources that constitute the corpus of this study, and the procedures for data collection, selection, and treatment. The final part is dedicated to the data analysis. First it justifies the use of Conversation Analysis (CA) to analyse talk-in-interaction, then it discusses its adaptation to online and computer-mediated communication, and finally it highlights the challenges associated with these new types of interactions.
  
- Publications: Chapter 4 compiles the set of publications and offers a brief description of each to emphasize their significance to the research. It provides an overview of the four publications included in the compendium, outlining their individual focus, theoretical frameworks, and research settings. The chapter concludes by summarizing how each

publication contributes to the understanding of participation, language choice, and the enactment of agency.

- Conclusion and Findings: Chapter 5 closes this work and discusses the main findings and conclusions of the study in an integrative manner, addresses the research questions and reflects on the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical contributions of the thesis to the research field. This last section includes some practical recommendations for teachers. The chapter also acknowledges the main challenges and limitations of the study and outlines directions for future research.

## ■ CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Interaction as a Site for Learning

Communicative Learning Scenarios in Context

Analysis of Talk-in-Interaction from an Integrative Perspective

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In recent decades, second and foreign language teaching—and, to some extent, first language teaching—has been increasingly informed by sociocultural theories of learning. For example, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD)—which explains how learning is mediated through social interaction with more capable peers—gained prominence in language education in the late 1980s and 1990s, through the work of Appel & Lantolf (1994), Lantolf (2000), Donato (1994), and Swain (2000), among others. Consequently, today learning is no longer seen simply as a process of acquiring knowledge but the consequence of being actively engaged in a social and cognitive learning process that fosters deeper understanding and skill development through talk-in-interaction. Thus, learning is not envisaged as an individual process of incorporating pre-existing knowledge but reconceptualised as a social practice rooted in the learners' participation in meaningful activities.

In this vein, interaction is not merely a means for conveying information but the very medium through which knowledge, competences, and identities are (re)constructed. This theoretical shift aligns with a widely held view in educational research that learning is inherently situated (Lave & Wenger, 1991), as it unfolds in specific contexts, within particular social relationships, and through the mediation of cultural tools and practices. In language education, this implies that the development of *competence*—whether linguistic, interactional, or plurilingual—cannot be disentangled from the real-life communicative situations in which this competence is enacted. This belief underpins the *strong* version of the socio-interactionist approach to language development, described and adopted by Mondada & Pekarek Doehler (2004) in their review of different interpretations of the role of social interaction in learning. They situate this perspective at the intersection of two main sources of theoretical inspiration: the ethnomethodological and CA approach to social interaction (Bange, 1989; Gajo & Mondada, 2000, among others) and the sociocultural approach to cognition and learning (Hall, 1993;

Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Young & Miller, 2004; Hall, 1993). Unlike the *weak* interactionist perspective—which regards social interaction as a mere backdrop to developmental processes—, the *strong* socio-interactionist perspective asserts that without social interaction, the development of language and higher cognitive functions cannot occur—sociality is not just beneficial but constitutive. Within this view, the learner participates in the interaction as a co-constructor of joint activities with other social agents, continuously adapting to the unfolding circumstances and activities that constitute talk-in-interaction (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004).

We now proceed to present the theoretical framework that supports this study. The chapter begins by reviewing how interaction has been approached and conceptualised in SLA research, contrasting sociocultural and cognitivist perspectives to language learning and highlighting the role of interaction in the development of learners' competence (Section 2.1). This is followed by a discussion of different communicative learning scenarios (Section 2.2). Finally, the chapter outlines an integrative analytical framework (Section 2.3) that brings together the three core dimensions in the analysis—participation, language choice, and the enactment of agency—and provides the lens through which the data will be examined.

## **2.1. Interaction as a Site for Learning**

### **2.1.1. Competence Development through Interaction**

The sociocultural perspective underscores learning as a social process primarily occurring through interaction (Hall, 1993; Lantolf, 2000; Hellermann, 2007; among others), therefore fostering learners' development of their *interactional competence* (IC) becomes essential. As described in Section 1.1, IC can be understood as the ability to accomplish meaningful social actions, to respond contingently to co-participants' previous actions and to recognize and orient to expectations regarding what to say and how to say it (Young, 2011; Hall & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Hall et al., 2011). IC is essential for effective language use and social

engagement, as it involves deploying and acknowledging context-specific patterns by which turns are taken, actions are organized on a moment-to-moment basis, and practices are ordered (Hall & Pekarek Doehler, 2011). Section 1.1. has already established that the current construct of IC builds on the notion of *communicative competence*—coined and elaborated by Hymes (1972a) and further developed by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990), among others—, as a reaction to Chomsky’s *linguistic competence* (1965). The main difference between communicative competence and IC, according to Young (2011, p. 430), is that “IC is distributed across participants and varies in different interactional practices” and, fundamentally, that “IC is not what a person *knows*, but what a person *does* together with others”. Kramsch’s view (1986) also clearly distinguishes IC from communicative competence arguing that IC presupposes “a shared internal context” or “a sphere of intersubjectivity” (p.367).

The resources that characterize IC and which participants bring to interaction were listed and classified by Young (2008) within 3 groups: (a) *identity resources* (participation framework), (b) *linguistic resources* (register, modes of meaning) and (c) *interactional resources* (speech acts, turn-taking, repair, boundaries). Other forms of conduct in addition to talk (nonverbal semiotic resources) are also considered in the analysis of the achievement of communicative activities (Goodwin, 2000), such as verbal prosody, rhythm and intonation (Young, 2011). Conversation Analysis (CA) examines how these resources are mobilized in the organization of *talk-in-interaction* (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Heritage, 1984). More specifically, within the field of second language research, this interest has been developed in *CA-for-SLA* (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Markee, 2008; Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger, 2015; Masats, 2017), which conceptualises L2 interactional competence, as Pekarek Doehler and Pochon-Berger (2015) explain, in terms of members’ “methods” (Garfinkel, 1967) for managing social interaction—i.e., systematic procedures such as turn-taking, repairing or opening and closing a conversation.

Thus, members of a social group organise their conduct (Brouwer and Wagner, 2004) employing these systematic procedures, accordingly with the increased complexity and accuracy of their interactional repertoires (Markee, 2008). Consequently, the development of L2 interactional competence is conceptualised as change over time in participants' methods for accomplishing L2 talk-in-interaction (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Hellerman, 2007).

In a similar way, *plurilingual competence* (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 1997, 2009) can also be considered as emerging through interaction, since learners mobilize their linguistic resources across languages in interaction, shaping and expanding their repertoires through social practices. Understanding plurilingual competence challenges the traditional monolingual view of language learning, which is grounded in the classical assumption that individuals acquire competences in different languages in isolation. Instead, research suggests that plurilingual individuals develop a dynamic and holistic skill set which goes beyond isolated linguistic abilities in different languages (Lüdi & Py, 2009; Nussbaum, 2014). Plurilingual Competence is then understood as a situated resource that enables speakers to flexibly mobilise their linguistic repertoire in both endolingual and exolingual conversations (Lüdi, 2003). It develops through participation in communicative activities and fosters the acquisition of new language knowledge and skills.

The Catalan school curriculum defines the plurilingual competence as the capacity to use and learn multiple languages effectively and appropriately for communication and learning (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2022). It involves awareness of one's own linguistic repertoire, capacity to transfer knowledge and strategies across languages, and recognition of the value of linguistic and cultural diversity. The curriculum also emphasizes respect for all languages and varieties—including official, additional, and heritage languages—as well as the promotion of democratic coexistence, tolerance, and non-discriminatory language practices. Plurilingual competence includes the notion of *repertoire*, as proposed by Gumperz (1964), that comprises

all the communicative resources available to an individual, including the languages and varieties they are familiar with and can use, regardless of their level of proficiency. These resources are not static but continually reshaped by linguistic socialization processes (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). This concept also challenges traditional classifications of languages (e.g., first, second, or native languages) as overly simplistic, particularly for individuals whose life experiences may challenge such categorizations. For instance, the notion of "mother tongue" often fails to capture the complexities of multilingual socialization, as it does not necessarily align with the first language learned or the language used in various social contexts, as explained in Masats, et al., (2025).

In language learning contexts, the way participants orient themselves to develop a task in the target language (and how they do it) is also a central issue in understanding the relationship between plurilingual practices and their development of communicative expertise. This expertise builds on participants' full linguistic repertoire. Research has shown that plurilingual uses scaffold participation in learning tasks and eventually foster the acquisition of the target language and its progressive use in a unilingual mode of participation. Additionally, plurilingual practices also facilitate the development of learners' interactional competence, which is vital for meaningful communication in diverse linguistic environments (Hall et al., 2006; Lüdi & Py, 1986, 2009; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Nussbaum & Unamuno 2000; Duff & Kobayashi 2010). Learners initially rely on their entire linguistic repertoire, using plurilingual resources to manage the task or overcome communicative obstacles (Masats, 2008; Llompart-Esbert & Nussbaum, 2018). Learning can be understood as a developmental process that progresses through stages in which learners shift from plurilingual interaction modes of communication to unilingual interaction modes, where they progressively orient themselves more exclusively toward the target language (Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2006; Masats et al., 2007; Masats, 2008; Llompart-Esbert et al., 2020). As Llompart-Esbert et al. (2020, p. 98) suggest,

learners set out from an initial stage in which they have little possibilities of participating in communicative activities in the target language, and progressively, through practice, and through the use of interlinguistic (e.g. recourse to resources from other named languages in their plurilingual repertoire) and intralinguistic (lexical substitution and paraphrasing) procedures, they learn to participate in interactions in unilingual mode in that language.

The resources participants mobilize as they progressively shift from one interaction mode to the other are diverse and varied. Four are particularly noteworthy: *code-switching* (CS), *code-mixing* (CM), *fused lects* (FLs) and making use of a hybrid *medium of classroom interaction* (Bonacina-Pugh & Gafaranga, 2011). Code-switching, as described by Auer (1999), is the alternation between languages within an interaction, perceived by participants and serving discourse or participant-related functions such as quoting, emphasizing, or adapting to social norms. Code-mixing, by contrast, is the integration of elements from different languages into a single communicative act, often producing hybrid language forms that sustain interaction, especially in learning contexts (Auer, 1999). Auer's notion of *fused lects* (FLs) refers to the blending or merging of distinct linguistic varieties (such as dialects or languages) in a single interaction, where features from both are integrated fluidly in the discourse. This results in a hybrid form of communication that transcends traditional boundaries between languages or dialects. Masats & Nogueroles (2022) expand this idea of hybridity when they argue that to maintain the flow of communication—and occasionally to dodge language alternation—, interactants resort to a hybrid medium of interaction by drawing on a variety of multimodal resources (e.g., gestures, tone of voice) alongside their plurilingual repertoires.

It is precisely in the progression from plurilingual to unilingual interaction modes of communication that evidence of language acquisition can be observed. This process often occurs within *potential acquisition sequences* (de Pietro et al., 1989), which refer to moments when learners temporarily pause the conversation or the resolution of a task to focus on specific linguistic features. These pauses create opportunities for learning (Llompart-Esbert et al., 2020) precisely because they enable participants to attend to communicative forms.

Potential acquisition sequences highlight how learners encounter, address, and overcome communicative challenges in real-time interactions. They originate, therefore, from a need for repair; an interactional activity aimed at solving a misunderstanding and refining language use. *Repair* mechanisms play a crucial role in scaffolding language development (Schegloff, et al., 1977; Kasper, 1985; Masats & Unamuno, 2001; Masats 2008; Batlle & Suárez, 2021). There are four key types of repair activities: *self-initiated self-repair*, where a speaker notices and corrects their own mistake; *self-initiated other-repair*, where a speaker signals difficulty and another participant provides the correction; *other-initiated self-repair*, where a participant encourages other participants to correct themselves; and *other-initiated other-repair*, where a participant identifies and directly corrects an utterance produced by another participant. Repair allows learners to refine their communicative skills at the time they actively participate in meaningful interactions and serve as support procedures in the progression from their total reliance on plurilingual resources to the exclusive use of the target language.

To conclude, it is important to notice that although the notion of *translanguaging* (García & Wei, 2015) also emphasises the holistic nature of plurilingual practices, this study is founded on the strong-interactionist view of plurilingual education. *Translanguaging* shares certain similarities with the interactionist perspectives on plurilingual communication in educational contexts (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). For example, both acknowledge learners' use of a wide range of activities that include multiple languages and modalities, including oral, written and digital

forms, which reflects individuals' ability to deploy their linguistic repertoire to participate in all types of interactions. However, the interactionist tradition—embraced by authors such as Gajo and Mondada (2000), Nussbaum et al., (2006), Masats, 2008, Bonacina-Pugh and Gafaranga (2011), Moore (2014), Llompart-Esbert (2016), among others—places greater emphasis on the sequential unfolding of plurilingual practices in a conversation and highlights how these instances of language use enable participants to attend to communicative forms and foster potential learning opportunities (Llompart-Esbert et al., 2020).

### 2.1.2. Tasks as Tools for Interaction and Learning

In the literature on TBLT, a distinction is often made between pedagogical tasks and real-world tasks (Nunan, 1989; Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007; see also Prabhu, 1987). *Pedagogical* tasks are classroom activities specially designed to promote language learning and, although they may not always mirror authentic communicative practices, they are structured to elicit particular forms or functions in a controlled setting (Ellis, 2003). *Real-world* tasks, by contrast, are communicative activities that speakers naturally engage in outside the classroom, such as ordering food, solving a problem, or writing an email (Nunan, 1989). In other words, as Long (1985, p. 89) defines it, “by *task* is meant a hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between”. Thus, while pedagogical tasks prioritize learning objectives, real-world tasks emphasize authentic communicative goals (Willis & Willis, 2007). In what follows, I will use the term *task* without adjectives to cover both senses.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the exact role played by interaction is a key point of divergence between cognitivist and sociocultural approaches to language learning. Cognitivists assume that acquisition is an internal cognitive process where interaction plays a complementary role—primarily by providing learners with *comprehensible input* (Krashen, 1985), *opportunities for output* (Swain, 2005), and feedback that triggers *cognitive restructuring* (Gass, 1997). In contrast, sociocultural theorists claim that learning is fundamentally social,

occurring *through* interaction. This distinction is related to another key point of controversial divergence between these two approaches: the conceptualization of the notion of *task* (see Masats, 2008, for a comprehensive review).

From a sociocultural perspective, tasks are seen as socially situated processes co-constructed by participants during interaction (Seedhouse, 2005b; Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2005; Masats, et al., 2007). This perspective challenges the assumption that tasks are static constructs that shape discourse; rather, it posits that it is interaction that (re)configures the task. By doing so, it emphasizes “the dialogic processes (such as scaffolding) that arise in a task performance and how these shape language use and learning” (Ellis, 2000, p. 193). Likewise, the author also argues that “tasks commonly used in SLA research are not just performed but rather interpreted, meaning that the activity itself is ‘constructed’ by the participants based on their unique goals, motives and contextual affordances” (p. 187). As tasks, from a sociocultural approach to learning, are constructed through moment-to-moment interactions (Brooks & Donato, 1994) no fixed categorization of task types can be established<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, research from a sociocultural approach focuses not on tasks as isolated units, but on the communicative acts that unfold as learners collaboratively perform tasks. Tasks are thus treated as activities that are both locally and historically shaped, reflexively defined and collaboratively accomplished by learners “in relationship to partners, either present, virtual or absent” (Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004, p. 462).

Breen (1989) identifies two stages in task development: *task-as-workplan*—pre-classroom implementation of what both the teacher and the learners will do—and *task-as-process*—actual classroom performance when participants collaborate to co-construct meaning with the actions that they take to accomplish the task, i. e. what actually happens in the

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<sup>7</sup> This dissertation does not delve into the literature on task types, as its focus lies on the interactions learners engage in during task performance rather than on the design or effectiveness of the tasks themselves. It only briefly introduces the distinction between pedagogical and real-world tasks at the beginning of this section for clarity.

classroom. The so-called “split personality” of the task as a research construct arises because “conceptualization is based on the task-as-workplan, but data is gathered from the task-in-process” (Seedhouse, 2005b, p. 533). Seedhouse (1999) argues that the primary goal of participants who take part in a task is not merely the practice of linguistic features but its successful resolution through interaction. This shift in focus is crucial to understand the importance of studying the interaction generated during the process of task resolution rather than simply measuring task outcomes. Seedhouse (2005b) argues that a solid foundation for understanding *tasks* as a research construct and for analysing interactional data can be built by focusing on the task-as-process. This approach involves studying how tasks unfold and develop in real-time interaction rather than treating them as fixed or predefined entities. It also entails a close examination of how interaction is organized, how turn-taking unfolds, and how learners strategically use linguistic and non-linguistic resources to accomplish communicative goals.

Finally, drawing on the socioconstructivist perspective that learning is a socially situated process emerging through collaborative interaction, it is important to emphasize that learning is a dynamic process that occurs in the discursive actions—the verbal and non-verbal moves used to construct meaning and coordinate interaction—that learners perform while participating in the resolution of the task (Pratginestós, 2025). Exploring these discursive actions thus involves examining both the decisions learners take in the interaction and the resources they deploy. The *Task Execution Frame* devised by Masats (2008, p. 142) systematically categorises learners’ discursive actions while engaged in the resolution of pedagogical tasks, namely *doing the task*, *managing the task*, and *overcoming trouble*, as they unfold during task engagement:

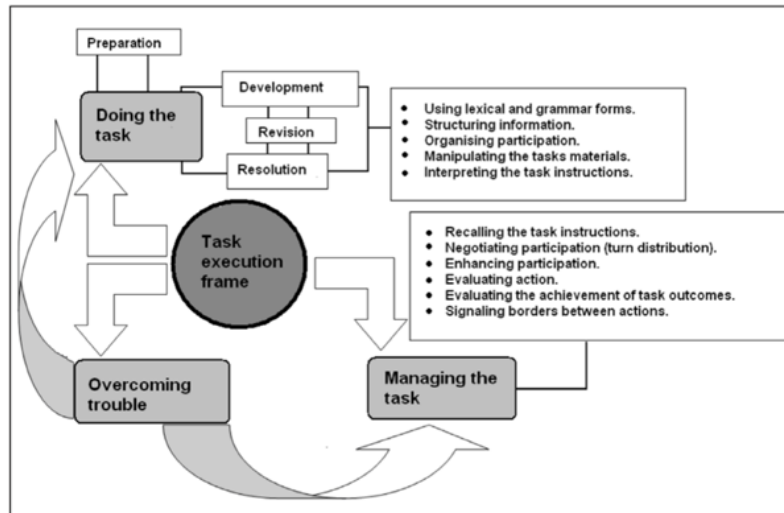


Figure 1. Observable actions in the context of carrying out a task (Masats, 2008, p.142)

Her model could easily be adapted to real-world task talk as learners always perform three types of discursive actions: participating, managing participation and overcoming trouble. Additionally, the study of talk-in-interaction also relies on the concepts of intersubjectivity and progressivity to explain how learners approach and organise their participation with the purpose of and preference for achieving interactional order. The notion of *intersubjectivity* (Heritage, 2007) refers to a state of 'shared understanding' between participants at talk, while the term *progressivity* (Schegloff, 2006) signals the forward-moving nature of interaction. These elements shape the constantly evolving nature of talk-in-interaction, demonstrating how conversations are co-constructed through moment-to-moment collaboration. Examining the interplay between these features provides a lens through which to understand how learners face interactional challenges while maintaining the forward-moving nature of communication.

In all types of interactions, these two key features of social interaction—progressivity and intersubjectivity—often coexist but can also come into tension. Indeed, these notions may initially seem self-contradictory as, at certain moments in interaction, “*progressivity is pitted against intersubjectivity*” (Heritage, 2009, p. 308). Participants must regularly negotiate between the tension of (a) acquiring a certain level of shared understanding, at the time they

maintain and pay attention to the linguistic and cultural diversity of all participants, and (b) progressing forward with the business of talk, which, when it comes to language learners, involves ensuring the task accomplishment (Heritage, 2007) through the adoption of all the possible resources that enable them to go on with the current activity (Markaki et al, 2013). In this intersubjectivity-progressivity axis, focusing on language learners' interactions as they engage in task resolution, Borràs (2013) summarises that progressivity integrates all the variables and actions that drive the task towards its resolution, including indicators such as efficiency, immediacy, and simplicity. Intersubjectivity, however, refers to the orientation towards the needs of other participants: equity (vs. efficiency), collaboration (vs. immediacy), and complexity (vs. simplicity). Participants mobilize all available resources to advance communication, which means, as said earlier, that they rely on multimodality, make use of language alternation or create hybrid forms, among others. By doing so, they balance the dual orientation of progressing with the task at hand while simultaneously fostering cooperation and achieving a shared understanding that is "adequate-for-all-practical-purposes" or "good enough" (Garfinkel: 1967, p. 8), typically reached through processes of negotiation.

Participants also use specific strategies to manage the interactional work necessary for successfully completing a task—either a pedagogical or a real-world one—particularly aligning with the progressivity pole of the progressivity-intersubjectivity axis. Among the practices that help learners establish the interactional order, Firth (1996) identified the procedures of *let it pass* and *make it normal*. The author defines *let it pass* as a procedure used by the recipient participant to leave unclear or unfamiliar language (e.g., 'grammar infelicities' or 'unidiomatic clause constructions') unaddressed, with the assumption that the meaning will either become clear or prove irrelevant as the conversation progresses. In doing so, the recipient participant avoids focusing on minor misunderstandings, making these issues interactionally insignificant, a stance that reflects passivity. In contrast, *make it normal* involves the recipient taking a more

active, though implicit, role in interpreting and understanding the communication taking place (Firth, 1996) not only by constructing the interactional order but also by creating the appearance of order. Yet, as Firth notes, even in this case the recipient participant refrains from explicitly signalling trouble in the co-participant's contributions, as this would indicate that the co-participant's statements are perceived as problematic. Letting hybrid or creative (or invented) forms pass is common, especially in interactions in English as lingua franca (ELF)<sup>8</sup>, where such forms are rarely explicitly highlighted—except when they seriously hinder or impede understanding. Hybridity—whether creative or multimodal—is so common in ELF that locally emerging hybrid forms, especially lexical ones, can become normalised as their non-standard use is adopted by other participants.

The procedures *let it pass* and *make it normal* favour *progressivity* and thus are crucial for facilitating smooth task advancement, which plays a key role in what Erickson (1982, 2004) describes as the *task learning environment*. This environment emerges from the interplay between the *Academic Task Structure* (ATS) and the *Social Participation Structure* (SPS), both of which shape various social participation structures. While the ATS refers to the sequential steps required to complete a task, the SPS regulates the allocation of interactional rights and obligations among participants. The SPS—which includes conversational rules for sequence interaction—is a key element for promoting intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity can indeed manifest through the collaborative construction of statements, known as 'candidate completions' (Firth, 1996). This occurs when one participant takes over an interrupted turn to finish the statement, interpreting the initial speaker's hesitations and pauses as a request for assistance or clarification. Intersubjectivity is also tied to what Smit (2010), drawing on Poulisse (1997), refers to as *joint forces*, or the inclination to work

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<sup>8</sup> *English as a Lingua Franca* (hereafter, EFL) refers to English being used to as a 'contact' or 'vehicular' language by people who do not share a first language (L1) and are neither native speakers (NSs) nor L1 speakers of the language being used (Firth, 2012), for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth, 1996).

together. The principle *joint forces* “implies that the participants contribute everything they can to the communicative exchange that is interactionally necessary” (Smit, 2010, p. 398). One way for participants to join forces for collaborative action is by engaging in cooperative work around the lexicon, particularly within repair sequences (see Borràs & Moore, 2019). In this vein, Smit (2010) also argues that repair is used to build ‘shared understanding’ and is regarded as a first-order interactional necessity in aligning one participant’s intention with the co-participant’s interpretation. Therefore, once more, the more formal aspects of language are not given attention unless they become relevant in the negotiation of meaning.

In plurilingual interactions, participants tend to display a strong preference for progressivity, opting to continue the interaction rather than pausing to fully resolve misunderstandings. This dynamic is particularly evident in instances of other-repair, where one participant addresses another’s error or misunderstanding, often through multimodal resources such as gestures, laughter, or changes in tone. These repairs help maintain sufficient intersubjectivity to keep the task moving forward, without entirely pausing the interaction (Mondada, 2014). Even when misunderstandings occur, participants tend to prioritize task advancement, using implicit cues or *covert claims* to signal the need for repair while maintaining the flow of communication (Mondada, 2016; Stivers, 2001). This constant negotiation allows participants to balance task completion and collaborative understanding with communication breakdowns—such as abandoning a communicative attempt—, which represents the extreme end of progressivity, where task achievement takes priority over further interaction (Schegloff, 1979; Mondada, 2014). The relationship between intersubjectivity and progressivity is particularly complex in interactions where participants are using an additional language they are still learning. Compared to interactions conducted in a participant’s primary language, the risk to rely on intersubjectivity is higher, since basic comprehension difficulties are more likely to arise. Within the framework of additional language learning and mobility programme

experiences, learners may have less shared knowledge and common ground on which to build intersubjectivity. This can make communication more challenging, and potential difficulties more noticeable.

To sum up, the need to find the balance between intersubjectivity and progressivity illustrates therefore the dual orientation of participants: aiming at mutual understanding while ensuring the efficient task completion. This negotiation shapes the interactional order and emphasises the need to study the role of communicative and interactive resources used by learners.

### 2.1.3. Peer Interaction as a Learning Resource

Among the various types of interactions learners engage in, peer interactions provide rich opportunities for learning through collaborative interaction and *collective scaffolding* (Donato, 1994). These collaborative interactions allow learners to co-construct new knowledge that goes beyond what any individual could achieve alone. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) formulation of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), which highlights how learning is most effectively supported through social interaction with more knowledgeable peers. Collaborative peer interactions—particularly those occurring during pair and group tasks—are especially relevant because they offer each member in the interaction increased possibilities of participation than those offered in interactions between teachers and learners (Masats, 2008). In this vein, Donato (1988) discovered that students who collaborated closely on preparing for a role-play task, achieved better learning outcomes—both individually and collectively—compared to those who worked more independently.

Collaboration is not merely the accumulation of language knowledge as an inert, solitary possession (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Instead, it enables learners to actively participate in a social activity, promoting future learning and development through expanding participation (Donato, 2004). According to Wenger (1998), collaborative learning not only supports the construction of

knowledge but also establishes and sustains mutual accountability among members of a community of practice. In this sense, rather than simply gaining information and remaining isolated from others, individuals that engage in a collaborative event evolve from peripheral members of a community into active participants, gradually getting more involved in the shared practices of the community. Peer interactions play a key role in fostering shared responsibility in learning, as students take on active roles as both experts and non-experts. Explaining concepts to peers not only benefits the recipient but also enhances the understanding of the person giving the explanation, as they must reorganise and articulate their ideas clearly. This reflects the concept of 'reciprocal learning' described by Ohta (2001), which emphasises the mutual benefits of peer-assisted learning, where both participants actively engage in the learning process.

Interacting with peers who are also learning a language may also create opportunities for more natural communication, as learners tend to participate in spontaneous dialogues that foster fluency and encourage them to experiment with new linguistic forms (Swain, 2000). This dynamic is particularly evident in peer interactions, where the absence of teacher mediation allows learners to explore different linguistic resources, structure topics collaboratively, and experiment with the actual organization of the interaction (Nussbaum, 1998; Masats, 2008). Peer collaborative interaction—particularly in informal settings as the one provided by peer work—may help learners feel less intimidated than in more formal, teacher-led interactions. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), this supportive environment facilitates the willingness to take risks, to make mistakes and to learn from them, fostering a less judgmental and more encouraging experience. In plurilingual learning contexts, drawing on plurilingual and multimodal repertoires is also a key aspect of peer collaboration. This is further supported by multimodal tools—such as gestures, images and digital resources—which enrich interactions and facilitate meaning-making in complex situations. As Jewitt (2009) observes, this perspective underscores the importance of considering multiple semiotic resources when analysing

interactional practices. Collaborative peer participation therefore provides a rich space for negotiation of meaning, a process in which learners work to face misunderstandings or to clarify their communicative intentions to successfully participate in the communicative event. Long (1996) stresses that these negotiations of meaning are fundamental to language development, as they help learners to identify and deal with their linguistic gaps.

Apart from enhancing linguistic correctness, peer collaborative interactions offer rich opportunities for learners to engage with a wider range of communicative strategies and viewpoints. Through these interactions, learners are exposed not only to various linguistic forms and styles but also to social norms and cultural differences that configure how language is used in different contexts. Exposing learners to different language diversity and cultural contexts contributes to the development of their pragmatic awareness and fosters adaptability (van Lier, 2000), providing learners with the skills necessary to participate in real-world, multilingual and multicultural communication effectively.

## **2.2. Communicative Dislocated Learning Scenarios in Context**

Today, human interaction no longer occurs exclusively face-to-face. This shift is particularly significant in educational settings and among younger generations. To further explore peer interaction, it is essential to examine how learners participate in various communicative environments, where these interactions take place, and how they contribute to language development. In this vein, numerous scholars have approached the difference between face-to-face and online interactions, where participation is shaped by the affordances and constraints of the medium. Online interactions—both in classroom settings and in informal out-of-class contexts—provide unique interactional opportunities and challenges that can have an impact on how learners engage with language and among themselves. In-class online interactions are guided by task objectives, while out-of-class online interactions tend to be more spontaneous and autonomous, providing learners with the opportunity to engage in more

authentic communicative exchanges through various digital platforms. Some researchers have sought to explain how learners interact in both settings to understand how they organise participation in digital contexts, and how this differs from what they do in physical contexts.

Learners' interaction unfolds in multiple scenarios that may have different modes, purposes, affordances, and constraints. Two dimensions are especially relevant for understanding how interaction shapes language learning: the distinction between online and physical settings, and the contrast between in-class and out-of-class interactions. Importantly, all these scenarios share a common feature: they are *dislocated* communicative contexts in the sense that are de-anchored from stable local frames and mediated by digital, cross-cultural, or translocal practices in the sense that interaction is not tied to one place, one language, or one cultural frame. Focusing on the characteristics of these dislocated scenarios is theoretically relevant as they foreground interaction as a dynamic, situated practice in which learners' participation and opportunities for language development are directly shaped by the affordances and constraints of each setting. The next sections will discuss how language learning research has approached online interaction as opposed to that occurring in physical settings, as well as the contrast between out-of-class and in-class interactions.

### 2.2.1. Online and Face-to-Face Interaction

The rise of online communication has naturally sparked increased research into its role in language learning. Some scholars have focused on the study of online interactions—*computer-mediated communication (CMC)*<sup>9</sup> for the sake of simplicity—to explore the unique opportunities this mode of communication offers for authentic and meaningful learner

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<sup>9</sup> In this study, online communication—either audiovisual or text-based—will be referred to as *computer-mediated communication (CMC)* or *online communication* for coherence and clarity. Other researchers in this field, though, have also used the terms computer-mediated interaction (CMI), mobile-mediated interaction (MMI) and mobile-mediated communication (MMC).

engagement. González-Lloret (2011) emphasizes how CMC can transform language learning by providing learners with real-world interactional opportunities that go beyond the traditional, teacher-controlled classroom discourse. Unlike conventional learning environments, online interactions allow learners to communicate directly with peers, including native speakers, fostering genuine communicative exchanges that reflect real-life language use. Technology-mediated contexts—particularly Virtual Exchanges (VE)—as in the case of part of the data analysed in Publication 3, for example—extend beyond the limitations of conventional learning spaces. As noted by Dooly & O’Dowd (2018), VE challenge traditional classroom boundaries, promoting a more dynamic and interactive environment. Additionally, they provide meaningful opportunities for learners to engage in authentic communication in culturally diverse settings, thereby enhancing their language proficiency and intercultural awareness (Dooly, 2022).

Beyond the structural changes online interactions introduce, their impact on learner agency and participation is also relevant. Text chat, for instance, has been recognized as a *level playing field* (Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996) that facilitates participation for both shy and confident learners. The possibility to reread and modify text-based communication also allows learners to reflect on their interactions, promoting metalinguistic reflection and self-correction (González-Lloret, 2008a). Moreover, recent technological affordances, such as *posts-in-progress* in platforms like WhatsApp, have introduced new interactional possibilities, enabling learners to observe how their conversation partners construct messages in real time (Garcia & Jacobs, 1999; Zemel & Çakir, 2009). These affordances help learners maintain coherence in online conversations, but they also create opportunities for them to have more control of their interactions.

Pedagogically, as González-Lloret (2013) argues, CMC offers learners spontaneous alternatives to conventional classroom languages and repertoires, bridging the gap between formal education and real-world communication. This idea aligns with the research on the

concept of *participatory web* (Androutsopoulos, 2010) as a site for language practice, where learners engage with language through social media, online communities and other digital platforms in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Such environments help learners develop intercultural competence and learner agency, as they actively construct their roles and identities through interaction. In this vein, as Androutsopoulos (2010, p. 203) discusses, “the novelty of the web 2.0 era [...] is the capacity it creates for a large number of people to become ‘intertextual operators’ who digitally modify multimodal text, for instance by adding subtitles, by replacing voices or images, and so on.” Recent studies extend this view: mobile-assisted technologies now enable learners to engage in language and identity work beyond the classroom, in networked, cross-cultural digital spaces (Li et al., 2023; Shadiev et al., 2024).

While online interaction offers major potential for research, it also presents significant challenges. As Herring (1999) and Tudini (2019) note, analyses based solely on text fail to identify multimodal resources such as gaze, prosody, and gesture that are central to face-to-face communication. Conversation Analysis (CA), however, has proved to be a robust framework for examining the sequential, rhetorical, and contextual features of online communication (Meredith, 2019), informing how learners construct meaning and negotiate interaction in digital spaces. Despite methodological and analytical advances that have contributed to understanding how these interactions are constructed (e.g., Thorne, 2013; Tudini, 2019; Pratsginestós & Masats, 2021), research on emerging contexts such as social media, video games, and mobile chat remains limited, leaving many popular forms of interaction (especially among younger generations) underexplored. The application of CA to this study on online interaction, as well as the challenges faced, is elaborated in the methodology, Sections 3.2.2. and 3.2.3.

Within online interactions, the focus now shifts to those occurring outside the classroom—particularly through social media—as these out-of-class exchanges are also relevant to this study (see Publication 1b and 2).

### 2.2.2. Out-of-Class Interactions

The reasons adolescents might have for interacting through social media in their everyday lives are countless, but most of the time, they are arguably not primarily related to language learning. Using a foreign language in digital channels, however, can become an unexpected language learning experience for teenage learners. The notions of *online informal learning* (Sockett, 2014; Toffoli & Perrot, 2017) and *CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) in the digital wilds* (Sauro & Zourou, 2019)—based on the concept of *learning in the wild* (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Clark et al., 2011; Moore, 2015; Wagner, 2015)—capture the idea of informal language learning in digital spaces, communities, and networks that are independent of formal instructional contexts. There are numerous studies addressing language learning situations outside the classroom, with some or no connection to the class environment. These include *Extramural English* (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012), *Online Informal Learning of English* (Sockett, 2014; Toffoli & Perrot, 2017), and *Language Learning and Teaching Beyond the Classroom* (LBC) (Reinders & Benson, 2017(Reinders & Benson, 2017)). All these research lines share the idea that these interactional settings are less controllable or organized than a classroom (Sauro & Zourou, 2019), “but which present interesting, and perhaps even compelling, opportunities for intercultural exchange, agentive action, and meaning making” (Thorne, 2010, p.144).

This growing interest reflects a shift in understanding language learning as a process that is not exclusive of formal education but extends into informal and digital contexts. These environments align with the everyday practices and preferences of learners, highlighting the relevance and potential of studying informal language learning spaces and practices in the current digital era.

### 2.3. Analysis of Talk-in-Interaction: An Integrative Approach

Having reviewed how language learning and competence unfolds and develops through interaction, tasks, and peer collaboration, this section will now introduce an integrative framework that brings together the three core dimensions that are central to this study: *participation*, *language choice*, and *agency*. Participation refers to how learners take part in conversations and negotiate roles, language choice is linked to the plurilingual resources learners employ to participate in the foreign language class or in interactions in ELF, and agency refers to learners' capacity to make decisions and co-construct the interaction. Together, these dimensions form a comprehensive framework for understanding how learners collaboratively navigate *talk-in-interaction* and create opportunities for learning.

#### 2.3.1. Participation as a Collaborative Process

The exploration of interactional practices and the detailed analysis of the multimodal resources interactants use to construct meaning are closely linked to the study of participation (Masats & Nussbaum, 2022). From this perspective, participation is not merely an individual cognitive activity but a collaborative, *situated learning* practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), manifested through the actions performed by all interactants during the course of a particular communicative event (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, as discussed above). Building on the notion of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), it has been argued that learning is a social practice in which learners activate their linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural competences, constantly adapting to others within the emergent context (Atkinson et al., 1984; Hall, 1993; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lantolf, 2000; Hellermann, 2007; Young, 2007). Learning is therefore not a process located in the individual's mind, but a social process unfolded in interaction, deployed in *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and distributed among interactants, as reflected in the following model:

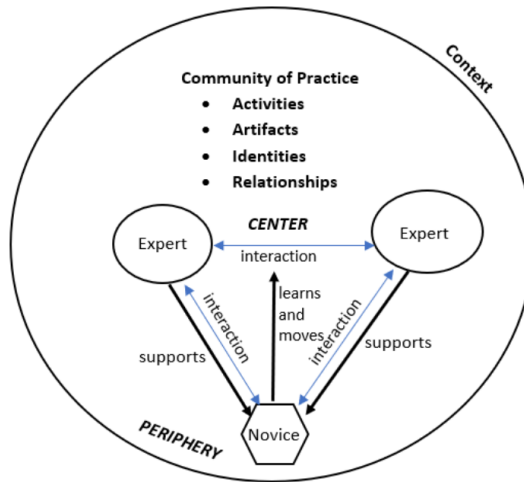


Figure 2. Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

Lave & Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of viewing learning as a dynamic process that extends beyond the mere transmission of content. Factual knowledge alone does not lead to learning; rather, it is through participation in the community of practice that learners engage in activities, interact with artifacts, and develop relationships with more expert members. As learners move from the periphery toward the centre of the community, their identities evolve, and they gain expertise. The evolution of the learner into a more expert member of this community, within a contextualized setting, is what ultimately supports knowledge construction, as the learner contributes more fully to the community's practices.

From this perspective, the study of participation focuses on the interactional practices enacted by participants and the multimodal resources they employ. Goffman's (1981) foundational model of participation underscores how speakers position themselves in discourse and define the roles and status of their interlocutors. Although his model had an exploratory nature, it was criticised because the speaker and the listener were treated as separate identities. Building on Goffman's (1981) model, Goodwin & Goodwin (2004), continued to investigate the complex dynamics of how individuals engage in communicative events by moving beyond static

categorizations of participants to explore the fluid and dynamic nature of interaction. In this vein, the authors contributed to the study of interaction claiming that participation is not limited to the fixed roles of ‘speaker’ or ‘listener’. Instead, they highlight how individuals actively negotiate and constantly interchange these roles, adapting to the evolving circumstances of the interaction. Another key aspect of their analysis is the role of embodied interaction, where gestures, facial expressions, and body position, together with speech, are used to convey meaning, shape turn-taking, and establish relationships among participants. The authors also emphasize the role of multimodal resources—the combined use of verbal, visual, and embodied modes of communication—in the collective construction of meaning and actions. Finally, their work underlines the importance of contextual sensitivity, referring to the way communicative practices are shaped by the immediate physical environment, cultural norms, and the peculiarities of the interaction, all of which influence how participation structures are formed and approached. By integrating these elements, Goodwin & Goodwin (2004) offer a complex perspective on human interaction, contributing to the study of how individuals collaboratively construct meaning, manage social roles, and adapt to the changing dynamics of interaction. Their model, therefore, can also be implicitly related to learning and has actually been applied to educational contexts, particularly in studies framed in sociocultural and situated learning theories.

### 2.3.2. Language Choice in Plurilingual Contexts

Learning in multilingual milieus is inherently shaped by the interaction between the languages used by participants, and by how interactants co-construct the communicative event they participate in, as demonstrated in the study presented in Publication 2. In these contexts, participants draw on their *language repertoire*—understood as the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the communicative interactions of a community (Gumperz, 1964)—when selecting, combining, and alternating between languages. Learners and teachers usually orient

to plurilingual talk, defined as “the alternating use of more than one language in the same episode of talk” (Musk & Cromdal, 2018, p. 16). The study of language alternation—which has evolved over the past three decades (Lin, 2013)—has become a key area in sociocultural and interactional research (see Filipi 2019 for an exhaustive review of the field). These studies have explored the functions of language alternation (Eldridge, 1996; Unamuno, 2008), its impact on the learning outcomes (Masats et al., 2007; Macaro, 2009; Llompert-Esbert & Nussbaum, 2023), its role in constructing identities and navigating social inequalities (Prego Vázquez, 2000), and in the distribution and patterns of language use (Polio & Duff, 1994; Kim & Elder, 2005). Research in this area can be broadly classified into two perspectives: the learner-peer perspective and the teacher-centred perspective (Filipi & Markee, 2018). From the learner-peer perspective—the central focus of this research—studies have examined the learning opportunities created through language alternation (Kasper, 2004; Mori, 2004), its role in fostering engagement in interaction (Cheng, 2013) and its contribution to task development (Markee & Kunitz, 2013). From the teacher-centred perspective, attention has been given to the pedagogical implications (Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005), the establishment of epistemic status (Cheng, 2014; Filipi, 2018) and the dynamics of vocabulary teaching (Huq et al., 2017). Additionally, practices such as linguistic policies (Amir & Musk, 2013) and the enactment of *practised language policies* (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012; as discussed below) have also been explored.

At this point, it is pertinent to focus more closely more closely on how participants orient themselves to and make sense of the language used in interaction. Gumperz (1982), building on previous research, suggested that the grammarian’s notion of language and the participants’ own notion of code could not be the same. In line with this distinction, Auer (1984, 1999) contributed to the debate by arguing that when participants alternate frequently between turns and within turns, none of the languages involved can be seen as the language-of-interaction. Instead, the use of various languages must be seen as a resource that constitutes the code to

which participants orient to. In a similar vein, Gafaranga (1999) argues in favour of suspending the concept of language and replacing it by the concept of *medium* of an interactional episode. This concept was later extended to that of *medium of classroom interaction* (Bonacina-Pugh & Gafaranga, 2011), understood as “‘the linguistic code’ that classroom participants actually orient to while talking, as opposed to the policy-prescribed medium of instruction” (Bonacina-Pugh & Gafaranga, 2011, p.330). Auer’s foundational work (1984, 1998) had earlier conceptualised bi-/plurilingual talk as relying on alternation either as a *discourse-related activity*—as a *contextualization cue* (Gumperz, 1982)—or as a *participant-related resource*—indexing speakers’ preference for a particular language or *medium* (Gafaranga 1999). Following Gafaranga (2001), this research, particularly the study discussed in publication 2, draws on the idea 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, p. 299). Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) expands this understanding by framing language choice as a “category-bound activity” (Sacks, 1992). That is, participants’ language choices co-construct their practised language policy. This term, coined by Bonacina-Pugh (2012), refers to Spolsky’s idea (2004) that there is a policy within practices, where speakers orient themselves to international 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 to 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’s work 2012, 2013).

In this vein, it can also be argued that the participants' language choices create the practical status of the languages they use (Unamuno 2015), that is, the choice of a particular language is a resource learners have at hand when they (a) need to solve communication breakdowns, (b) enact a particular identity, or (c) display their affiliation to the educational institution (Cots and Nussbaum 2008) by accommodating to the explicitly or implicitly agreed norms of language use present at schools understood as *communities of practice* (CoP, Lave and Wenger 1991). Observing groups of learners who share a common interest for a particular domain and learn to improve their skills or knowledge through regular interactions is especially relevant for this research as it is crucial to understand the notion of the *in-between learning scenario* in relation to practised language policies (see Publication 2). CoPs, as discussed in the previous section, underscore the social nature of learning: knowledge is co-constructed through participation and collaboration within a community. CoPs have three common key elements: a shared domain—which defines the group's focus and purpose—, a community—where members interact, build relationships, and exchange ideas—, and a practice—which involves shared tools, techniques, and approaches developed with time.

The ways in which learners select and alternate between languages gain relevance in peer interaction, where collaborative exchanges not only provide the context for these choices but also create affordances for scaffolding, co-construction of knowledge, and the joint development of communicative practices.

### 2.3.3. Agency in the Co-construction of Interaction

Agency—an individual's will and capacity to act—is one of the most fundamental characteristics of human behaviour. Recently it has been framed as relational, embodied, socially situated, and dynamically adaptive (Duff & Doherty, 2014; Buhrmann & DiPaolo, 2017; Bouchard & Glasgow, 2019; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Bui & Filipi, 2024). As Mercer (2011) argues, numerous SLA studies have examined agency in respect to learners' capacities for autonomous,

self-regulatory and goal-oriented strategic behaviours (e.g. Bown, 2009; Gao, 2010; Huang, 2011; Toohey & Norton, 2003). In this vein, Larsen-Freeman (2019) claims that “although second language development is rightly seen to be embedded in a larger sociohistorical ecological system, languaging is still performed by an agentive learner in particular in a specific place [...] for particular reasons with particular others” (p. 63).

Gao (2010) argues that it is not just the affordances of a specific context that are responsible for shaping learners’ selection and use of resources—and the ways in which interactants and their actions relate to one another—but rather the balanced interaction of both. Thus, agency can be seen as “people’s [learners’ in our study] ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals, which may lead to personal or social transformation” (Gao, 2010, p. 417), or, in other words, as the right attitude toward learning a new language. Additionally, Mercer (2012) emphasizes the need to consider “the dynamics of a person's ongoing life history, including their past and present experiences, as well as their future goals, expectations, and imaginations” (Mercer, 2012, p. 57) to be able to examine agency holistically.

Agency is not an attribute of a person, but a relationship between the learner and what their context affords (Driver et al., 2021). When the context is favourable and opportunities for participating are granted, learners may begin to take responsibility for their own learning, taking initiative and even creating opportunities to learn. They may also start taking more risks—confident in their ability to learn from their mistakes—and develop the ability to adapt and persevere in order to overcome obstacles (Driver et al., 2021). These agentive actions—along with more or less deliberate decisions—can influence the way learners participate in interactions and may contribute to learning, understood as “the development of increasingly effective ways of dealing with the world and its meanings” (van Lier, 2000, pp. 246-247). Parallel to this—and especially relevant to this study—, Mercer (2011) outlines an agentive system that

encompasses both a learner's sense of agency—the extent to which a learner feels agency, both generally and within specific contexts—and their agentive behaviour—the exercise of agency through participation and action, or, conversely, through deliberate non-participation or inaction). This system involves the choice to engage actively or, alternatively, to intentionally refrain from participation or action. This is why the study examines how agency is enacted in learners' interactions—rather than on how agentive they feel—, specifically examining how resources are mobilized through this enactment and how these actions can be identified and categorised.

Learner agency is thus a dynamic and multifaceted construct that emerges within specific temporal and spatial contexts, shaped by past experiences, present interactions, and future expectations (Larsen-Freeman, 2009) and is characterized as emergent, relational, heterarchical, multidimensional, and changeable through iterative processes of co-adaptation. Agency is considered *emergent* because it arises within specific moments, influenced by the interplay of past habits and future goals, as well as the contingencies of the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). It also depends on the availability of social, cultural, and economic resources within a given ecological context (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). Moreover, agency is inherently *relational* because it develops through interactions with others and the broader environment (Miller, 2014; Gallagher, 2017). The relational nature of agency explains how learners adapt to one another over time, with these iterative processes continuously reshaping their agency. The interconnection of its various traits also makes agency *heterarchical*, with each characteristic influencing and being influenced by the others. Finally, agency is *multidimensional* as it is influenced by internal factors such as emotions, beliefs, and personality, and it operates across three levels of learner engagement: behavioural, cognitive, and emotional. These dimensions are visible through learners' discursive actions—as discussed in publication 3. The *behavioural* dimension relates to participation, interaction patterns, and processes such as turn allocation

and selection. The *cognitive* dimension concerns how learners construct and interpret meaning during interactions. Finally, the emotional dimension—referred to in this dissertation (and in Publications 1b and 3) as *relational* to underline its focus on *social presence*<sup>10</sup>—includes affective and cohesive strategies that foster group cohesion. These might include humour, the use of inclusive language, or references to other participants' messages, which collectively contribute to the discourse construction.

Larsen-Freeman (2019) asserts that while learning occurs within a broader sociohistorical framework, it is ultimately shaped by the intentional discursive actions of learners within specific contexts, driven by particular goals and collaborators. Similarly, Gao (2010) argues that agency emerges from the dynamic interplay between contextual opportunities and learners' strategic decisions. Thus, agency represents learners' ability to adapt, and make meaningful contributions within their contexts, as evidenced through their discursive actions, which plays a crucial role in the learning process. One tangible manifestation of learners' agency is reflected in the language choices learners make during interaction, as explored in the next section.

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<sup>10</sup> *Social presence* (Short, J., Williams, E., & Christie, B., 1976; Lowenthal, P. R., 2010) refers to the feeling that others are "real" and present during communication, whether in face-to-face or mediated environments (like online chats, video calls, or social media). It plays a crucial role in shaping how people engage, perceive, and respond to one another (Robbins, 2020) in different communication contexts.

# ■ CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Research Design and  
Approach

Data Collection and  
Treatment

Analytical Approach

### **3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter presents the qualitative methodological framework guiding our study. Section 3.1. (Research Design and Approach) introduces the qualitative single-case approach of the research and explains how the overarching research questions outlined in Section 1.2 are addressed through sub-questions across the four case studies. This section also outlines the classroom proposal from which the interactional data were obtained, and presents the different participants involved in the study. Section 3.2. (Data Collection, and Treatment) describes the composition of the data, the methods used followed to collect and select them, and the steps undertaken to prepare them for analysis. This includes the transcription conventions used to render face-to-face and digitally mediated interactions, as well as a classification of scenarios and datasets. Section 3.3. (Data Analysis) explains the application of Conversation Analysis (CA) within an Ethnomethodological framework, emphasising how this approach is complemented by ethnographic insights. The section concludes with a reflection on the methodological challenges encountered during the research process, particularly with respect to the digital nature of certain interactional data.

#### **3.1. Research Design and Approach**

This study adopts a qualitative, single-case analysis approach. The design is guided by the overarching research questions and further specified through sub-questions, which enable each article in the dissertation to contribute to addressing the broader aims. This section also provides a detailed account of the development and implementation of the classroom proposal that frames the analysed interactions, as well as an overview of the participants involved in the study.

### 3.1.1. Research Method

Instead of aiming for broader statistical results, the adoption of a qualitative research design particularly valuable to focus on rich and detailed descriptions that capture the complexity of human interaction and learning (Merriam, 1998). This is especially useful in education and linguistics, as it allows for the analysis of meaning-making, identity, and interaction as phenomena that are inherently situated and continuously emerging in real-world settings (Richards, 2003). Such a perspective enables the researcher to capture the dynamic, socially constructed nature of interactions as they unfold in authentic educational environments. Building on this, the present dissertation adopts a single-case analysis approach, in which each of the four publications presents an interconnected case study. While the four cases are framed within the same classroom proposal, each focuses on specific episodes with distinct characteristics that occurred at different stages of its implementation.

Case study research, as Mercer (2011) highlights, offers a powerful methodological approach by enabling rich, exhaustive, personal and contextualised data to be generated. This type of research allows for a thorough exploration of distinct phenomena, which can lead to “a full and thorough knowledge of the particular” (Stake, 2000, p. 22). Single-case studies are valuable in educational settings because they enable researchers to closely analyse unique, situated experiences, providing insights into complexities of individual and group learning experiences, classroom dynamics, and pedagogical interventions. They allow researchers to capture nuanced ways in which learners engage with language or their own language learning processes in a way that could be overlooked in a broader quantitative study. As Duff (2008) points out, such an approach is particularly appropriate in language education research, where context, identity, and interaction play a critical role in shaping learning outcomes. According to this author, the selection of cases is shaped not by statistical prevalence, but by what the researchers know about the topic, the uniqueness or relevance of the case, and the theoretical

or epistemological positions guiding the research. Moreover, as Waring (2009) observes, the value of single-case analysis does not lie in discovering entirely new interactional practices, but in revealing the complexities of specific episodes. This approach enhances understanding of interactional phenomena across institutional settings, provides a foundation for collecting similar cases, and documents previously unrecognised practices that may be significant within specific contexts. Although findings from case studies should not be generalised statistically or directly transferred from one context or population to another (Mercer, 2011), they can be considered “generalizable to theoretical propositions” (Yin, 2003, p. 10), enabling researchers to identify patterns, refine conceptual frameworks, and generate insights suited to addressing the theoretical questions posed. In this sense, the use of single-case studies in this dissertation is well-suited to address the exploratory nature of the research questions while also contributing to the broader academic discourse on language learning and the role of peer interaction in educational settings.

In short, each single-case study focuses on a particular episode that enable a close examination of participation, language choice, and learner agency as they unfold in talk-in-interaction. Each of the analysis offers unique insights to the phenomena but together they provide complementary perspectives that address the overarching research questions guiding the dissertation.

### 3.1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

As detailed in Section 1.2., the study is guided by three overarching research questions, centred on participation, language choice, and agency. These are further specified through sub-questions, which are used as an analytical guide for the individual case studies. Rather than being addressed separately or sequentially, the sub-questions presented here provide a framework for interpreting the findings of each article and, collectively, for answering the main research questions in the Conclusions (Chapter 5).

*RQ1: How do learners organise participation in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?*

This question investigates the processes through which learners engage with one another, negotiate roles, and regulate interaction while conducting collaborative tasks in plurilingual educational settings. The analysis is guided by the following subquestions:

- How do learners balance shared understanding and task progress when managing turns and roles across face-to-face and online modalities?
- How do learners co-construct participation in dislocated scenarios, including pedagogical, off-task, and informal learning moments?
- How do digital affordances—e.g., social media, messaging platforms—reshape participation in plurilingual (peer) interactions?
- How does participation contribute to the development of learners' interactional competence across contexts?

*RQ2: How does learners' language choice emerge in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?*

This question examines patterns of language selection in talk-in-interaction and the way in which these choices are shaped by sociocultural and contextual factors. The analysis is guided by the following subquestions:

- What factors guide learners' language choices during interaction?
- How do practiced language policies (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012) emerge and evolve in collaborative plurilingual settings?
- How do learners use their plurilingual repertoires to scaffold meaning, manage roles, and construct identities?
- How do patterns of language choice reflect or shape emerging communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991)?

*RQ3: How do learners enact agency in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?*

This question explores how learners act autonomously, make interactional choices, and shape the structure of talk-in-interaction within plurilingual contexts. The analysis is guided by the following subquestions:

- How do learners exercise agency in relation to peer participation and task goals?
- How do learners position themselves and project identities through participation and language use?
- How is agency enacted differently across classroom-based and dislocated learning spaces?
- How do learners balance academic task demands with social participation when enacting agency?

### 3.1.3. Research Context

The teaching proposal that frames the interactions analysed in the four publications of this dissertation stems from a broader research and innovation project (*DATE Project*<sup>11</sup>), designed to empower English teachers to transform their teaching practices and create opportunities for learning. For two academic years (2018–2021) I held the position of research support technician in the DATE project and became an active and committed member of one of the participating school communities. The current proposal was co-designed and co-implemented by me and two of the teachers from this school community (see Section 3.1.4. for information on the different participants) within the frame of the DATE project. The classroom proposal that frames my study, which we named *This is us!*, was primarily aimed at offering a group of students of 3rd of ESO (secondary compulsory education in the Spanish educational

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<sup>11</sup> [Els docents com a agents transformadors de les pràctiques educatives gràcies a la seva participació col·laborativa en un projecte interdisciplinari d'innovació docent a les aules d'anglès de dos instituts de secundària del Vallès Occidental \(DATE\)](#). RecerCaixa. Obra Social La Caixa (2016ACUP-001, 2017-2020): 28/02/2018 – 27/02/2020. IP: Dolors Masats.

system for students aged 14-15) from one of the high schools participating in the DATE project opportunities and spaces to use and interact in English meaningfully. Its objective was to enable learners to deploy and develop their *interactional competence* (Kramsch, 1986) throughout the process. At a broader level, the proposal was also designed to increase learner engagement among students who were not intrinsically motivated to learn English, as well as to enhance their global awareness and their appreciation of their own city and culture. The classroom proposal adopted a project-based learning (PBL) methodology, in line with the general guidelines of the DATE project, which stipulated that the classroom proposals should follow a PBL approach—preferably including technology—to address socially relevant issues, such as the refugee crisis or environmental sustainability. For example, students participated in cultural exchanges, created digital stories, or engaged in activities that allowed them to communicate with peers from other schools in other countries. These approaches aimed to foster authentic communication in English while simultaneously engaging students in meaningful and socially relevant activities (Dooly & Sadler, 2019).

Building on these principles—and going back to the design and implementation of the classroom proposal framing this study—an initial contact with a secondary school in Greece was started through the eTwinning<sup>12</sup> platform. A group of students of the same age as the Catalan participants, along with their English teacher, took part in the *This is us!* collaborative proposal, which was designed to foster familiarity with each other’s culture and ways of life. The two groups were connected through a series of virtual exchanges organised and mediated by their teachers so that they could share information on various topics related to their traditions and daily life. Prior to the first virtual connection, the students were encouraged to investigate on

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<sup>12</sup> The **eTwinning** platform is a European School Education initiative sponsored by the European Commission that aims to facilitate collaboration between schools across Europe, fostering intercultural learning, digital literacy, and the development of collaborative skills through joint educational projects. (see <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>).

their peers' respective countries and prepare a video introducing themselves and posing questions about their peers' culture and lifestyle. By the end of the project, a face-to-face meeting in Greece was planned, which triggered the interest of participants to get to know their each other even better. Consequently, during the video conferences carried out in their classrooms, some students found an excuse to exchange their personal Instagram accounts to socialise. The translocal telecollaborative project, therefore, succeeded in offering the students an authentic context in which to use the target language in and outside the classroom. At that point, researchers requested access to their Instagram chat conversations and students voluntarily accepted to send them screenshots on the understanding that these data would be used for research purposes, in this case as part of the *IEP! project*<sup>13</sup>, which focused on out-of-school use and learning of English. Finally, after a recruitment process, a group of students were selected to travel to Greece to meet their international project peers. Before the trip, however, the group of Catalan students were assigned the task of organizing some fund-raising activities to subsidise part of the trip. As the decision to travel to Greece was announced just before the summer break and the trip was planned for September, the meetings to think of ideas to raise money for the trip—and the actual activities—had to be conducted outside the school during the summer break. For that matter, a WhatsApp chat was created for teachers to have a direct instant communication channel with all the students and to supervise over the summer the preparation of this forthcoming school trip. Within this initiative, the young Catalan students proactively decided to create an Instagram account to announce all the shops in their town that had joined the initiative to help raise money for the trip to Greece. Finally, the actual trip to Greece of a group of Catalan students provided numerous encounters and opportunities for interaction.

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<sup>13</sup> The research project 'Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)', was funded by FEDER/Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades – Agencia Estatal de Investigación. Grant ID PRPPGC2018-099071-A-I00. IP: Emilee Moore.

The interactions that emerged during the various stages of the didactic proposal—including the international experience—constitute the primary source of data compiled for the analyses presented in this research (see Section 3.2. for a detailed account of the interactional data collected throughout the process).

#### 3.1.4. Participants and Their Roles

This section presents the participants involved in the interactions analysed across the publications comprising the compendium. The first participant is the researcher—me, the author of this thesis—whose role was not limited to that of an external observer. As an active member of the school community throughout the project, I contributed not only to the design and implementation of the classroom proposal but also became part of the data generated in the study. The second group comprises members of the school community, with particular emphasis on the in-service teachers who, alongside other stakeholders, collaborated in the design and implementation of the classroom project. This group also includes volunteer university students who participated in the broader DATE Project and provided additional support to the classroom proposal. The final group consists of the learners themselves, who were the primary participants in most of the classroom interactions. Their participation in the project—especially through peer interaction—was central to the studies conducted in the various publications.

##### *The Researcher as Participant*

Drawing on ethnographic approaches commonly employed in the exploration of classroom practices in educational settings (see Mondada & Nussbaum, 2012, or Masats and Nussbaum, 2022, for examples), in this study I assumed a dual role that went beyond that of an external observer. My continued presence in the secondary school involved in the DATE project allowed me to integrate temporarily into the community, assist the English teacher, conduct

ethnographic work, and develop a nuanced understanding of institutional practices and linguistic policies. This immersion provided critical insight into the institutional dynamics, enabling me to better interpret the observable phenomena, in line with the recommendations of Kunitz and Markee (2017), who emphasize the importance of such understanding for researchers external to an institution. The ethnographic approach in language learning research is grounded in the concept of *membership knowledge* (ten Have, 2002), which refers to the insider understanding the researcher gains through active participation and immersion in the field, as previously mentioned. Ethnography is therefore not only a methodological tool for observing and analysing language practices, but, as Martín Rojo (2010) highlights, also provides a critical, context-embedded methodology for examining how language practices are intertwined with institutional structures, identities, language ideologies, and power relations in educational settings. This approach is particularly valuable in educational contexts, where formal and informal language practices intersect and mutually influence one another.

In sum, my position as a research support technician within the DATE Project allowed me to become an active member of the school community. This dual role enabled me to conduct ethnographic observation and analysis, which formed the foundation of this thesis. Importantly, occupying an insider position also meant becoming part of the data itself—a situation that inevitably influenced both the interactions and their interpretation, while simultaneously providing a privileged perspective as a researcher.

#### *In-service Teachers and Other School Community Members*

This group includes the in-service teachers who played a key role in co-designing and implementing the classroom project, alongside with other members of the school community whose support was crucial. To clearly situate the participants in this group and their specific roles, it is first necessary to distinguish between aspects and roles in the design and development of the classroom proposal that were predetermined by the broader DATE project,

and those decisions made collaboratively with members of the school community during the design and implementation of the classroom proposal that frames the data in this study.

The DATE Project was primarily conducted as *collaborative action research* (Nussbaum, 2017; Masats et al., in press). This methodology is also referred to by the Spanish-coined term *co-labor* (Leyva & Speed, 2008; Ballena et al., 2020) to contrast with traditional notions of *collaboration* in education, which often involve researchers entering schools from an expert position of authority to assist teachers—regarded as non-experts—in improving their practices. Conducting research in *co-labor*, however, presents certain challenges, particularly in negotiating the goals and expectations of multiple stakeholders, including researchers, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers (see Pratginestós, et al., [2019] for a study on the relationships established among all the stakeholders in the DATE Project). Collaboration within a *co-labor* framework among the various project participants—the researchers and the in-service teachers, as well as the volunteering pre-service teachers—was prioritised to attain the project main goals: developing innovative, project-based learning methodologies that could be integrated into the classroom, while also empowering teachers as agents of transformation in both their teaching practices and professional development. The following figure illustrates the dynamic, interrelated relationship among the different stakeholders; all working toward the same goals.

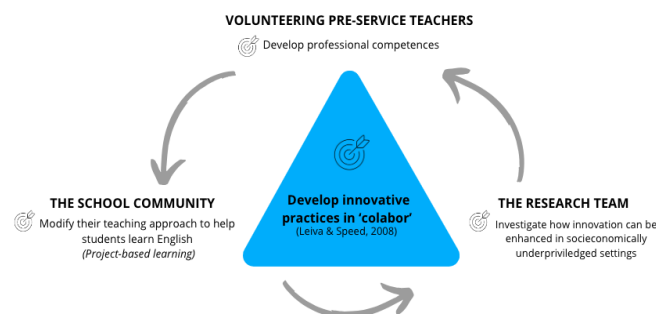


Figure 3. Participants in the DATE research and teaching innovation project and project objectives

The DATE project drew on the belief that meaningful teaching innovation can only be achieved when in-service teachers are empowered and actively engaged in transformative educational initiatives in collaboration—within a *co-labor* framework—with researchers and pre-service teachers. Such collaboration not only serves as a training model for pre-service teachers but also fosters professional development for both in-service teachers and researchers alike (Masats & Guerrero, 2018). Such belief is, in turn, based on the premise that knowledge gained by teachers who reflect upon their practices has positive consequences in their students' learning success (Burnard, et al., 2015). To this end, mixed teams of researchers and in-service teachers worked collaboratively from symmetrical positions to design, implement, assess, and disseminate classroom proposals. The *co-labor* framework emphasizes the horizontal distribution of tasks and responsibilities, whereby all members contribute to planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results (Ballena et al., 2020). The incorporation of preservice teachers and volunteers—who collaborated with researchers and in-service teachers in the design and implementation of interdisciplinary, project-based classroom initiatives—was essential to the successful development of the project.

The first and most important participant in this group—who is also an informant in the data collected for this study—was the in-service English teacher in the Catalan secondary school in the project. Apart from actively participating in the design and implementation of the classroom proposal, which introduced a PBL methodology relatively new to the subject at that time, he was also co-responsible for the preparation of the trip to Greece and for the planning the pedagogical activities carried out throughout the process. As a teacher, he inevitably became part of the interactional data collected for this study, typically in the role of facilitator and, at times, as a voluntarily spectator of the interactions that occurred mainly among peer learners (see Publication 3). Following the principles of the *co-labor* approach to research practices (Leyva & Speed, 2008), this teacher also participated in the data collection, analysis and

dissemination of some of the findings of the DATE project, along with the supervisor of this thesis (see, for example, Pratginestós, et al., 2019 and Pratginestós, et al., 2020).

The English teacher in Greece, who acted as counterpart in the *This is us!*, also played a significant role in this study. After initial contact through the eTwinning platform, she became actively involved in the design and implementation of the classroom project, particularly in preparing the trip to Greece and in developing the pedagogical activities conducted there. She also features in some of the interactions analysed (e.g. Publication 3, although due to sound and image limitations, her contributions are only partially audible and not visually captured. Her role was primary that of a facilitator of the exchange, while also actively encouraging both groups of students to interact, as discussed in the analysis of Publication 3.

In addition, a volunteer university student participated in the implementation of project and can be seen and heard in some of the interactions analysed (Publication 3). Her role in these exchanges was mainly that of occasional support, intervening in moments of communication breakdown or prolonged silences, thereby helping to maintain the flow of interaction among the learners, as illustrated in the analysis of Publication 3.

### *The Learners as Protagonists*

Both the Catalan and the Greek learners, aged 14 and 15, form the central group of participants and the main protagonists of the classroom proposal. Their peer-to-peer interactions form the core of the data analysed across all the publications of this thesis. As active agents in the project, they engaged in the tasks designed within the PBL methodology—partly new to the Catalan students—, participated enthusiastically in the (tele)collaborative activities with their partner school, and engaged in the pedagogical and intercultural experiences associated with the trip—before, during and after the visit. Their voices and interactions were

therefore key in shaping both the classroom dynamics and the analyses presented in this dissertation.

From an ethical perspective, data collection practices involving teenage learners raised both opportunities and challenges. The translocal project offered students an authentic context for language use, which was especially valuable in the Catalan school—located in an underprivileged milieu where learners had rarely encountered genuine communicative needs in English. The use of social media in a language other than their home language further reinforced the value of learning foreign languages.

Teachers/researchers obtained parental consent for translocal communication both in the classroom and online—through social media—, as well as explicit permission from all participants to collect screenshots for research purposes. Data were duly anonymised and handled in accordance with ethical guidelines for research with human participants and with the principles of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016/679), which emphasize informed consent, data minimization, and respect for participants' rights. However, as bonds between the two groups strengthened—particularly after meeting in Greece—students increasingly perceived the requirement to send Instagram chats with their teachers as an intrusion into their private lives. At that point, data collection was discontinued. This experience not only safeguarded participants' privacy but also helped us reflect on the ethical complexities of using personal digital communication in research. Such practices demand a careful balance between authenticity and respect for participants' rights.

### **3.2. Data Sources, Collection, and Treatment**

This section presents the data sources underpinning the study, the procedures followed for data collection, and the steps taken to treat and prepare the data for analysis.

### 3.2.1. Corpus and Data Sources

The interactional data generated along the various stages of the didactic classroom proposal (as described in Section 3.1.3)—including the exchange trip—constitute the core of the data compiled and analysed in this research. Although not all the data have been thoroughly analysed or used as the primary the source for a specific publication, presenting the full dataset is essential for understanding the broader data compilation process. In Table 1 below, each set of interactional data is outlined and linked to the corresponding publication(s) in which its analysis is featured.

DATA DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANTS present in the data	PUBLICATION
<b>1. Classroom project</b>		
1.1. Audiovisual recording of the process of preparation of the introductory videos in the classroom (in groups)	Catalan students	-
1.2. Introductory videos	Catalan and Greek students	-
1.3. Virtual encounters	Catalan and Greek students (+ teachers/researchers)	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Selection process and preparation of the exchange trip</b>		
2.1. Students' answers to a questionnaire via Google forms created to select those interested in travelling	Catalan students	-
2.2. Interviews of the shortlisted candidates	Catalan students + Catalan interviewers/researchers	-
2.3. WhatsApp group chat to plan the activities to raise funds to subsidise the trip	Catalan students and teachers	<b>2</b>
2.4. Instagram account created by students for fund-raising	Catalan students	-
<b>3. Exchange trip</b>		
3.1 Informal conversations with teacher presence in Greece	Catalan and Greek students (+ teachers/researchers)	-
3.2 Joint classroom activity in Greece	Catalan and Greek students (+ teachers/researchers)	<b>1</b> <b>3</b>
3.3 <i>Instagram</i> chats (one-to-one chat & group chats)	Catalan and Greek students	<b>1b</b>
3.4 Focus group with students who travelled to Greece	Catalan students (+ teacher/researcher)	-

Table 1. Brief outline of each set of interactional data and its presence in publications.

To provide a clear overview of the collected data, the various interactions that emerged throughout the different stages of the process were categorised according to their contexts and communication channels. These interactions were classified based on several parameters, as presented in Table 2 and further detailed below, including their scenario, the type of data, and the participants of each interaction.

DATA DESCRIPTION	SCENARIO					TECHNOLOGY MEDIATION		TYPE OF DATA		PARTICIPANTS				
	IN-CLASS		OUT-OF-CLASS			IN-BETWEEN	YES	NO (face-to-face)	WRITTEN screenshots/ text extracts	ORAL audio/video	LEARNERS		TEACHERS	
	Pedagogical task	Real-world task	Pedagogical task	Real-world task	CATALAN						GREEK	CATALAN	GREEK	
<b>1 Classroom project</b>														
1.1. Audiovisual recording of the process of preparation of the introductory videos in the classroom (in groups)	*					*			*	*		*		
1.2. Introductory videos	*					*			*	*	*			
1.3. Virtual encounters	*					*			*	*	*	*	*	
<b>2 Selection process and preparation for the exchange trip</b>														
2.1. Students' answers to the questionnaire via Google forms created to select those interested in travelling		*				*		*		*				
2.2. Interviews of the shortlisted candidates		*					*		*	*		*		
2.3. WhatsApp group chat to plan the activities to raise funds to subsidise the trip					*	*		*		*		*		
2.4. Instagram account created by students for fund-raising				*		*		*		*				
<b>3 Exchange trip</b>														
3.1. Informal conversations with teacher presence in Greece				*			*		*	*	*	*		
3.2. Joint classroom activity in Greece			*				*		*	*	*	*	*	
3.3. Instagram chats (one-to-one chat & group chats)				*		*		*		*	*			
3.4. Focus group with students who travelled to Greece				*			*		*	*		*		

Table 2. Classification of the compiled data

Each set of interactional data, as illustrated both in Table 1 and 2, correspond to a specific easily identifiable stage and scenario of the learning proposal. Please note in the setting column a sub-column referred to as an *in-between learning scenario*—a term coined in our study (Pratginestós & Masats, 2024) to identify a very specific scenario within a WhatsApp chat with learners (see Section 5.2. for further insight on this methodological contribution).

### 3.2.2. Data Collection and Selection

The data for this research were collected within the framework of the DATE project, following an extended period of ethnographic fieldwork (see Section 3.1.3. and 3.1.4. for further

details). A variety of data collection methods were employed, adapted to the specific contexts of interaction. Classroom interactional data in physical settings were recorded using both audio and video, depending on the situation. In many cases, *audio* recording was preferred to minimise intrusiveness and avoid overwhelming the participants. In the Catalan context, classroom data were gathered from two secondary-school classes, each consisting of approximately 30 students. In this context, around 10 hours of classroom interaction were recorded, capturing a range of activities and stages within the whole implementation process of the classroom proposal. During the trip to Greece, an additional 4 hours of in- and out-of-classroom interaction were audio-recorded, complementing the dataset collected to that moment.

In parallel, online interaction data were collected through multiple channels. Instagram exchanges were documented with the support of participating Catalan students, who voluntarily shared 15 screenshots of their group and one-to-one exchanges with their Greek peers—with the understanding that these data would be used exclusively for research purposes and fully anonymised. For WhatsApp interactions—as I was a direct participant in the conversations; acting both as a teacher and a researcher— I obtained permission from other participants to extract and convert the data into plain-text files to facilitate their systematic analysis, ensuring once again that all participant information was anonymised to protect their identities. The resulting dataset consisted of interactions from a chat among 12 participants, which amounted to approximately 15 pages of text.

Following the data collection phase, the entire dataset underwent an initial review and preliminary analysis. Selecting the data was not an easy task, as there were many interesting extracts, but the process was guided through collaborative data sessions organised by the GREIP research group, involving my supervisor and other senior and junior researchers. These sessions were particularly valuable for discussing and refining analytical strategies. Based on the insights gained during these discussions, and the relevance of specific datasets to the preliminary

research objectives, a selection of data was retained for the present study, while other sets were disregarded. From the recordings with classroom interactional data, a curated subset of analytically relevant extracts was selected for detailed analysis and incorporated into Publications 1 and 3. From the Instagram dataset, 4 screenshots were selected for analysis and included in Publication 1b. From the WhatsApp corpus, 5 analytically relevant extracts were identified and retained for Publication 2. In this vein, further details regarding the specific characteristics of each dataset are provided in the corresponding publications.

All selected interactions take place in dislocated scenarios that diverge from strict conventional classroom-based interactions. These deviations manifest through spatial displacement, temporal shifts, or alternative participant configurations, setting them apart from traditional school-based interactions. This common feature emerged not from an intentional design at the outset, but rather from the natural process of data selection, guided by the specific research interests each dataset elicited. Table 3 below offers a brief description of the datasets analysed in each study and highlights the dislocated nature of the learning scenarios examined. These dislocations reveal learners' experiences as dynamic, situated, and shaped by the specific social and technological affordances and constraints of each setting.

Publication	Description of the Data Set	Dislocated Nature of the Scenario
<b>Publication 1: Interactional Competence in Transnational Plurilingual Peer Interactions</b>	Task-based peer interaction data collected during a transnational project involving Catalan and Greek secondary students using <i>English as a lingua franca</i> in face-to-face group work.	While classroom-based, the scenario is dislocated in terms of language use (ELF in a local setting) and social configuration, with learners engaged in intercultural collaboration <b>beyond their usual peer groups</b> .
<b>Publication 1b: Learning English in Translocal Exchanges in Instagram Chat</b>	Screenshots of informal Instagram messages exchanged between Catalan and Greek students after the project ended, voluntarily shared by participants.	This is a fully <b>out-of-class, informal, and digital scenario</b> , marked by temporal dispersion (which extended after the trip), spatial separation, and spontaneous participant-led engagement.

Publication	Description of the Data Set	Dislocated Nature of the Scenario
<p><b>Publication 2:</b>  <b>Exploring Language Alternation in an 'In-Between Learning Scenario'</b></p>	<p>WhatsApp group conversations involving students and teachers preparing for a joint trip, including both planning and social interaction.</p>	<p>The scenario is referred to as an “in-between learning scenario”, situated between formal instruction and informal communication. It is dislocated <b>temporally</b> (interactions happen asynchronously) and <b>socially</b> (teachers and students co-construct a learning space outside institutional norms).</p>
<p><b>Publication 3</b>  <b>Examining Learner Agency in Plurilingual Peer Interactions</b></p>	<p>A combination of online and face-to-face task interactions during a transnational project, involving Catalan and Greek secondary students using <i>English as a lingua franca</i> in online and face-to-face group work.</p>	<p>Learners interact across <b>variable contexts</b>—digital and physical, scheduled and improvised—making the learning ecology <b>participant-variable</b>, with learners engaged in intercultural collaboration <b>beyond their usual peer groups</b>.</p>

Table 3. Rationale for the dislocated nature of each scenario

### 3.2.3. Data treatment for the Analysis

Once the data had been selected, the transcription process started. As *Conversation Analysis (CA)*—further discussed in Section 3.3.1. below—requires detailed attention to turn-taking, sequence organisation, and the contextual flow of interactions (Sacks et al., 1974), transcription plays a central role. It acts as a critical bridge between naturally occurring interactions and their analysis. In fact, the very act of transcription already constitutes an initial stage of data interpretation (Psathas & Anderson, 1990). As Ochs (1979:44) emphasizes, “transcription is a theoretical process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions.” In this sense, transcription goes beyond simply recounting participants’ practices: it functions as a systematic documentation of those practices and, together with the methodology employed, ensures that the data can be examined and critically engaged with by other researchers (Mondada, 2002; Nussbaum, 2006).

Fine-grained transcriptions are vital in CA research to capture the key features of talk—such as pauses, overlaps, intonation, stress, and non-verbal cues. As Balaman and Sert (2017) point out, “participants’ designs of turns, formations of actions and organisation of sequences can be best depicted via a transcription system that does not dismiss any detail of interaction as

irrelevant” (p. 14). This view aligns with the work of Jefferson, a pioneer figure in CA, who developed a comprehensive transcription system to represent the temporal and interactional dynamics of talk-in-interaction with precision. Jefferson (2024) regarded transcription not merely as a technical step, but as an analytical activity in itself—one that requires interpretive decision-making to accurately reflect the intricacy of human interaction. She compiled a widely used glossary of transcript symbols, accompanied by an introductory chapter that remains foundational for researchers working within this tradition. This study uses the transcriptions conventions developed by GREIP (Research Group for Education, Interaction and Plurilingualism), which are based on Jefferson’s system (2004), particularly for face-to-face interactions (in Publications 1 and 3). These conventions are outlined in Figure 4 below:

Pseudonym of speaker:	STU:
Intonation	
a. Falling:	\
b. Rising:	/
c. Maintaining	–
Pauses:	
a. Timed:	(n <sup>o</sup> seconds)
b. Untimed:	(.) (..)
Overlapping:	[text]
Latching:	=
Interruption:	text-
Lengthening of a sound:	te:xt
Soft:	°text°
Loud:	TEXT
Slow:	<text>
Fast:	>text<
Incomprehensible fragment:	xx
Best guess at unclear fragment:	(text?)
Continuation of a previous turn:	STU:
Transcriber’s comments:	((comment))
Language (as oriented to by speakers):	
a. Catalan	<b>text</b>
b. English	text
c. Spanish	<i>text</i>
e. Other languages	<u>text</u>
Translations:	text

Figure 4. Transcription conventions used for face-to-face interactions

As indicated in the first convention above, all participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymisation and protect participants' identities in accordance with ethical research guidelines. In addition, ethical approval to use the data collected for the publications was obtained from the UAB Research Ethics Committee CEEH (ref. No. 3670).

Apart from the transcription conventions listed above—originally proposed to transcribe oral data—additional decisions had to be made regarding how to present data obtained from social media, including how to handle anonymisation in these contexts. These issues are discussed in Section 3.3.3, where the adaptations made to apply CA transcription conventions to digital and online interactions are examined in detail.

### **3.3. Analytical Approach**

All the data presented in the publications are analysed using *Conversation Analysis* (CA) within an ethnomethodological framework, complemented, when relevant, by ethnographic perspectives, as outlined in this section. The methodological challenges that arise when applying CA to the analysis of online, computer-mediated data are also addressed in this chapter.

#### **3.3.1. Conversation analysis (CA) as the Research Apparatus**

CA provides both a methodological and theoretical framework for investigating authentic situated social practices, particularly how participants orient to, understand and construct each other's actions (Sacks et al., 1974). CA is rooted in the principles of ethnomethodology, the sociological approach developed by Garfinkel (1967) to examine the methods people use to make sense of and organise their everyday activities. Ethnomethodology focuses on participants' interpretative procedures—*ethnomethods*—that enable them to attribute meaning to their actions and sustain social order. CA extends these principles to the study of verbal and embodied interaction, applying them to naturally occurring talk-in-interaction. The integration of the theoretical principles of ethnomethodology and the

methodological tools of CA is often referred to as Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (EMCA). While CA examines the sequential patterns of verbal and non-verbal interaction, EMCA emphasises how participants use these practices as methods for producing and recognising social order. This includes attention to embodied resources such as gaze, gesture, and posture, while maintaining an *emic* perspective, that is, by focusing on how participants orient to, understand, and construct each other's actions. By combining a commitment to naturalistic data with a focus on participants' perspectives, EMCA offers a robust framework for analysing how understanding is displayed and achieved in interaction (Heritage, 1984; Lynch, 2019).

As mentioned above, both ethnomethodology and CA adopt an emic view, that is, they try to understand social actions from the participants' point of view, without including or considering external interpretations. In this line, ethnomethodology postulates that the meaning of social actions is *indexical*—it depends on the context—and *reflexive*—actions are not only influenced by the context but also construct it. CA applies these concepts to analyse how speakers create and renew the context through their interaction. Besides, ethnomethodology proposes the notion of the *documentary method of interpretation* (Garfinkel, 1967), which involves treating everyday actions as *documents* that reveal primary social patterns and structures, i.e., specific instances of behaviour as evidence of broader, often implicit, social rules and norms (Schüttpelz, 2019).

Conversation analysis (CA), however, has traditionally been reluctant to document learning for various reasons. As Moore & Nussbaum (2011) argue, this reluctance derives, firstly, from the fact that it deals with data collected at a specific moment in time and cannot reflect changes in behaviour in the mid and long term (He, 2004). Secondly, because CA focuses on the empirical study of interaction without seeking explanations outside the activity studied (Psathas, 1990) and, thirdly, because CA is radically emic, as mentioned, seeking to understand the organisation of social life just like the actual participants in the interaction live it and interpret

it. Documenting learning would involve adopting an ethical vision, projecting on the data external visions of the researchers, something that the CA does not admit.

In SLA research, however, EMCA has been used to trace how learners' interactional competence develops through participation in talk-in-interaction (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Pekarek Doehler, 2018). This perspective, often referred to as *CA-for-SLA*, uses the tools of CA to investigate how second language learning emerges through interaction (Markee & Kasper, 2004; Kasper & Wagner, 2011). Seedhouse (2005a), for example, used CA-for-SLA in the language learning context to explore how learners and teachers co-construct meaning by analysing the interactional architecture of language classrooms. Masats (2008) focussed on learners' perceptions of the task to understand which processes facilitate acquisition in interaction. Other studies have examined how repairs shape the identities speakers adopt when they interact in learning situations (Masats & Unamuno, 2001) or how learners make use of plurilingual mechanisms like code-switching and code-mixing as scaffolding mechanism to communicate in the target language (Masats et al., 2007; Llompart-Esbert et al., 2020). In this sense, when exploring task-based interactions, CA methodology—which focuses on the fine-grained details of talk within its sequential order— can only apply to the *task-as-process*. This is because, as Seedhouse (2005b) argues, CA relies on the sequential details of talk as it unfolds, and therefore its analysis pertains to the *task-as-process* rather than the *task-as-workplan*, the latter being a plan rather than an actual communicative event (see Section 2.1.2. for a more elaborate discussion on this matter). As also noted in other studies (Markee, 2000; Ohta, 2001; Seedhouse, 1999, 2005b), through CA methodology—particularly CA-for-SLA—tasks can only be analysed emically. As these studies illustrate, CA-for-SLA provides a useful framework to examine tasks as they unfold in interaction from the participant's perspective, and it is the approach adopted in this thesis. To better understand how CA-for-SLA enables such analyses, it

is important to outline the four basic principles of CA (Sacks, et al., 1974) on which this approach is grounded. These can be summarised as follows:

The *first* principle holds that spontaneous speech is neither disordered nor unstructured but is organised in a rational and systematic way within a sequential organisation. This means that verbal interactions follow patterns and rules that can be analysed and described. CA studies how turns in conversation are ordered, such as adjacency pairs (Schegloff, 2007). The *second* principle points out that speakers' contributions not only create the context of the interaction, but also constantly renew it. This is related to the concepts of indexicality and reflexivity (Garfinkel, 1967), which explain how speakers give meaning to their actions in the context of conversation (Heritage, 1984). The *third* principle defends that all semiotic material that is part of the interaction (such as gestures, looks, body positions, etc.) can be relevant for interpreting participants' activities. This implies that CA does not only analyse verbal language, but also other communicative resources and embodied interaction. Finally, the *fourth* principle holds that analysis should be data-driven, with no prior assumptions. This means that the analyst must observe the data without prejudices and let the interpretation emerge from the data only, adopting an emic perspective. This means that the information should only be considered if the participants orient to it in their discourse, by referring to it in any way or make it relevant. Otherwise, it should not be taken in account.

Additionally, to describe how interactions are structured and managed CA focuses on different mechanisms:

- 1 *Turn-taking* refers to how speakers manage their turns in conversation, ensuring that talk is organised and that participants know when to speak and when to listen.
- 2 *Adjacency pairs* refer to two related utterances by different speakers, such as a question and an answer, or a greeting and a response. These pairs are fundamental to the structure of conversation.

- 3 *Sequentiality* refers to the fact that speakers' contributions create and renew the context of the conversation, following a logical sequence.
- 4 *Preference organization* refers to the ways in which certain types of responses are preferred over others in conversation. Preferred responses—such as acceptations—help to maintain the flow of the conversation, while non-preferred responses—such as rebuttals—) may require additional explanations.
- 5 *Repair mechanisms* refer to how participants address and correct problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding during the interactions. Repairs can be initiated by the person producing the utterance (self-initiated) or the interlocutor (other-initiated) and can likewise be carried out either by the initiator of the utterance (self-repair) or by the interlocutor (other-repair). We elaborated on how repairs (within *potential acquisition sequences*) may be a potential opportunity for learning in Section 2.1.1.

As clearly described above, our primary methodological approach is thus CA-for-SLA—Conversation Analysis (CA) within the EMCA tradition—, as it provides the tools for examining how participants make sense of social interactions through turn-by-turn sequences. However, recent research shows that CA within the EMCA approach can be meaningfully complemented by ethnographic insights that situate interaction in broader contexts. While CA has traditionally resisted external interpretations to avoid imposing meaning, Matsumoto (2018) demonstrates that incorporating ethnographic data can enrich our understanding of why participants act in certain ways, how prior relationships shape interaction, and how nonverbal behaviour acquire social significance. This approach aligns with linguistic ethnography, which maintains CA's commitment to participants' orientations while situating the analysis of the interaction within broader social and institutional contexts. Although epistemological tensions between sequential analysis and ethnography are acknowledged, scholars such Rampton et al., (2004) and Creese

(2008) argue that language and social context are inseparable, and that CA can benefit from ethnographic perspectives linking micro-level details to lived sociocultural realities.

Following this perspective, the present study draws on our—the researcher's—own sustained ethnographic fieldwork (as described in Section 3.1.2) not only to complement the CA analysis but also to provide a deeper, situated understanding of the classroom norms, participant roles, and communicative expectations that structure and can be detected through everyday interaction.

### 3.3.2. Conversation Analysis in Online and Computer-mediated Interaction

As exposed above, all the data explored for this dissertation has been analysed sequentially following the premises of the CA-for-SLA a research apparatus. However, considering the digital nature of some of the data explored in publications 1b and 2, we need to move on from the traditional conventions of CA to consider the unique features of online text-based interactions. Numerous researchers have tackled the challenge of applying CA to online data, whether audiovisual or text-based, and to computer-mediated communication (CMC) or interaction (CMI). Most studies focus on sequence organization and turn-taking in CMC/CMI as opposed to more established findings of such aspects in face-to-face oral communication (see Giles, et al., (2015) and Tudini and Liddicoat (2017) for influential research reviews). Additionally, several authors have explored the unique interactional resources users employ on social media platforms and video games (Thorne, et al., 2015; Androutsopoulos 2010) and the affordances and constraints of each medium (Hutchby 2001; Meredith 2019). Research on L2 CMC and CMI (and mobile-mediated interaction and communication: MMI or MMC) from a CA perspective has focused on learners' participation and task accomplishment, while also questioning the use of traditional CA devices to analyse online data produced by L2 learners, such as turn-taking, sequence organization, or repair (see, for example, González-Lloret 2011; Negretti, 1999;

Thorne & Hellermann, 2022; Balaman & Sert, 2017; Pekarek-Doehler & Balaman, 2021; Pratginestós & Masats, 2021; Pratginestós, 2022).

When analysing a technologically mediated interaction that is not oral but written, applying CA implies that the sequence organization may appear "chaotic, highly disrupted, without any adjacency [...], mainly due to the fact that the exact timing of message placement cannot be controlled by the interactants" (González-Lloret, 2011, p. 310). Yet, research indicates that participants' turns often orient towards specific previous turns within the same conversation as in any other ordinary face-to-face interaction, which is known as 'virtual adjacency' (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003). This is so even among language learners (González-Lloret, 2007, 2008a). As González-Lloret (2011) notes, however, the turn-taking system in technologically or mobile-mediated text-based communication is significantly different from face-to-face communication and is highly constrained by the medium, which presents challenges for both participants and CA analysts (see also Garcia & Jacobs, 1999; Herring, 1999; Murray, 1989; Negretti, 1999; Thorne, 2000; Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003; Beisswenger, 2008). In line with this, González-Lloret (2008b, 2011) examined the role of explicit repair and sequence organization in synchronous, text-based computer-mediated communication (SCMC), highlighting how learners adapt to the medium to achieve understanding and maintain conversational coherence. Despite some methodological and analytical advances to deepen the understanding of this type of CMC interactions (e.g., Thorne, 2013; Tudini, 2019; Pratginestós & Masats, 2021), research on some emerging interactional contexts—including social media, video games, and mobile chat—is still insufficient, and despite their popularity among learners some contexts are still underexplored from this interactional participation framework.

### 3.3.3. Methodological Challenges in Analysing Digital Interaction

One of the challenges CA analysts face when exploring digital or computer-mediated interactions—as we expose and discuss in Publication 1b—is determining what constitutes a

turn. To describe the organization of turns, we have coined the term 'message unit'. Message units are created when participants press enter to post their contributions. Participants can either post a single message unit or split their post into smaller units. In the first case, the turn consists of a 'compact message unit', where no other participant speaks during the production and delivery of the message. In the second case, the message is divided into 'split message units', allowing other participants to either wait for the complete contribution or join in while different units are still being constructed. To illustrate our approach, the following excerpts present examples of both compact and split messages from the online interactions analysed, both from WhatsApp and Instagram. In Excerpt 1, we see that lines 22 and 23 form a split message unit—the message is being divided across different turns—whereas line 24 appears as a compact message unit, produced and delivered without interruption. In Excerpt 2, lines 13-16 further demonstrate a split message unit, whereas line 17 shows a compact one.

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

Excerpt 1. WhatsApp interaction illustrating the notion of message unit

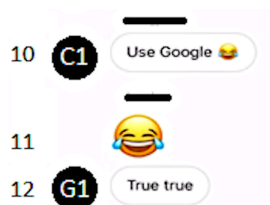
6 I am 15 years old I am the  
 7 president of the students council I  
 8 am playing basketball for 4 years  
 9 I like wtcing movies and hanging  
 10 out with my friends I have one  
 11 sister and I also get bored very  
 12 much 😊 G12  
 13 Jajaj we are already twowho got  
 14 very bored  
 15 Wow 4 years to his playing  
 16 basketball will be goog no? C2  
 17 Haha...I like basketball a lot G12  
 18 it's more or less the same for me,  
 19 I've been doing judo for 10 years  
 20 Haha C2  
 21 Wowww G12

Enviar mensaje...

Excerpt 2. Instagram interaction illustrating the notion of message unit

Additionally, our description of turn composition includes not only lexical (words), phrasal (phrases), clausal (clauses), and sentential (sentences) units but also visual (pictures, gifs, giphy, and emojis), audial (instant recorded oral messages), audiovisual (videos), and

hypertextual (links to other multimodal texts) units. This can also be observed in the excerpts provided. Line 24 in Excerpt 1 (above) and line 10 in Excerpt 3 (below) illustrates a compact message unit that combines a sentential and a visual component, whereas lines 11 and 12 in Excerpt 3 offer an example of a message unit divided into two smaller parts: a visual unit (line 11) and a lexical unit, the latter repeated twice (line 12).



Excerpt 3. Instagram Interaction illustrating turn composition

Building on these examples, the analysis of interaction in text-based chats, such as the Instagram or WhatsApp ones, requires attention to the particular features of each platform, as these may differ from or add a nuance to the traditional CA understanding of certain notions such as the *turn* or the *overlapping*.

Some notable features of WhatsApp chats regarding these notions should indeed be highlighted. The system records the exact time a turn is posted, providing information on overlapping and transition times between turns. However, this is less relevant than in face-to-face interactions, as participants may not respond immediately for various reasons. This way of marking adjacency connects directly to how we have dealt with overlapping turns and turn representation. Since the extracted file from the WhatsApp includes precise timestamps (hour:minute:second), it was possible to reconstruct interactional timing with accuracy. This enabled us to determine whether contributions occurred in immediate succession (with possible overlap) or were separated by considerable temporal gaps. As illustrated in Excerpt 4 below, all turns were posted within just over a minute. Furthermore, each message in the exported file is

numbered sequentially, meaning that every new message—regardless of its length or content—is treated as a separate turn.

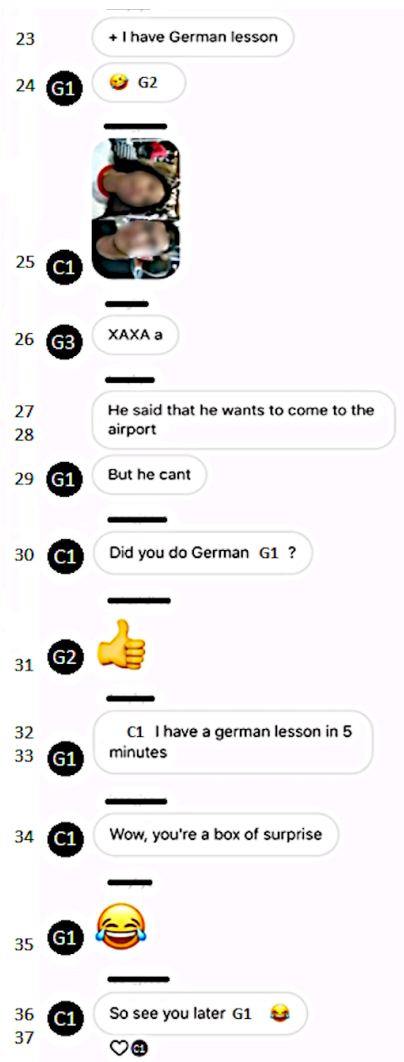
35 [Jun. 27 10:05:34] TEACHER 1: Let's see how many of you could make it tomorrow  
36 (let's say at 11.30 at the school) and we could also meet again one day next week.  
37 [Jun. 27 10:06:05] ANN: I can't go  
38 (*in response to 35-36*) [Jun. 27 10:06:27] POL: Okey, I can go the two days 😊  
39 (*in response to 37*) [Jun. 27 10:06:50] NOA: me neither

Excerpt 4. WhatsApp Interaction illustrating turn adjacency

WhatsApp also allows users to refer to a specific previous turn, even if it was posted much earlier in time. This feature helps organize sequences and avoid misunderstandings, favouring what has been referred to as the *virtual adjacency* (Schönfeldt and Golato 2003). However, not all users utilize this mechanism, which can lead to ambiguity when multiple sequences occur simultaneously, posing a limitation to our study. To address this, we annotated the exported text file (extracted from the app) by marking explicit replies with the phrase “*in response to line X*”, thereby making relational links across turns visible, as shown above in Excerpt 4 (lines 38 and 39).

The Instagram interactive features pose some specific analytical challenges too. Overlapping, for example, is harder to interpret in Instagram chats, as turns do not physically overlap. Two participants may produce messages simultaneously, but their posts are published sequentially. Unlike what occurs in WhatsApp chats, in Instagram posts the exact posting time is not recorded—at least at the time of this study—, so overlaps cannot be measured, and pauses cannot be inferred. If messages are not read synchronously, it is impossible to determine whether two messages were posted simultaneously or after a pause. Similarly, a series of turns repeating the same words within the same exchange cannot simply be analysed as a choral response; participants might have chosen to take the floor simultaneously through self-selection, or some may have responded only after observing others' posts. A further challenge

concerns the identification of adjacency pairs. In contrast to WhatsApp, where users can explicitly select a previous message to signal a reply, Instagram did not offer that feature at the time of this study—though it does now. The absence of this functionality complicated the re-establishment of adjacency pairs, requiring the analyst to rely instead on sequential positioning, repetition, or contextual cues to reconstruct interactional links. In Excerpt 5, for instance, we observe how two sequences of turns—one related to a joke about meeting at the airport (lines 24-29) and another about attending a German lesson (lines 23, 30, 32-34)— are interwoven. While these overlapping threads make it difficult to trace conversational coherence, it is still possible to distinguish them thanks to the contextual and thematic cues.



Excerpt 5. Instagram interaction to illustrate adjacency and vocatives

A reliable way to identify the turn adjacency is by observing how participants address one another directly with vocatives (i.e., by naming the interlocutor). This strategy, however, posed challenges for transcription, as it required concealing participants' identities while at the same time preserving the interactional features essential for analysis. In the case of Instagram interactions (see Excerpts 2, 3 and 5), we manipulated the screenshots to hide usernames and profile pictures and replaced them with an alphanumeric identifier. This coding system consists of a letter to identify the group of students (G for Greek students, C for Catalan students) and a number indicating the order of first appearance in the chat. This code was also consistently used to replace students' names when they appeared in the text messages, thereby ensuring that vocatives continued to function as markers of adjacency. As seen in Excerpt 5 (above), the use of coding allowed recognition of turn adjacency, as vocative references continued to signal the intended addressee despite anonymisation. In lines 30, for example, C1 directs a question specifically to G1 by explicitly naming him, thereby clarifying that the message is not addressed to the group as a whole. G1, in turn, answers his question with C1's name, using the same strategy to maintain the conversational link.

For WhatsApp interactions (Excerpts 1 and 4), anonymisation was achieved in a way more similar to face-to-face data: students' names were replaced with three-letter pseudonyms (e.g., NER, PAN), which also protected privacy while maintaining the recognisability of conversational links, which balanced ethical concerns and analytical needs.

Another level of complexity—beyond the features of the chat itself—relates to the fact that the exchanges may not always be complete when data is shared with the researcher. This could be due to the fact that the students only selected fragments of their Instagram chats or because the screenshots acknowledge the presence of audio and visual elements that are either not disclosed to the teachers/researchers or no longer accessible.

# ■ CHAPTER 4 PUBLICATIONS

Overview of the Compendium

The Publications in Detail

Synthesis of the  
Publications



## 4. PUBLICATIONS

### 4.1. Compendium overview

The four publications included in this compendium constitute its foundation and collectively fulfil the criteria established by the Doctoral Programme in Education at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (UAB) for the submission of a compendium-based doctoral thesis. These requirements include authorship criteria (as sole or first author), date of publication (post-registration of the doctoral thesis, between the years 2021 and 2025), and dissemination through high-impact academic platforms. Two publications appear in peer-reviewed journals of recognised academic value and the other two are book chapters published by internationally prestigious publishers. As outlined below, three of the publications are available in open access on the respective publishers' official websites and, in agreement with the doctoral programme's requirements, all four have also been uploaded to the *Dipòsit Digital de Documents de la UAB* (UAB Digital Repository of Documents).

#### Publication 1

Pratginestós, C. (2022). Interactional competence in transnational plurilingual peer interactions. In D. Masats and L. Nussbaum (Eds.), *Plurilingual classroom practices and participation in Catalonia: Analysing interaction in local and translocal Settings* (pp. 188–199). Routledge. [Open access here](#).

Available at the permanent link of the UAB Digital Repository of Documents: <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/308440?ln=ca>

This is a single-authored book chapter published by *Routledge*—a globally recognised academic publisher known for its rigorous and selective peer-review process in manuscript acceptance. According to the Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) for foreign publishing companies, *Routledge* (*Taylor & Francis Group*) ranks **first** in Education and **fifth** in Language, Literature and Philology.

Lingüística, Literatura y Filología

Educación

Editoriales extranjeras

Posición Editorial	ICEE
1 Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group)	119

Editoriales extranjeras

Posición Editorial	ICEE
1 Cambridge University Press	220
2 Oxford University Press	194
3 Peter Lang Publishing Group	183
4 De Gruyter	140
5 Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group)	138

Figure 5. Ranking of Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group) in Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) in humanities and social sciences (Publication 1)

Publication 1b (complementary)

Pratginestós, C., & Masats, D. (2021). Learning English in translocal exchanges in Instagram chat. In E. Moore & C. Vallejo (Eds.), *Learning English out of school: An inclusive approach to research and action* (pp. 69-97). Peter Lang. [Open access here.](#)

Available at the permanent link of the UAB Digital Repository of Documents: <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/282649?ln=ca>

I am the first author of this book chapter, co-authored with my doctoral supervisor and published by *Peter Lang Publishing Group*, a publishing house of recognised international standing. According to the [SPI ranking for foreign publishing companies](#), Peter Lang ranks **third** in the field of [Linguistics, Literature, and Philology](#) and **tenth** in the field of [Education](#).

Educación

Editoriales extranjeras

Posición Editorial	ICEE
1 Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group)	119
2 Springer	110
3 McGraw Hill	58
4 Kluwer Academic Publishers (Wolters Kluwer)	39
5 HumanKinetics	38
6 IGI Global	34
7 Sage Publications	29
8 Oxford University Press	28
9 Pearson Publishing	23
10 Chicago University Press	22
10 Peter Lang Publishing Group	22

Lingüística, Literatura y Filología

Editoriales extranjeras

Posición Editorial	ICEE
1 Cambridge University Press	220
2 Oxford University Press	194
3 Peter Lang Publishing Group	183

Figure 6. Ranking of Peter Lang Publishing Group in Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) in humanities and social sciences (Publication 1b)

This publication is included as a complementary contribution to the compendium because according to the criteria of the Doctoral Programme in Education from the UAB only one book

chapter can be part of the main corpus. Nevertheless, given the high impact of the publishing house and the direct relevance of the study to the content of the compendium, it is incorporated here.

## Publication 2

Pratginestós, C., & Masats, D. (2024). Exploring language alternation and participation in an ‘in-between learning scenario’: A case study of a WhatsApp chat with secondary students of English. *Classroom Discourse*, 15(3), 273-292.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2024.2315022>

Available at the permanent link of UAB Digital Repository of Documents: <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/289852>

I am the first author of this article, co-authored with my doctoral supervisor, and published in *Classroom Discourse*, a peer-reviewed Q2 (second quartile) journal in the category of Education and Educational Research in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR). In SJR (Scimago Journal Rank) has the following **indexing impact factors in the discipline of Social Science**: Year 2024—Q1 in Linguistics and Language (SJR 2024: 0.693, h-index: 25, position: 151) / Q2 in Education (SJR 2024: 0.693, h-index: 25, position: 399). The journal also ranks high in other major academic databases including Scopus, and Social Sciences Citation Index.

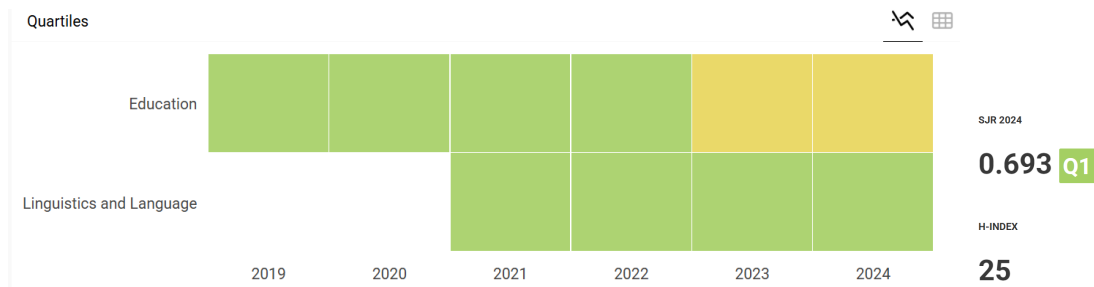


Figure 7. Indexing impact factors of Publication 2

### Publication 3

Pratginestós, C. (2025). Examining learner agency in plurilingual peer interactions: Managing participation in virtual and face-to-face tasks. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Languages & Literature*, 18(3), 1-24. [Open access here](#)

Available at the permanent link of the UAB Digital Repository of Documents: <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/319865?ln=ca>

This last publication is a single-authored peer-reviewed article published in *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Languages & Literature*, which has the following **indexing impact factors** for year 2024: Q1 in Literature and Literary Theory (SJR 2024: 0.188, h-index: 9, position: 151), Q2 in Language and Linguistics (SJR 2024: 0.188, h-index: 9, position: 619) and Q4 in Education (SJR 2024: 0.188, h-index: 9, position: 1244).

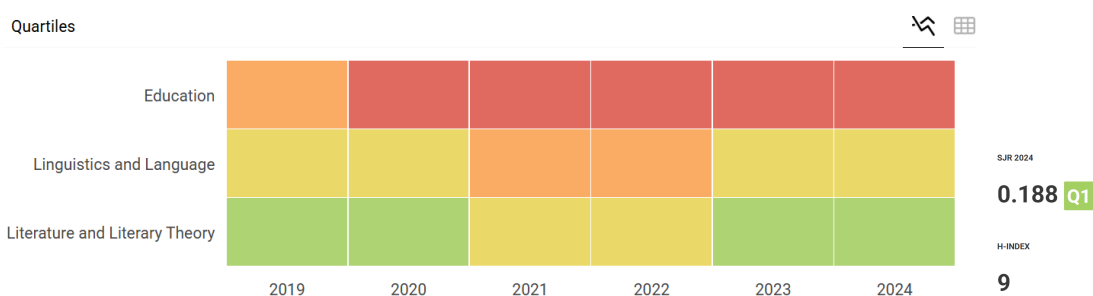


Figure 8. Indexing impact factors of Publication 3

Regarding impact indexes, it is important to note that research in Language Didactics falls within the field of Social Sciences, but it is more closely aligned with Linguistics and Language than with Education. In the case of publishers, index rankings tend not to vary significantly across fields; however, in the case of journals, it does. As an example, the journal of the Language and Literature Didactics Unit, *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching and Learning Language and Literature*, is ranked Q1 in the field of Literature and Literary theory, Q2 in the field of Linguistics and Language, but only Q4 in the field of Education, as shown in Scopus: <https://www.scopus.com/sourceid/21100208058>

## 4.2. The Publications in Detail

This section presents a description of each publication and concludes with a summary table that synthesises the main point for ease of reference and comparison.

### 4.2.1 Publication 1

Pratginestós, C. (2022). Interactional competence in transnational plurilingual peer interactions. In D. Masats and L. Nussbaum (Eds.), *Plurilingual classroom practices and participation in Catalonia: Analysing interaction in local and translocal settings* (pp. 188–199). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003169123-21>

#### Brief summary

This chapter presents a single-case analysis of peer interactions among the Catalan and Greek secondary students of English while engaged in the resolution of a pedagogical task during a face-to-face school encounter in Greece within the framework of the joint transnational project. Drawing on Conversation Analysis (CA) and ethnographic perspectives, the study offers a micro-analysis of the interaction to examine how learners use English as a lingua franca (ELF) and mobilise their Interactional Competence (IC) as they manage turn-taking, address misunderstandings, and use multimodal and plurilingual resources to sustain mutual understanding and advance task progression. Two excerpts from the recorded interactions are analysed. The first one illustrates initial difficulties in topic alignment and understanding, stemming from linguistic gaps and differing interpretations of the *Academic Task Structure* (ATS). These moments reveal how learners attempt to repair or move forward using various resources—such as code-switching, gestures, or letting misunderstandings pass. The second excerpt demonstrates improved interaction flow as students manage to find a shared topic—local festivals—and collaboratively construct meaning. Here, a shift toward unilingual modes of communication in ELF is observed, although supportive plurilingual resources—e.g., terms in Spanish, gestures, sound effects—continue to be mobilised. The analysis highlights two key

concepts: *preference for progressivity*—participants' determination to sustain conversational flow—and *intersubjectivity*—their efforts to maintain mutual understanding, which can, however, come into conflict in interaction. Overall, the study underscores the pedagogical value of transnational exchanges in enhancing learner engagement and the development of their IC. Such interactions not only foster the authentic use of English but also encourage learners to deploy their full communicative repertoires. The findings suggest that peer interactions in diverse, less socially privileged environments promote linguistic risk-taking and collaborative learning—phenomena often less visible in traditional teacher-led settings.

## **Interactional competence in transnational plurilingual peer interactions**

*Cèlia Pratginestós*

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### **Introduction**

Enhancing learners' engagement in using and exploring a language they still do not master is a challenge most secondary teachers need to face in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. Yet, triggering students' need for communicating to one another in a language other than the one they use to socialise within the group is not an easy task. It is our belief that teachers can reverse the situation by providing learners with opportunities to participate in transnational plurilingual interactions with peers. In such practices the use of English goes beyond the classroom walls, which creates a need to use English and occasions for genuine communication. In turn, these initiatives also create a 'space for learning' (Walsh, 2011) as students can practice the target language and deploy their Interactional Competence (IC) through the mobilisation of plurilingual and multimodal resources.

This chapter will focus on how participants in transnational plurilingual interactions use English-as-a-lingua-franca (ELF), a mediating communication tool in and outside the classroom, and also will explore the resources they mobilise when exposed to the opportunities for real communication with peer students with a different L1. On the one hand, we will look at how learners organise their participation, focusing on certain aspects of the interaction and their IC deployment such as turn-taking and topic management. On the other, we will heed the plurilingual and multimodal procedures they mobilise in favour of progressivity and intersubjectivity. Towards this purpose, we have analysed two sequences of interaction – collected within the framework of a collaborative research and innovation project – recorded during the implementation of a group task (within an transnational exchange) between Greek and Catalan secondary school students. The task assigned to the learners consisted of exchanging information, in groups of four, on their own culture and lifestyle to finally report said information to the group as a whole at the end of the class. First, the theoretical framework will be laid out. Then, the methodological apparatus used for analysis will be described and, after the data analysis, conclusions will be formed.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003169123-21

### On the nature of learner's interactional competence

When engaging in interactions with others (both in an L1 or L2 language), we deploy our ability to accomplish meaningful social actions, to respond to co-participants' previous actions and to recognise and respond to expectations of what to say and how to say it (Hall and Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Young, 2011). IC relates to this ability as it involves deploying and recognising context-specific patterns by which turns are taken, actions are organised on a moment-to-moment basis and practices are ordered (Hall and Pekarek Doehler, 2011). The current construct of IC builds upon the concept 'communicative competence', coined by Hymes (1972) and operated and theorised by Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990), among others, in contrast to Chomsky's 'linguistic competence' (1965). The main difference between 'communicative competence' and IC, according to Young (2011: 430), is that "IC is distributed across participants and varies in different interactional practices" and, fundamentally, that "IC is not what a person *knows*, but what a person *does* together with others". Kramsch's view (1986) also clearly distinguishes IC from communicative competence arguing that IC presupposes "a shared internal context or 'a sphere of inter-subjectivity'". The resources that participants bring to interaction, which characterise IC, were listed and classified by Young (2008: 71) within three groups: (1) identity resources (participation framework), (2) linguistic resources (register, modes of meaning) and (3) interactional resources (speech acts, turn-taking, repair, boundaries). Other forms of conduct in addition to talk (nonverbal semiotic resources) are also considered in the analysis of the completion of communicative activities (Goodwin, 2000), as indeed are verbal prosody, rhythm and intonation (Young, 2011).

Among all the types of interactions learners participate in, peer interactions provide opportunities for learning through collaborative interaction and collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994). There is consensus among researchers that interactions in paired and group tasks are particularly relevant because they offer every member in the interaction increased possibilities of participation than those offered in interactions between teachers and learners (Masats, 2008). As the author shows, in plurilingual peer interactions, without the presence/mediation of a teacher, learners dare to explore, take risks and participate both in the topic structuring, the actual interaction organisation and even in freer exploration of different linguistic forms. Understanding how participants interact with peers entails understanding how they communicate and co-construct learning in a moment-by-moment fashion within the interaction, i.e. how they deploy their IC (Kramsch, 1986; He and Young, 1998; Hall, Hellerman, and Pekarek-Doehler, 2011).

Within an L2 educational setting, as Borràs, Moore, and Nussbaum (2015) explain, participants are simultaneously responsible for managing the organisation of their talk, which resembles an ordinary conversation with various participants (Lerner, 2003), and the need to complete the task they have been

assigned. This duality, as the authors point out, is linked to a framework proposed by Erickson (1982), which suggests an intertwined relationship between the ‘Social Participation Structure’ (SPS), i.e. the set of constraints on the allocation of interactional rights and obligations of the various group members, filled with conversational rules of sequence interaction (Seedhouse, 2005; Masats, Nussbaum, and Unamuno, 2007), and the ‘Academic Task Structure’ (ATS), i.e. the stages necessary to complete the task. The way participants orient themselves to develop and execute a task in an L2 is also central to the study of the relationship between plurilingual practices and the development of L2 communicative expertise (built on the participants’ full repertoire), because, as Llompart and Nussbaum (2018) establish, plurilingual uses scaffold participation in L2 learning tasks and the eventual acquisition of unilingual competences (Nussbaum and Unamuno, 2000; Hall, Cheng, and Carlson, 2006; Lüdi and Py, 2009). This process is characterised by different stages (Llompart et al, 2019) that move from plurilingual interaction modes, where diverse resources, i.e. ‘code-switching’, ‘code-mixing’, ‘fused lects’ (Auer, 1999), hybrid forms, gestures, etc., are used simultaneously to manage the task or overcome communicative obstacles, to unilingual modes, where participants orient themselves towards the exclusive use of the target language. A single-case analysis cannot provide insights on this process – as a longitudinal study would indeed do – but can provide information on the specific plurilingual mechanisms deployed by participants at that very stage of the learning process. Language switching is analysed to understand the nature of the sequence and to explore how the language chosen by every participant impacts on the organisation of the following turns (Auer, 1984).

The use of diverse resources deployed by participants in ELF interactions is closely linked to the purpose of and preference for achieving interactional order while maintaining intersubjectivity for mutual comprehension (Heritage, 2007) based on the preference for progressivity (Schegloff, 2006). The maintenance of the intersubjectivity of the interaction engages participants in the treatment, prevention and repair of possible troubles and problems of understanding, whereas the preference for progressivity involves participants in the adoption of all the possible resources that enable them to go on within the current activity (Markaki et al, 2013). The procedures ‘let it pass’ and ‘make it normal’ are brought into play to accomplish the interactional order (Firth, 1996) in favour of progressivity, essential for the development of the ATS (Borràs, Moore, and Nussbaum, 2015). As Firth (1996) puts it, the concept ‘let it pass’ involves “the hearer letting the unclear or unknown utterance ‘pass’ on the assumption that it will either become clear or redundant as interaction progresses”, involving passivity on the hearer’s part. Conversely, “the concept ‘make it normal’ involves the hearer actively, though implicitly, attempting to make sense of what is being done and said” (Firth, 1996: 243). In this case, however, as the author states, the hearer avoids ‘other-repairs’ or ‘candidate completions’ as these would manifest the interlocutor’s utterances being perceived as problematic.

## Methodology

Our data were collected within a collaborative research initiative targeted at empowering and enabling teachers to transform teaching practices in the English classroom through the adoption of Project-based Learning (PBL). Projects have proved to be meaningful proposals that create a real need to use English and opportunities for authentic communication (Dooly and Sadler, 2019). In this study data emerge from the implementation of a teaching proposal designed, executed and assessed in ‘colabor’ (Leyva and Speed, 2008; Ballena, Masats, and Unamuno, 2020), that is, through a form of ‘collaborative action research’ (Nussbaum, 2017; Masats et al, in press) between the author of the chapter and an in-service English teacher participating in the research study. The teaching proposal took the form of a telecollaboration and mobility project designed to offer a group of Catalan adolescents – from a public high school in the metropolitan area of Barcelona – opportunities to use and interact in English during the preparation and accomplishment of a cultural exchange and actual trip to Greece. The interaction presented here corresponds to a face-to-face encounter recorded during the development of an in-class group task (described below) when the Catalan students travelled to Greece.

We present a single-case analysis of the plurilingual peer interactions, generated during the implementation of a group task. Our approach to data stems from an ethnographic and emic perspective and is based on the theoretical and methodological premises of Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) to describe the numerous resources comprising L2 users’ IC. As Balaman and Sert (2017) put it, “CA provides a complete picture of situated participant orientations mainly through the socio-analytic constructs such as turn-taking, sequence organisation, preference organisation, and repair” and enables the researcher to determine how speakers demonstrate they understand each other in the “context-shaped and context-renewing” (Heritage, 1984) character of any interaction. Through these data we focus on the impact this project has had on the L2 interactive competence of the participating secondary school students and the resources they mobilised to achieve an effective communication in ELF when interacting with peers with a different L1.

## Analysis

The following excerpts correspond to a sequence of interaction in which Nerea (NER) and Laia (LAI) – Catalan – and Panagiotis (PAN) and Giorgios (GIO) – Greek – were asked by their teacher to sit in groups of four for a group discussion. Very few guidelines were given as learners were expected to talk freely about any topic they found worth sharing (related to their culture and lifestyle) for approximately 15 minutes. It is relevant to mention that both NER and LAI are using their mobile phones, which constitutes a mediation tool, to find photos of the places they are talking about and to show PAN and

GIO. These excerpts will serve as examples of two aspects of the participants' interaction and IC deployment: (1) how learners organise their participation in interaction (SPS) and co-construct the task (ATS), and (2) how they use diverse plurilingual resources and other mechanisms in favour of progressivity while orienting to a 'unilingual mode of interaction' (Lüdi and Py, 1986 [2002]).

### **Organising participation for task-completion**

In excerpt 1, which corresponds to minute 3:10 of a 21-minute sequence, NER and LAI are trying to come up with names of places to fulfil the requirements of the task proposed according to their interpretation of the ATS and the complete ecology of the activity.

Excerpt 1. Participants: two Catalan students, namely Nerea (NER) and Laia (LAI) and a Greek student, namely Panagiotis (PAN)

1 NER: this is sevilla/ ((showing her mobile to the other participants))  
 2 PAN: is it near to barcelona/  
 3 NER: no::: it's like ah: eight hours in car  
 4 PAN: ah ok\ (0.2)  
 5 NER: e:: next (.) madrid/  
 6 PAN: =yeah: we know  
 7 LAI: [is the capital/  
 8 NER: [yes (.) is the capital (.) [of spain]  
 9 LAI: [of spain] (0.2)  
 10 PAN: so there's athens/ also/ (.) have you go- have you been to athens/  
 11 NER: asthens/  
 12 PAN: athens is the capital of greece/  
 13 NER: no\  
 14 PAN: ah\ (.) there's a akropolis there  
 15 LAI: (.) cómo/  
 (.)what/  
 16 NER: =que si hemos ido a- NO: la-  
 =if we have been to- NO: the-  
 17 LAI: =PORTAVENTURA/ ah: did you have xx  
 18 ((showing her mobile to the other participants))  
 19 NER: mira\ this is madrid\  
 look\

The sequence starts when NER initiates a topic talking about Sevilla (line 1) that she herself closes with another self-selected turn giving the name of another city ("Madrid", line 5). NER does not expand her self-initiated topic even though PAN has showed alignment with the topic proffered by expanding NER's topic with a follow-up question (line 2) and a validating token (line 4). Instead, in line 5, NER brings in another topic to the interaction and PAN

responds with an epistemic stance marker (line 6) demonstrating that they are already aware of Madrid, as it is the capital of Spain. To expand (and align with) the topic NER has initiated, PAN asks NER and LAI about “Athens” (which links to the topic “Madrid” because they are both capitals). NER, however, does not seem to recognise the word (nor the connection with “Madrid”) as she does not even reproduce it in the same way and utters it with a rising intonation (“Astheens”/, in line 11). NER does not acknowledge the word even though PAN has expanded the topic in favour of mutual understanding (and to avoid misalignment) with some more information on the city (line 14). The data suggest that NER does not recognise the word Athens as the translation of “Atenes” (in Catalan). We sustain that idea because of the action performed within the lateral sequence NER and LAI engage in (lines 15–16). In this lateral sequence, where they switch to Spanish to try to conjointly solve the misunderstanding, we appreciate that NER (line 16) starts translating PAN’s question in line 10, but interrupts her own utterance with a “NO: *the...*” as if she does not associate the word *Athens* (“Astheens”, for her) with the capital of Greece, “Atenes” (in Catalan). She does not complete her turn (so we cannot confirm our analysis), however, because LAI, who is still looking for photos of places on her mobile to share with the group, interrupts NER (line 17), with an abrupt topic shift to name another place, a theme park, to probably restart the dynamics of the task (and in favour of progression), which brusquely breaks alignment with the previous turns.

The actual sequence of the task, consisting of bringing up different topics to the conversation, nearly as a ‘competition’ to demonstrate who has the nicest places in their countries, and the possible participants’ interpretation of the ATS, may have contributed to the development of the interaction, so far: fast turn distribution with short turns, no turn allocation and misalignment (as they do not seem to find a topic of shared interest). The irruption of the topic “Portaventura” (line 19), a theme park, however, generates a change of the interaction dynamics as participants seem to find a common interest and align with the other participants, increasing intersubjectivity among them. The participants have finally achieved alignment (through a common ground topic) after bringing up different topics that had not been so productive for the task development nor so successful in terms of intersubjectivity to date. This new productive dynamics continues in excerpt 2 when NER initiates another self-selected turn introducing the topic of the “parties of city” (line 1, excerpt 2).

### ***Mobilising plurilingual and multimodal resources***

Excerpt 2, which corresponds to minute 5:40 of the 21-minute interaction, allows us to identify how the participants orient themselves to a unilingual mode of interaction, although they rely on plurilingual resources and other mechanisms to overcome obstacles and complete the task.

Excerpt 2. Participants: three Catalan students, namely Nerea (NER), Laia (LAI) and Alaa (ALA) and a Greek student, namely Panagiotis (PAN)

1 NER: =and did you have (.) parties of city/  
 2 LAI: yes  
 3 PAN: =[uh.. there:  
 4 LAI: =[ah the  
 5 NER: the city [parties]  
 6 LAI: [si\ (.) the city have [uhm one weekend (.) that have parties  
     for xxx  
     [yes\  
 7 ALA: [party of xxx  
 8 PAN: uhm there are bars  
 9 NER: one: [one time a year]  
 10 PAN: [there's a (xxx)]  
 11 LAI: yes  
 12 PAN: one time a year/  
 13 LAI: in one a weekend one weekend  
 14 PAN: there is one party here in chrysoupoli eh: every saturday/  
 15 LAI: [no no  
 16 ALA: [no  
 17 LAI: [but it's a party xxx  
 18 NER: [no\ but we in spain we have (.) like we say *fiestas del pueblo* (.)  
 19 that are the parties of the city (.)its' like a weekend with:  
 20 all the people go to the street: there are music: eh: dri::nk  
 21 eh eat a lot of: typical food:: all the: and *petardos*/  
     *firecrackers*/  
 22 ((she looks at LAI and moves her hands)) and the last day (.) there are:  
 23 PAN: [ah  
 24 LAI: [highlights\ *petardos*\  
     *firecrackers*\  
 25 PAN: =ah:: ehm:  
 26 LAI: POOM/ ((she moves her hands))  
 27 PAN: [yeah yeah::  
 28 NER: [yes  
 29 PAN: [(whispers something unintelligible in Greek))  
 30 GIO: a:h/  
 31 NER: this is typical of spanish

Focusing on the plurilingual resources participants mobilise, we identify a whole sequence in this excerpt about the topic proffered by NER, the “parties of city” (line 1), referring to the local festivals taking place once a year in most towns around Catalonia and Spain. In line 1 we see how NER clearly orients herself to a unilingual mode of interaction when she performs a word-to-word translation of “fiestas de ciudad”. We can identify, however, she is aware that the concept “parties of city” might not be understood by the receiver when she,

in favour of mutual understanding, reformulates the phrase in line 5 (“the city parties”) and expands the topic with more information (line 9) and a whole description in lines 18–21. Actually, from line 18 to 21 NER engages in a description task offering a lot of details and even decides to switch codes (“like we say fiestas del pueblo”, in line 18) with the objective of contributing to the illustration of the concept. It is not until line 30 that NER signals the end of the sequence with an utterance that appears as a summary of the whole topic on the “parties of city”. Within this description we can also see that she uses another word in Spanish (“petardos”, in line 21). In an attempt to continue orienting to a unilingual mode, however, NER starts a word search. She does so by resorting to LAI uttering the word in Spanish (code-switching to direct the message to one specific participant exclusively; Auer, 1999), as if expecting LAI to scaffold her with the word in English. Instead, LAI moves her hands, possibly representing fireworks, and uses the onomatopoeia “POOM”. Yet NER does not interrupt her turn and strives to continue her description in English.

Within this sequence we can also observe different occasions in which LAI and also another Catalan student, ALA, (in lines 7 and 16) take turns to help in the definition and clarification of the concept “parties of the city”. LAI does a topic expansion to NER’s topic-initiation turn, validating NER’s new idea with a “yes” in line 2, and expanding the topic with some more details in lines 4, 13 and 17. In order to make the interaction progress and flow smoothly, LAI also orients herself to a unilingual mode of interaction when she offers the translation to the word “petardos” as a response to NER’s request. She does not appear very confident about her contribution (“highlights”, in line 24), though, because she immediately resorts to the word “petardos” in Spanish again and makes a sound and moves her hands (using multimodal resources) to illustrate the whole idea.

Within the interaction, we have also identified other procedures participants mobilise in favour of progressivity and intersubjectivity to let anomalies and misunderstandings ‘pass’ where these are considered to be transparent and/or interactionally ‘non-fatal’ (Firth, 1996: 243). In line 25 PAN, after the communication obstacle generated by the word “petardos” (translated by LAI into “highlights”), responds with a validating token, without a ‘candidate completion’ or an ‘other-repair’ providing the right word (presumably, “fireworks”) or an explanation. Instead, he ‘lets’ the unsolved word search ‘pass’ as he can presumably figure out what the Catalan students are referring to thanks to both the plurilingual and multimodal resources deployed. Far from underscoring the obstacle, PAN corroborates his understanding in line 27 after LAI’s attempt to describe the actual term multimodally (using an onomatopoeia and gestures). Similarly, in lines 3, 8, 12 and 14, we can confirm PAN’s preference for progressivity (letting it pass) and interactional order (also essential for the development of the ATS) when he expands NER and LAI’s initiated topic without probably having clearly understood what they refer to.

Finally, going back to excerpt 1, we see PAN deploying another resource to ‘normalise’ the previous turn and thus let the appearance of interactional order prevail, hoping that the misunderstanding with the word “Athens” (excerpt 1, line 12) will unfold as the talk progresses. He does so by including the word “Athens” (not “Asthens”, as NER has said in the previous turn) and by providing further information on the city (line 14), possibly expecting NER and LAI to finally recognise it. PAN ‘lets’ the obstacle ‘pass’ because he does not other-repair NER when she utters “Asthens”, but he does not take a passive role as he actively, though implicitly (‘normalising’ it), attempts to clarify the term in favour of understanding.

## Conclusions

Our analysis describes how learners, when exposed to English-as-lingua-franca (ELF) peer interactions in transnational educational settings, organise their participation following the rules of any ordinary interaction (Social Participation Structure, SPS) and at the same time orient themselves to task completion (Academic Task Structure, ATS), which entails full deployment of different interactive resources in favour of progressivity. The excerpts analysed here show how participation develops in terms of turn-taking and topic-management. As presented in the analysis, in excerpt 1 participants seem to initially find it hard to hold on a topic and to manage their participation fluently. However, in excerpt 2 (approximately two minutes later), it is significant to note how learners finally seem to engage in a more productive dynamics as they are able to focus on one topic and organise their participation in a more effective manner. The analysis reveals that the convoluted participant organisation in excerpt 1 could be a result of the learners’ interpretation of the ATS as a ‘competition’ to demonstrate which country has the nicest places or the most alluring culture and lifestyle. This produces a sequence characterised by fast turn distribution with short turns and little (or no) turn allocation together with some misalignment among the participants. However, the change in the dynamics of the interaction, after they find a common ground topic (observed in excerpt 2), contributes to the production of longer turns and more turn allocation. This favours learners’ deployment of both plurilingual (‘let it pass’ and ‘make it normal’) and multimodal resources in favour of intersubjectivity among participants and progressivity of both the task and the interaction. The analysis also gives some insights on the progression from plurilingual to unilingual mode of interaction which learners orient to. Although this is not a longitudinal analysis and we do not aim to track development, we can identify some of the actual stages of this progression when observing how learners, when faced with some communicative obstacles, display diverse resources (word-to-word translation, gestures, sounds, etc.) and, eventually, orient themselves towards the exclusive use of the target language (with a thorough description of the unclear concepts).

While it is not the aim of this study to demonstrate learners take bigger risks when interacting with peers, the data seem to suggest that they put different plurilingual resources into play, along with other interactive mechanisms in favour of mutual understanding, alignment (intersubjectivity) and task completion, which does have an impact on their Interactional Competence (IC) deployment. Presenting learners with spaces to engage in transnational peer interactions can enhance their engagement to use English and can provide them with opportunities to participate in plurilingual interactions and thus to display (and possibly eventually develop) their IC.

### Acknowledgements

The data presented here were collected within the research project ‘Teachers as agents of transformation through their engagement in cross disciplinary innovative projects in the English classrooms (DATE)’ sponsored by RecerCaixa 2016 (Project Ref.: 2016ACUP-001 (2017–2020)- LCF/PR/RC16/10100003). Principal investigator: Dolors Masats.

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#### 4.2.2. Publication 1b

Pratginestós, C., & Masats, D. (2021). Learning English in translocal exchanges in Instagram chat. In E. Moore & C. Vallejo (Eds.), *Learning English out of school: An inclusive approach to research and action* (pp. 69-97). Amsterdam: Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b18699>

##### **Brief summary**

This chapter investigates how the group of adolescents from Catalonia and Greece—learners of English—spontaneously use Instagram chats for informal interaction to say goodbye after a trip to Greece, undertaken as part of the classroom-based translocal project. The study explores how learner agency manifests in digital interactions that are neither teacher-mediated nor situated within formal learning environments. Drawing on real Instagram conversations—both one-to-one and group chats—we analyse how participants engage in meaning-making through *English as a lingua franca*, supported by plurilingual and multimodal resources.

Findings reveals that *learner agency* is expressed *behaviourally* (e.g., posting, topic selection), *cognitively* (e.g., language choice, turn construction), and *relationally* (e.g., emoji, humour, code-switching, and procedures of interactive cohesion). Emojis for instance, serve not only as emotional markers but also as resources for managing discourse and signalling social presence. Similarly, *code-switching* and *code-mixing* scaffold communication when participants encounter linguistic breakdowns or limitations.

The analysis also considers the constraints of Instagram's affordances—such as the absence of visible message threading and the fixed display of posting time—by developing the notion of *message units* (see Section 3.3.3). These encompass *compact* and *split messages*, as well as multimodal components like photos, audio clips, and emoji. The chapter demonstrates that, even without teacher supervision, learners successfully co-construct meaning, manage turn-taking, and display interactional competence.

In both one-to-one and group settings, learners actively participate in interactional sequences by taking initiative, showing empathy, and navigating relational as well as language challenges. In group chats, they exchange jokes, words of farewell, and personalized messages that signal strong peer relationships and foster inclusivity despite linguistic barriers.

The study also raises ethical considerations around the use of personal digital communication for research, particularly the balance between capturing authentic data while safeguarding participants' privacy. The findings suggest that digital, informal spaces can provide meaningful opportunities for language learning, especially when learners feel personally empowered to engage in the communicative event. The chapter concludes by arguing for a stronger integration of such practices into formal education and calls for teaching approaches that align more closely with learners' real-world communication practices and needs.

Cèlia Pratginestós / Dolors Masats

## Learning English in translocal exchanges in Instagram chat

**Abstract** This chapter analyses how social media – Instagram chats – is employed by a group of youth in Catalonia and in Greece for communicating in English as a lingua franca, as an extension of a translocal project initiated in their schools. We set out from the premise that learners’ participation and willingness to use the language to communicate in this context can be attributed to a genuine, agentive interest in learning English, even though learning English is neither the immediate nor the main goal of the youths’ communicative exchanges. Our study focuses on the plurilingual and multimodal procedures participants employ to organise participation, construct meaning and build relational bonds. Our results suggest that learners’ communication in the lingua franca is scaffolded by a channel they are well acquainted with – Instagram – and a shared code including emoji and multimodal resources. Additionally, we discuss the methodological and ethical challenges teachers and researchers face when supporting out-of-school digital spaces for learning and conducting research.

**Keywords:** learner agency, participation, turn-construction units (TCU), plurilingual and multimodal communication, Instagram chat, informal language learning

### 1. Introduction

The reasons adolescents might have for interacting through social media in their everyday lives are countless, but most of the time, they are arguably not primarily related to language learning. However, using a foreign language in digital channels can become an unexpected language learning experience for teenage language learners. The notions of ‘online informal learning’ (Sockett, 2014; Toffoli & Perrot, 2017), or ‘CALL in the digital wilds’ (Sauro & Zourou, 2019) – the latter based on the notion of ‘learning in the wild’ (Clark & Lindemalm, 2011; Clark et al., 2011; Firth & Wagner, 2007; Moore, 2015) – encapsulate the idea of informal language learning in digital spaces, communities, and networks that are independent of formal instructional contexts, less controllable or organised than a classroom (Sauro & Zourou, 2019), “but which present interesting, and perhaps even compelling, opportunities for intercultural exchange, agentive action, and meaning making” (Thorne, 2010, p. 144). In this chapter we focus on peer

interactions in Instagram chats, as an extension of a translocal project initiated in their school.

Our study seeks to comprehend how a group of Catalan and Greek adolescents organise their participation and create social bonds in this digital space. In particular, we analyse how they structure their turns and orient to the other participants to convey and construct meaning in English as a lingua franca. In Section 2 of the chapter, we discuss the notion of learner agency and the nature of communication through social media. In Section 3, we present our corpus and justify our decision to employ the theoretical and methodological toolkit of conversation analysis (CA) in our study. We also argue for the need to expand the understanding of turn construction units (TCUs) proposed by Sacks et al. (1974) to account for the nature of multimodal communication in social media. In Section 4, we use our proposed model for analysing participation and learner agency in Instagram chats in interpreting our data. To conclude, we reflect upon the implications of our study for the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

## **2. Learner agency and participation in peer interaction through social media**

Agency has been described as a “temporally embedded process of social engagement” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963) and as a socioculturally mediated process related to people’s will to act (Gao, 2010). According to Mercer (2012), it “concerns how agentic an individual feels both generally and in respect to particular contexts [...] [and how that] individual chooses to exercise their agency through participation and action, or indeed through deliberate non-participation or non-action” (p. 42). Learner agency has captured the attention of language education researchers as one of the keys to success in learning (McLoughlin, 2016), especially because it is linked to processes of self-regulation and has an impact on learners’ self-efficacy, identity, motivation, and meta-cognition (Xiao, 2014). As Larsen-Freeman (2019) claims, “although second language development is rightly seen to be embedded in a larger sociohistorical ecological system, languaging is still performed by an agentic learner in particular in a specific place [...] for particular reasons with particular others” (p. 63). Larsen-Freeman (2019) defines learner agency as being emergent, spatially and temporarily situated, achieved, relational, changeable through iteration and co-adaptation, heterarchical and multidimensional.

Agency is emergent because it is situated in a particular time and space, while also being shaped by past, present and future experiences (Larsen-Freeman,

2019); it is the “capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963). Agency should “be conceived as something that is achieved, rather than possessed, through the active engagement of individuals with aspects of their contexts-for-action” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 134). It further depends on “the availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). Additionally, it is relational because it does not depend on one individual (Gallagher, 2017), but develops “in relationship with others and with the world” (Miller, 2014, p. 142) and it changes because learners iteratively co-adapt to one another time and again. Change – co-adaptation through an iteration process – depends on several of the previously mentioned traits; thus agency is heterarchical because those traits are interlinked. Finally, agency is multidimensional and contingent upon intrapersonal factors (emotions, beliefs, personality, etc.), occurs simultaneously on the three levels of learners’ engagement (behavioural, cognitive and emotional), and is observable in learners’ discursive actions. The behavioural dimension of learners’ agency relates to participation and interaction patterns and to turn allocation and turn selection processes. The cognitive dimension refers to how interactants understand and convey meaning. The emotional dimension – which we will refer to as relational so as to distinguish this type of engagement from emotions as interpersonal factors – concerns the employment of affective, cohesive, and interactive indicators of social presence. For example, the use of humour, emoji or self-disclosure texts denotes affection; the use of vocatives or inclusive pronouns are a few of the procedures learners employ to maintain group cohesion; and referring to others’ messages or asking questions contributes to the social construction of discourse.

Participation is reflected through the actions all interactants perform during the development of a particular communicative event (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Text-based, mobile-mediated chats like Instagram feature the use of abbreviations, interjections, and a range of audiovisual resources that shape the way in which utterances are produced and received. Consequently, meaning is mediated by photographs, gifs, short videos, audio messages, emoji, etc., which may remain in the chat or disappear after being viewed once, according to the parameters set by the sender. These features influence turn-taking and the construction of the next turn; they “might posit word-like properties and show grammatical patterns and orders, similar to words” (Stamatov, 2017, p. 2). Furthermore, these multimodal resources may often convey meanings that are more complex than the simple observation of what they represent, because their interpretation relies on the ability to make constantly evolving and varying

intertextual connections that can be highly ephemeral as they are often linked to trends or events that are only meaningful and relevant for a certain time. This constant adaptation and evolution can be linked to the idea put forward by Blommaert and Rampton (2011) that:

contexts in which people communicate are partly local and emergent, continuously readjusted to the contingencies of action unfolding from one moment to the next, but they are also infused with information, resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through, and/or are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration (as well as in their capacity to bestow privilege, power or stigma). (p.14)

Therefore, when approaching technology-mediated interaction through a social media app, conducting a “multimodal analysis is an inevitable empirical adjustment to contemporary conditions, and we are compelled to move from ‘language’ in the strict sense towards semiosis as our focus of inquiry” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 28).

In the Instagram chats studied in this chapter, participants are more focused on the progressivity (Heritage, 2007) of the interaction than on language problems, and they orient to different discursive activities to accomplish and co-construct understanding (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2011; Mori 2004; Wong, 2005). Different languages are frequently put into play to help communication progress and meaning is co-constructed and mediated through translation and peer-scaffolding. The mobilisation of plurilingual resources (Llompert et al., 2020) in the interactions studied in this chapter is closely related to the use of multimodal elements. The visual resources deployed pertain to a medium which young participants are not only familiar with, but expert users of. Even those young people who are not confident in English as the lingua franca still interact more or less successfully thanks to their mobilisation of multimodal resources, together with plurilingual ones. The young people switch from one code to another (Auer, 1999), including different languages and modalities; for example, to emphasise an idea, participants may convey the same message subsequently in different languages or in different modes (text, image, audio, etc.). Our research thus supports the claim that plurilingualism must be regarded as being embedded within multimodality (Masats & Nussbaum, 2021).

### **3. Methodology**

In this section of the chapter, we present the theoretical and methodological toolkit employed, our research objectives and the corpus studied.

### 3.1. CA for the study of Instagram chats

Conversation analysis (CA) offers the theoretical and methodological apparatus used in this study to investigate authentic, situated interaction, focusing on how participants orient to, understand and construct each other's actions (Sacks et al., 1974). CA enables researchers to determine how speakers demonstrate they understand each other in the context-shaped and context-renewing character of interaction (Heritage, 1984). When the interaction analysed is not oral but written and technology-mediated, adopting CA involves taking into account that sequence organisation in technology- or mobile-mediated communication might seem "chaotic, highly disrupted, without any adjacency [...], mainly due to the fact that the exact timing of message placement cannot be controlled by the interactants" (González-Lloret, 2011, p. 310). However, previous research has shown that participants' turns tend to orient clearly to specific previous turns within the same conversation, which has been referred to as 'virtual adjacency' (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003), including when participants are language learners (González-Lloret, 2007, 2008). It must be noted, however, that in Instagram chats, unlike other text-based chats (i.e. WhatsApp), participants cannot select a previous message to signal they are posting a response to that message, which makes it more complex to reconstruct adjacency pairs. In this vein, as González-Lloret (2011) points out, the turn-taking system in technology- or mobile-mediated text-based communication differs from face-to-face interaction and is highly constrained by the medium (see also Beisswenger, 2008; Garcia & Jacobs, 1999; Herring, 1999; Murray, 1989; Negretti, 1999; Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003; Thorne, 2000), which poses challenges for both participants and CA analysts.

Difficulties arise when determining what constitutes a turn. To describe the organisation of turns, we have coined the term 'message unit'. Message units are created when participants press enter to post their contributions. Participants may opt to post a contribution as a single message unit or divide it into smaller units. In the first case, turn message units are compact (we call them 'compact message units'); no other participant takes the floor while the message is being produced and delivered. In the second case, the message is split into what we call 'split message units' and other participants may either decide to wait to receive what they interpret as the complete contribution, or participate while one (or more) different units are still being constructed. In this latter case, we interpret that a new turn has been opened by means of an overlap. Other types of overlap are difficult to interpret as such because in Instagram chat turns do not physically overlap; that is, two participants may be producing their messages at the same time, but their posts will be published one after the other. The exact time

when a message is posted is not recorded either, therefore overlaps cannot be measured and pauses cannot be inferred. If messages are not read synchronically, it is impossible to determine whether two messages were posted at the same time or after a pause. Similarly, a string of turns repeating the same word(s) within the same exchange cannot simply be analysed as choral responses; it may be the case that all participants had simultaneously opted to take the floor following a self-selection procedure, but some participants may also opt to respond after seeing other participants doing so. Furthermore, our description of the composition of turns is not only constituted by lexical (words), phrasal (phrases), clausal (clauses) and sentential (sentences) units, but also by visual (pictures, gifs, giphys and emoji), audial (instant recorded oral messages), audiovisual (videos) and hypertextual (links to other – multimodal – texts) units.

To demonstrate our approach, in Image 1 we observe two turns; one produced by speaker C1 and the other produced by speaker G1. Speaker C1's turn is composed of a compact message unit which consists of a sentential and a visual unit (line 10). As a response, G1 produces a turn composed of a message unit split into two smaller units: a visual unit (line 11) and a lexical unit, which is repeated twice (line 12).



**Image 1.** Screenshot of message units.

### 3.2. Research objectives

This chapter studies learners' spontaneous use of social media (i.e. Instagram chat), triggered by their participation in a translocal classroom project. Particularly, we aim to investigate how the learners' interaction in social media prompts their agentive use of English. We will identify the three dimensions

(behavioural, cognitive and relational) that constitute this multimodal agency by observing the discursive actions learners adopt to interact and co-construct meaning. Thus,

- to identify the behavioural dimension of learners' agency, we analyse participation and turn allocation and turn selection processes;
- to explore the cognitive dimension, we study how interactants construct their turns, and
- to examine the relational dimension, we focus on their employment of affective, cohesive, and interactive indicators that denote affection or social presence.

### 3.3. Corpus

The study presented in this chapter is an extension of a collaborative research project aimed at empowering teachers to transform teaching practices in the English classroom ('Teachers as agents of transformation through their engagement in cross disciplinary innovative projects in the English classrooms [DATE]', led by Dolors Masats<sup>1</sup>). Within this initiative, teachers were encouraged and enabled to implement meaningful and innovative teaching, creating opportunities for authentic communication in English (Dooly & Sadler, 2019). The design, implementation and assessment of these proposals was done through a form of collaborative action-research (Nussbaum, 2017; Masats et al., in press), in which teachers and researchers work in collaboration from symmetrical positions to design, implement, assess and disseminate classroom proposals. This type of research is also referred to with the Spanish term *colabor* (Leyva & Speed, 2008; Ballena et al., 2020). In this collaborative spirit, the actual teaching proposal that frames the data analysed here was designed by the authors of this chapter and an English teacher (Jorge Solans) participating in the study. It aimed at offering a group of Catalan adolescents from a public high school in the metropolitan area surrounding Barcelona opportunities to use and interact in English. This collaborative proposal engaged two groups of students, in Catalonia and in Greece, in a classroom project to get to know each other's culture and lifestyle. The two groups were connected through different virtual exchanges organised and mediated by their teachers so that they could share information on various topics related to their traditions and daily life. By the end of the project, the classes planned a face-to-face meeting in Greece, which triggered the interest of participants to

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1 Funded by a RecerCaixa grant, reference: 2016-ACUP-001.

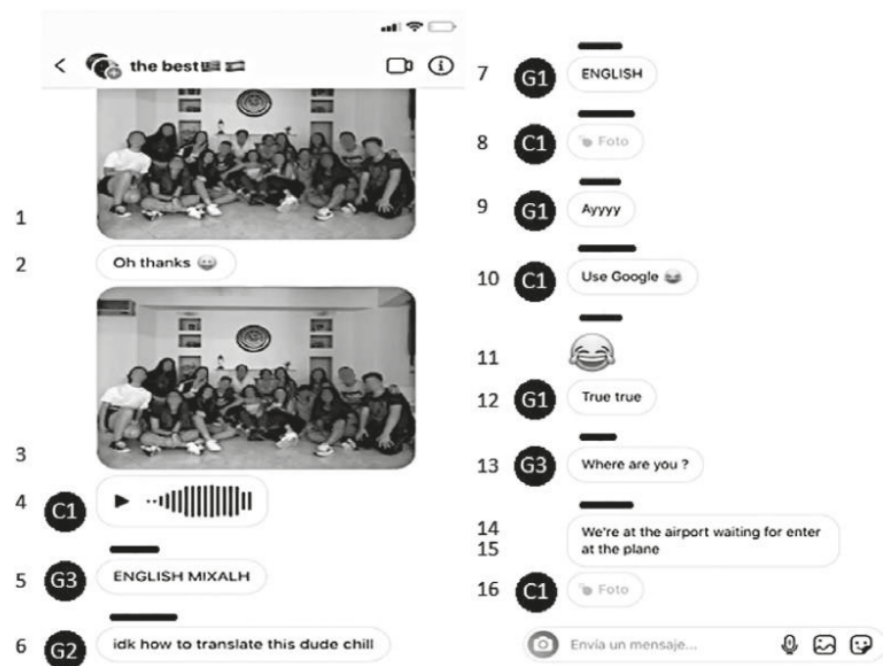
get to know their peers better. As a consequence, during the videoconferences carried out in their classrooms, they found an excuse to exchange their personal Instagram accounts to socialise. The translocal project, therefore, succeeded in offering the students an authentic context in which to use the target language in and outside the classroom. At that point, teachers requested access to their Instagram chat conversations and students accepted to send them screenshots on the understanding that these data would be used for research purposes; in this case as part of the IEP! project, which focused on out-of-school use and learning of English.

### **3.4. Data treatment and ethical issues**

The data studied in this chapter are screenshots of Instagram chat conversations that Catalan students voluntarily shared with researchers, before and after meeting face-to-face with their Greek counterparts. Ethically, our data collection practice has pros and cons. The translocal project offered students an authentic context in which to use the target language. This was particularly important in the school in Catalonia which was located in an underprivileged milieu and whose students had rarely experienced a real need to learn English. The use of social media in a language other than the one used in their homes also reinforced the value of learning foreign languages. Teachers/researchers had parental permission for legitimising communication outside the classroom through social media and also permission from all participants to have access to the screenshots for research purposes, which have been anonymised. Yet, as the bonds between students grew more solid, especially after the two groups had met personally in Greece, having to send their teachers screenshots of their chats was seen as an intrusion into their private lives. At this point the data collection ceased.

The excerpts we examine in this chapter serve as examples of interactions not mediated by the teacher, where learners use language in a natural, authentic manner, without any supervision. Methodologically, the data is interesting because it gives access to natural talk-in-interaction occurring outside classroom walls. However, it poses two major problems. In Section 3.1, we already problematised the notion of TCU to account for the multimodality of discourse in social media. A second problem relates to the features of the chat itself and to the fact that the exchanges may not always be complete when data is shared with the researcher, either because the students only select fragments of their Instagram chats or because the screenshots acknowledge the presence of audio and visual elements which are not disclosed to the teachers/researchers, or no longer available. Here we present an example of the type of data being

analysed to illustrate the characteristics of our corpus. As we see in Image 2, the screenshots of Instagram chats reveal that our participants deploy different types of multimodal resources to interact, as discussed in Section 2 of the chapter (e.g. abbreviations, audio clips, emoji or photos). As for the photos, it is to be noted that there are two types according to their display time; some stay in the chat and some others become unavailable once they have been seen once. The user of the app decides on either option before sending the photo to the chat. The same applies to audio messages.



**Image 2.** Screenshot of group chat at the end of the trip to Greece.

Image 2 also illustrates the way data was treated before the analysis. To guarantee anonymity, students' faces in the pictures were blurred by the researchers. Similarly, the names of the participants were crossed out and their profile pictures replaced by a code composed of a letter (G for Greek students or C for Catalan ones) and a number identifying the order of first appearance of the participants in the chat, which is maintained throughout the different excerpts (so G1, for

example, is the same student in all the data). This code is also employed to substitute students' names when they are mentioned in the text messages (see Image 3 in the next section).

Screenshots are shown as they were received by the teachers/researchers, which means the photos are shown if they were visible in screenshots learners shared. Multimodal data such as photos and audio clips are considered as information present in turns. The content of the deleted photos or the audio clips that are not available to researchers are counted as elements that constitute a turn because they were available to the participants. Additionally, we added line numbers. Turns can be simple and correspond to one line, as we can see in lines 3 (picture), 4 (audio) and 5 (text) of Image 2, or longer and correspond to several lines. In Instagram chats, participants' names appear at the beginning of their turns. In our data, turns start in the lines with no participant code and end in the lines that contains the participants' code. Thus, lines 14–16 of Image 2 correspond to one turn produced by a Catalan student (C1). That turn is composed of text (lines 14 and 15) and a photo (line 16). Finally, it is important to mention that any non-standard language use or spelling in the excerpts was produced as such by the participants. Translations from Greek to English have been added, when necessary, after text lines (see Image 3 in the next section).

#### **4. Understanding Instagram chat and language learning**

The objective of the analysis is two-fold. First, we examine two excerpts of one-to-one Instagram chats as examples of how learner agency is triggered by the classroom telecollaboration proposal and the mobility programme that derived from it. Second, we will focus on how a group of Catalan students participate in those chats, and especially how they construct and convey meaning. Our analysis sheds light on learning in the digital wild and on how interaction unfolds in Instagram chats.

##### **4.1. One-to-one Instagram chat**

The first excerpt (Image 3) we analyse corresponds to a private chat with two participants in which a Catalan female student (C2) and a Greek male student (G12) are sharing information about each other after one of the teacher-mediated virtual encounters, during which participants spontaneously and agentively decided to share their Instagram accounts by holding up pieces of paper with their usernames.



**Image 3.** One-to-one chat occurring after one of the teacher-mediated virtual encounters.

First, we see that participation is quite balanced among the two participants: G12 produces four turns with a total density of 52 words/emoji, whereas C2 produces a total of three turns and 49 words. Yet, although G12 enacts an agentive behavioural action and takes the initiative of starting the conversation (line 1), C2 immediately self-assigns the role of allocating turns and proposes the topics that will unfold in the conversation, by making an explicit request (“tell me something about your life”, lines 3 and 4) or by prompting a response through a question tag (“no?”, line 16) based on a comment previously made by G12 (that he had played basketball for four years). So, in this excerpt we can interpret agency as a process of co-adaptation to the circumstances in which the interaction unfolds and which is

observable in the procedures of turn and topic selection and acceptance. Second, if we focus on the traces that participants' cognitive actions leave on this chat, we can observe that the composition of the turns each participant constructs differs slightly. By asking G12 to introduce himself (lines 3 and 4) and commenting on what he says (lines 13–16; 18–20), C2 actively participates in the communicative event through the production of turns which take the form of split message units that only contain short sentences. Yet, her action triggers the production of a compact message unit by G12, which is composed of both text and visual units. With regards to how the message is conveyed, we might argue that the Greek student seems to use a rehearsed discourse when introducing himself, with the utterance being similar to one that could be produced during a classroom activity. On the contrary, the Catalan student's turns resemble more spontaneous dialogue and she enacts listenership by showing attention to and commenting on the information G12 provides (lines 13 and 14) and constructing her messages based on that information (lines 15–16; 18–19). Third, the relational dimension of the learners' agency can be observed by analysing social presence in the content of the turns. Affective indicators of social presence in this excerpt take the form of visual (emoji) and lexical units (interjections) to represent laughter. Both participants resort to laughter to show affiliation with each other and to create a sense of 'community'. Laughter is used by C2 to justify her request to G12 to disclose his life (line 4) and by G12 to signal his acceptance (line 5), reinforced by the use of the lexical unit 'okeyy' (his lengthening of the "y" reinforces the acceptance), before actually taking the action of introducing himself. When G12 completes his disclosure of personal information (lines 11 and 12), he does so with laughter represented by an emoji, preceded by an iteration of the sentence unit C2 had produced to request that information from him (line 3). Referring to another's message is an interactive indicator of social presence. C2's response to the last part of G12's message also starts with a lexical unit to represent laughter, followed by a sentence unit that embraces G12 in her state of being bored. The use of inclusive pronouns ("we", in this case, line 13) is a cohesive indicator of social presence. Finally, laughter in line 17 is used by G12 to indicate that he liked C2's appraisal of his basketball skills and in line 20 it is used by C2 to signal that she made an impressive revelation – that she has been doing judo for 10 years and is thus also good at it – which is interpreted as such by G12 when he produces an interjection to show admiration ("Wowww", line 21). Social presence is also traced through other interactive indicators, such as asking questions (as C2 does in line 16) or referring to others' messages (as G12 does in lines 11 and 12; or C2 does in lines 15 and 16). Additionally, C2's split message unit in lines 18 and 19 is

constructed by relating to one of the topics (interest in sports) G12 had brought up, which is a cohesive indicator of social presence.

As this excerpt is an example of peer interaction on Instagram chat, it is not surprising that participants deploy so many indicators of social presence. The opposite would be strange. Yet, we also claim this is a learning space. In this regard, we can observe that both participants take risks when participating. G12 misspells two words (“cuncil”, line 7; “wtcing”, line 9), which seems to indicate he struggles with them. We do not consider the spelling errors to be the typical abbreviations people use when texting because G12 does not employ this procedure in any other message he sends. C2 seems to take even more risks; she expresses herself more naturally in the sense that she does not produce classroom-like messages as G12 does, and she relies on plurilingual procedures to overcome language troubles and participate in the conversation in English. For example, in lines 13–14 she relies on code-mixing procedures and constructs a sentence unit (“we are already two who got very bored”) that is a word-for-word translation of a typical Catalan expression (“ja som dos els que ens avorrim”). Similarly, in line 16, she closes her sentence unit with a “no?”, which corresponds to the standard confirmation tag that it is used in Catalan and Spanish. At the end of this excerpt, we can also observe an instance of self-repair; when C2 first made use of the interjection for laughter, she used the Spanish spelling (line 4), which was followed by G12 using the same interjection spelt in English (line 5). As his split message unit was immediately followed by quite a long compact message unit (lines 6–12), G12’s move was not interpreted by C2 as a hetero-repair, which explains why she uses the Spanish spelling again in line 13, when she takes the floor. Yet, it is interesting to note that after the Greek student uses again the interjection “Haha” with English spelling in line 17, the Catalan student incorporates the corrected spelling into her next turn (line 20). We cannot confirm whether she does so as self-repair or to imitate G12, but we do consider this uptake to offer learning potential. This focus-on-form episode can only be understood in the emergent, spatially and temporarily situated context in which learners’ agency has been achieved, and which leads participants to put into play their interactional competence in English as a lingua franca.

#### **4.2. Instagram group chats**

In this section we analyse an episode that takes place on an Instagram group chat when the Catalan students were at the airport about to board their plane back home after their stay in Greece. The conversation is very lively as students are recalling all the enjoyable moments they have shared together and are expressing

how they will miss each other. There are several group members in this chat, but only one Catalan student (the one who provided us with the screenshots) and 11 Greek students participate in the conversation by producing at least one post. The episode has been divided into two parts to facilitate the analysis. In the first part (see Image 4), C1 takes the initiative and addresses the Greek students. This excerpt ends when he posts his last farewell message. The second part of this episode (see Image 5) contains the response of the Greek students to C1's last message, which serves as a conclusion.

The communicative episode starts with a photo that is not available on the screenshot (see line 1 in Image 4), as it is the kind of photo that can only be viewed once according to the app parameters set by the sender, as detailed in the Section 3.4. That unavailability of the totality of the content from when the actual conversation took place poses a challenge for researchers; not having access to the entirety of participants' turns makes it impossible to interpret how the topic was selected in turns 1 and 2 in Image 4 from an emic perspective. However, the episode presented in Images 4 and 5 does not contain any other non-disclosed image, therefore, we can trace how the conversation unfolds.

Image 4 has two main participants: the Greek student G1 and the Catalan student C1. C1 produces eight turns with a density of 46 words/emoji and G1 produces nine turns with a density of 32 words/emoji. The other participants – Greek students G2, G3 and G4 – base their participation on G1's and C1's turns; G2 produces four turns and a total of 15 words/emojis, G3 produces three turns and a total of six words and G4 produces one turn and a total of four words. Other Greek students are also attentive as we will see through their participation in Image 5. From Image 4 (line 25), we can also see that at least one Catalan student – C3 – is also a silent participant (the photograph depicts students C1 and C3). We will now proceed to analyse participation and the construction and allocation of turns and topics.



**Image 4.** Instagram group chat with Greek and Catalan students occurring just before the group of Catalan students board their plane back to Catalonia.

Image 4 provides an example of agency, understood as a process of co-adaptation, that is observable through the actions taken by participants when selecting and accepting turns and topics. Participants' behaviour in this chat differs from that of the students in Image 3 in the sense that the sequences that make up this episode do not unfold one after the other, instead most are embedded in another. The fact that this is a group chat and that different participants may be writing a post at the same time offers an explanation of why this is so. Although Instagram does not allow for participants to refer to the exact turn they are responding to, 10 different sequences can easily be traced. C1 is the participant who took the agentive action of initiating the episode, the one that participates most and who initiates most of the sequences (five out of 10) by proposing new topics. G1 is the student who produces most turns and words/emoji, but only initiates a side-sequence to take on the role of interlinguistic mediator (see Zhang & Llompart, this volume). G2 only produces four turns (two sentence units in Greek, one in English and one visual unit) but initiates three sequences. Additionally, we can see that most sequences are made up of either two- or three-turn units. Occasionally, the same turn is responded to sequentially by several participants. For example, in lines 14 to 16, G2 had suggested that G1 go to the airport through a split message composed of a textual and a visual unit (two emoji laughing with tears of joy). G1 responded with the same emoji (line 17). The sequence could have ended with this adjacency pair (proposal/reaction), but G4 (line 18) and C1 (line 19) also react. It is interesting to note that C1's turn in line 19 serves to close a sequence (lines 14–19) but also triggers a new adjacency pair (request/refusal, in lines 19–21) in which G1 provides a reason for not going to the airport. Thus, we can conclude that agency in this medium and at the time in which the episode occurred is achieved through students' behaviour (turn initiation and topic selection) but does not correlate with the density of participants' discourse.

The cognitive actions students undertake to construct their messages are varied. C1 seems to have preference for producing messages composed of sentence units in English (lines 2–3, 6–7, 19, 30, 34 and 36) and G1 for constructing messages composed of sentences (lines 4, 21, 23, 27–29 and 32–33) and lexical units (lines 5, 11, 12, 38 and 39). Occasionally they both resort to the use of emoji as indicators of social presence in response to what other participants have said. As Dooly and Czura (2021) note, emoji are combined with verbal communication and are understood as an alternate code or language variety. Thus, emoji:

may have more communicative purposes than simply conveying emotions or pictorially representing facial expressions or gestures [...] [and] may be deployed to orchestrate the interaction (e.g. mitigation through humour) or to elicit a next-turn interaction from other participants (e.g. orientation of an expected response). (Dooly & Czura, 2021, p. 223–224)

In our data, emoji produced in multimodal turns (used in combination with lexical units) are used by interactants to provide connotative meaning relating to the degree of commitment to the truth of the propositions they utter. For example, when C1 in line 19 requests G1 to go to the airport, he knows it is not feasible. Therefore, his verbal request is followed by an emoji laughing with tears of joy. However, when turns are only composed of visual units or two split message units (one of which is visual), emoji express a reaction to a previous turn. For example, C1's reaction to the turn produced in Greek (line 8) is delivered through a visual unit in the form of an emoji with crossed eyes, often meaning dead or astonished (line 10). In either case, emoji are code-switching procedures with communicative intent.

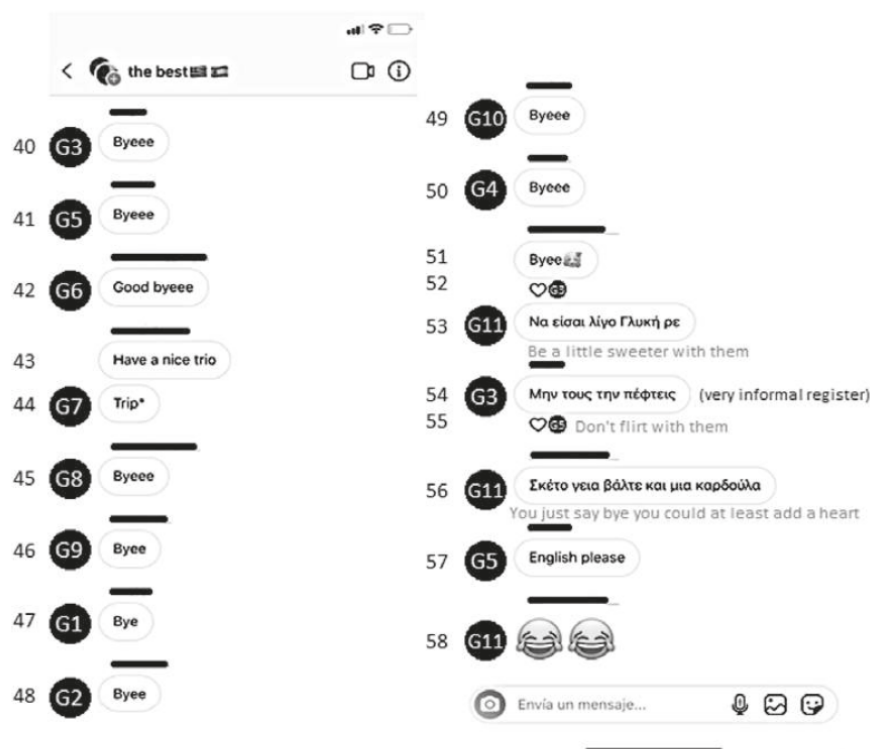
That is, in line 10, C1 shows astonishment about G2's turn by switching from one code (verbal) to the other (visual). Similarly, G1 responds multimodally with laughter to G2's proposal both with a lexical unit (the slang interjection "Lol" in line 12) and with a visual unit (tears of joy emoji, in line 17). G2's four turns are produced in Greek and in English and are also composed of sentence units (lines 8, 14–15 and 22) complemented with emoji (line 16). G2's code-switching, unlike C1's actions, is used to signal a change of addressee (G1 and not the whole group), which, on one of the occasions (line 8) is also reinforced by the fact that a vocative (the addressee's name) is used. So, by switching to Greek, G2 is not only addressing a Greek participant but also excluding (purposely or not) the Catalan participants that do not speak Greek. The participant-related switch (Auer, 1999) in line 8 triggers G3's turns in lines 9 and 13 in which she asks her peer to switch back to English. Thus, G3 takes the agentive action of regulating code use without actually translating G2's turn. This is done by G2 himself, who in lines 14–15 accepts G3's request and translates the utterance he had previously produced in Greek into English.

As we discussed earlier, C1's acceptance of G2's proposal (line 19) through a message composed of a sentence unit and a visual unit (an emoji laughing with tears of joy, possibly showing that his proposal is a joke) serves to open a new topic (a request/invitation to G1 to visit them at the airport). G1's message to declare he cannot travel to the airport and justify why (lines 21 and 23) is split into two posts. G2's second switch into Greek (line 22) is again participant-related, as it is addressed to G1 only and embedded within his split message. G1 responds with

an emoji in line 24. As his message is produced after his response to C1's invitation, G1 adds G2's name in his turn. G2's message in line 22 is delivered in a quite informal register with the inclusion of an abbreviated swear/slang word. His use of the first-person plural pronoun signals he embraces G1's idea when he claims "we (Greek students) don't have anything else better to do" – presumably, apart from going to the airport to see the Catalan group off. G3 participates with an interjection in Greek representing laughter and written in capital letters ("XAXA", line 26), suggesting a louder utterance in digital text-based communication. In her turn in line 26, G3 seems to be responding exclusively to G2's previous turn in Greek. This leads G1 to take on the role of interlinguistic mediator and to entirely reformulate G2's message (he changes "we" in Greek to "he" in English, uses a more formal register and "We don't have anything better to do" is replaced by "He said that he wants to come to the airport But he cant", lines 27–29). The translation of G2's turn does not include G1 as one of the people who have nothing to do, and it comes after G1's disclosure of the reasons why he cannot get to the airport ("+ I have a German lesson", line 23). This prompts C1 to ignore G1's translation of G2's comment and to ask for more information regarding G1's German lesson (line 30), just before G2 formulates a turn with a visual unit (the thumb-up emoji) to signal his acceptance of G1's adapted translation of his own words (line 31). G1 responds with a sentence unit explaining that he has a German class imminently, preceded by a vocative to indicate C1 as the person he is addressing (lines 32–33). C1 completes this sequence with a comment preceded by the interjection "Wow" to indicate amazement (line 34), to which G1 responds with an emoji (line 35). The turn produced by G1 here also triggers the initiation of a new sequence, in this case, an adjacency pair as a farewell. The fact that C1 starts this last exchange with the adverb "so" (line 36) indicates the connection between the two turns (lines 32–33 and 36). The use of G1's name also corroborates this and signals that C1's farewell is addressed to him only.

The fact that the sequences are interwoven does not seem to be a barrier for participants to convey or interpret messages. This is so, in part, because participants take multiple agentive relational actions to guarantee the cohesion of the co-constructed message. For example, G1's sentence unit in line 23 is preceded by a "+" symbol to indicate that this turn is part of a split message unit he was elaborating before G2's turn. The use of vocatives by G1 and G2 also serve to guarantee discourse cohesion and, like code-switching procedures, are also indicators of social presence as they signal who is included or excluded from each sequence. Group cohesion is achieved through interactional procedures including asking questions on a previous topic (as in line 30) or responding to other's messages (as in lines 17, 18 or 19, to cite a few). The employment of

affective indicators such as humour (as in lines 14–16 or 19), self-disclosure (as in line 23) and especially the use of emoji, reveal social presence; that is, participants' ability to project themselves socially and affectively. The whole conversation is scattered with emoji, representing different reactions and emotions as a response to an immediate or distant previous turn. Code alternation from textual to visual message units is done naturally and emoji are integrated into the different sequences. Emoji are also employed to qualify messages. For example, in line 37, C1 produces a turn by simply clicking “like” on his previous sentence unit message to reinforce the idea that he really hopes to see G1 again. Thus G1's next turn is a split message to respond both to this wish (line 38) and to the farewell (line 39). In Image 5, which is the continuation of this conversation, we observe how two other interactants also participate by clicking “like” on a message produced by a peer (lines 52 and 55).



**Image 5.** Continuation of the Instagram group chat with Greek and Catalan students occurring just before the group of Catalan students board their plane back to Catalonia.

Image 5 is also interesting because although up to that point only four Greek students had displayed the agentive action of taking the floor, there were, at least, seven other Greek students engaged in the communicative episode we are examining. We are unsure whether the Catalan students did not respond to this choral farewell because they were no longer available – they may have been boarding the plane – or due to other reasons. We need to bear in mind that time is not recorded in Instagram chats, so this string of messages could have been produced within a few seconds or over a longer time span. Additionally, turns do not overlap, which poses a challenge for researchers when recreating how the discourse evolved. In Image 5 we can observe 19 turns and three sequences. The first sequence is a farewell exchange that started in the last two turns of Image 4, when C1 says goodbye to G1 (line 36) and the latter responds (line 39). This farewell exchange has three moves. The first one is the farewell between C1 and G1 (lines 36 and 39, Image 4); the second one (lines 40–51, Image 5) is a string of farewell utterances whose target addressee changes as the discourse unfolds; and the third one (line 52, Image 5) is an assessment move (a “like”) performed by G3 on G11’s turn. If we take a closer look at the second move from the first sequence, we can see that Image 5 starts with a post by G3, one of the students who had already taken part in this episode (see Image 4). In her turn, she is unlikely farewelling C1 as C1 had not explicitly addressed his farewell to her; instead, she seems to address the whole silent Catalan student audience. This is confirmed when the string of farewell utterances is over; the use of a plural vocative ‘them’ in the sequence produced in Greek by G11 and G3 (lines 53 and 54) indexes that the Greek students perceive the group of Catalan students as ratified participants (Goffman, 1981) in the event, and were addressing their farewell to them all, and not just to C1. Similarly, the fact that G1 offers his farewell again (line 47) also indicates that he is no longer addressing C1, as he had done in the previous excerpt (line 39, Image 4), but the whole Catalan audience. This change of target audience is not signalled but is implicitly assumed by the Greek participants and is possibly what triggered them to explicitly participate by posting.

In Image 5 we can also observe that the string of messages is not produced simply as iterations of G3’s first turn. So, out of the 11 turns that make up the second move of this first sequence, eight are composed of the same single lexical unit (versions of “bye” in lines 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50), one is produced with this lexical unit followed by a visual unit (line 51), and one is made up of two lexical units (line 42). In all cases, “bye” is produced with a variety of spellings, with various extensions of the vowel “e” at the end of the word. In Instagram, like in other text-based social media chats (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger or Facebook), the more letters that are used to extend the last vowel

sound, the longer the sound being represented, which could be an indicator of interactants' genuine interest in participating in this last communicative episode. Finally, only G7 takes the agentive action of expressing farewell by employing a different conversational formula ("Have a nice trio", line 43), which semantically connects with the actual reason why they are saying goodbye to their friends. It is also worth mentioning that G7's clause unit contains a spelling mistake that is marked with the "\*" symbol, as is convention in this medium, and self-repaired in the following line ("trip").

The second sequence in this excerpt takes place in Greek and involves two Greek students: G11 (in lines 53 and 56) and G3 (in line 54). G11 is the last participant to post a farewell message and the only one that complements the lexical unit with a visual unit: a smiling face with three hearts emoji (line 51). This action is followed by a comment on how other Greeks should farewell their Catalan friends (line 53, translated as "Be a little sweeter with them"). His participant-related switch into Greek indicates he is addressing his Greek counterpart only. G3 (the same student who had asked G2 to use English in Image 4) responds (we can't tell in which order) by liking the message that contains the emoji (line 52) and by producing another sentence unit in Greek (line 54, translated as "Don't flirt with them"), which is marked with a "like" by student G5 (line 55). In reply, G11 produces another sentence unit in Greek (line 56, translated as "You just say bye you could at least add a heart") to justify himself.

A final consideration about Image 5 relates to the third sequence. In it, G5 participates again by producing a clause unit (line 57) that paraphrases G3's turns 9 and 23 from Image 4. G11 responds to this with a visual unit, a face with tears of joy emoji (line 58). These last two turns reveal that although G5 and G11 had not posted earlier, they were attentive to how the interaction unfolded.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter we have examined how two groups of English learners use Instagram chats to communicate and socialise translocally. Their interest in consolidating their bonds was genuine and was rooted in their participation in a collaborative classroom project that involved several online exchanges and a trip by the students from Catalonia to visit their counterparts in Greece. The initiative of establishing contact in a non-teacher-led environment offered to them by social media was an agentive action students took in class and that teachers/researchers, after obtaining parental permission, encouraged. The results of our analysis on learners' participation in two communicative episodes occurring in two of those Instagram chats – one between two learners and the other between

the two groups – have implications for both teachers and researchers, which we will discuss after summarising our findings.

We have seen that both posting and not posting constitute behavioural agency actions participants undertake. Being silent does not indicate absence or disengagement, as we saw in Image 5 when two Greek students, G5 and G11, made reference to a previous joke to which they had not previously responded. Similarly, the Greek students in Image 5 address their farewell to all the Catalan students, when only one of them, C1, had been posting, while another was only made visible in a photograph C1 had posted of the two of them. Our analysis also reveals that the density of participants' messages, calculated in terms of number of turns and of lexical and non-lexical elements in their contributions, does not relate to the agency actions of selecting and attributing turns or topics. Thus, in Image 3, participation is quite balanced if we observe the behaviour of the two students in the chat, yet the student who initiates the episode and produces most turns and denser contributions is not the one who allocates the turns and selects the topics. The same occurs in the group chat, in which G1 is the participant with most turns and the second in terms of the density of his contributions, but he only selects one of the 10 topics during the conversation. On the contrary, G2 intervenes half as much as G1, with less dense contributions – two of his turns are in Greek, one is in English (the translation of one of the turns he produced in Greek) and one is constructed with a single visual unit (an emoji) – but he initiates the topic of three of the sequences.

With regards to indicators of participants' cognitive agency, that is, the actions interactants adopt to produce their messages, we can see that communication through English, a language both groups are learning, is scaffolded by the use of a channel they are familiar with (Instagram) and the legitimate shared code (including emoji and other multimodal resources) that accompanies it. Posting emoji (or "likes" to own and other's messages) entails enacting listenership, understood as "the act of giving feedback on prior messages" (Choe, 2018, p. 703), but emoji are also used to add meaning to the message being conveyed. For example, in Image 4 an emoji is used by G2 (line 16) to indicate that he knew his proposal (lines 14–15) could not be accomplished. Similarly, laughter – expressed through textual units in the form of interjections or acronyms – is used to modulate a demand so that it could be interpreted as a mild request, as in Image 3. Additionally, different symbols are employed for purposes that are recognisable to technology-mediated text writers (e.g. the "+" symbol is employed to indicate that a message is incomplete or the "\*" symbol is used to introduce a correction). Participants' communication, apart from being supported by the agency action of employing multimodal resources (participants shift from

text-based messages to visual messages in Images 4 and 5), is also scaffolded by the languages in the participants' repertoires, as observed when interactants rely on mechanisms such as code-switching (they produce messages in Greek in Image 4) or code-mixing (they make a word-per-word translation of a Catalan idiomatic expression in Image 3).

Cognitive agency is also achieved when interactants take decisions regarding the density of their contributions. In Image 3 we observed how one of the participants opted for creating compact message units which contained several smaller units (in the form of sentence units or image units) and a variety of topical elements. On the contrary, in Images 4 and 5, participants opted to construct their turns based on what we called split message units, that is, by developing a topic though more than one brief post. These agency actions have implications for how the conversation unfolds and are partially dependant on the space in which it takes place; in Instagram chats turns never overlap, previous messages cannot be selected to mark they are being addressed, unlike, for example, in WhatsApp. Consequently, while in Image 3 topics develop sequentially, in Images 4 and 5 all sequences contain other embedded sequences. Yet, the conversation develops fluently and with no misinterpretations, which indicates that all participants know well how to participate.

The mediation actions of translating the sequences produced in Greek into English could be regarded as a means of achieving relational agency in the sense that while the original language choice excluded part of the interactants from the conversation, interlinguistic mediation moves acknowledged them as ratified speakers. Other relational actions in our data include the use of emoji, humour, and self-disclosure (affective indicators), the employment of vocative and inclusive pronouns (cohesive indicators) and the actions of asking questions or referring to other messages (interactive indicators). Again, students seem to rely on these procedures rather spontaneously, which leads us to argue for the need to bring technology into the classroom to establish connections between classroom practices and social practices. As we mentioned, the introduction provided by G12 in Image 3 in the form of a compact message unit resembles the type of texts students produce in the classroom when asked to introduce themselves, but the way interaction unfolds in excerpts Images 4 and 5 differs a lot. Hence, if the role of formal language instruction is to trigger an authentic need for learners to use the target language to accomplish real communicative goals, classroom practices cannot ignore the type of communicative practices learners engage in in informal environments. That is, language teachers should allow for classroom communication and learning to generate the kind of learning opportunities that informal communication offers. This study sheds light on the nature

of participation in out-of-class peer interaction and may serve as inspiration for those teachers willing to promote learners' abilities to participate in real social encounters mediated through technology.

Our chapter also seeks to contribute to the study of peer interaction and learning in the digital wild. Since learning is a socially situated action, participation in Instagram chats in English as a lingua franca is to be regarded as a potential language learning experience in itself, although concrete evidence of language learning can also be traced in the data (see for example C2's self-repair in Image 3), even though that is not learners' immediate goal. The study of language learning through social media needs a robust theoretical and methodological apparatus. We have argued that CA, and especially the notion of TCU proposed by Sacks et al. (1974) to study participation, is valid if it is updated to capture the essence of multimodal communication such as that developed in social media. In this regard, we suggest that the types of units that make up a turn should be expanded to include non-textual units such as audio/video files, photographs and all sort of visual elements (gifs, emoji, likes, etc.) or the prototypical symbols in technology text-based communication (\*, +, etc.). In our data, non-textual units, apart from contributing to the co-construction of meaning, also constitute the preferred mode of participation of some of the interactants. Symbols, on the other hand, are used by interactants as cohesive devices to link together the split message units that constitute their turns, as we see in Image 4.

A second challenge researchers of authentic, informal, peer communication face relates to the ethical implications of using personal data disclosed by learners. The Greek and Catalan students in our study gave us permission to read their personal communication and they were the ones who selected what we could and could not see. We also had consent from their families. Nevertheless, 'spying' on how young people build up their relational bonds raises ethical issues as we described in Section 3.4. Therefore, it is necessary to create conditions under which social media can be used in classrooms in a genuine manner and investigate the types of discourse it generates and how it contributes to learning. Proposals in which formal teaching and learning is developed through social media are still scarce but gaining prominence in the formal language classroom. An example of one of these emerging initiatives in secondary classrooms in Catalonia can be found in the work of Olivé (2020a, 2020b), who engages language and literature students in the process of understanding literary work by setting them, for example, the task of impersonating in Instagram a character from the novel they are reading.

## Acknowledgements

This research and publication were funded by FEDER/Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades – Agencia Estatal de Investigación. Grant ID PRPPGC2018-099071-A-I00. This contribution was produced under the auspices of the PhD in Education programme at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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#### 4.2.3. Publication 2

Pratginestós, C., & Masats, D. (2024). Exploring language alternation and participation in an 'in-between learning scenario': A case study of a WhatsApp chat with secondary students of English. *Classroom Discourse*, 15(3), 273-292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2024.2315022>

#### **Brief summary**

This paper presents a case study of a WhatsApp group created by the two secondary school teachers in Catalonia to coordinate a student-led fundraising task related to the upcoming school trip to Greece. Although the WhatsApp chat was not designed as a formal learning tool, the interaction within it gradually created what we defined as an *in-between learning scenario*—a hybrid space situated between formal and informal peer interaction.

Drawing on the notion of *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012), the study shows how policies emerge in and through everyday practices rather than being externally imposed. Initially, the teachers set the tone and the language policy by using English, emulating the classroom's *medium of interaction* (Gafaranga, 1999). Students aligned with this norm, both implicitly and explicitly, treating the chat as an opportunity to practice English in preparation for using it as a lingua franca with their Greek peers. However, findings show that control over topic selection—and by extension, over the interactional norms—shapes language use. When teachers lead the conversation, English dominates. When students start leading, Catalan and Spanish emerge, reflecting their personal *language preferences* (Auer, 1984) and processes of *membership categorization* (Sacks, 1974). At this point, a flexible, plurilingual medium of interaction becomes the new norm, accepted implicitly by both parties, embodying a practiced language policy that balanced task accomplishment, social positioning and a pragmatic approach.

Methodologically, the study applies *Conversation Analysis (CA)* to WhatsApp interactions, adapting it to examine turn-taking, message timing, and multimodal resources (e.g., text, emoji, audio). Through five excerpts collected over three months, the analysis traces how the medium of interaction was negotiated, suspended, and reshaped across time. Finally, the study offers insights into how digital tools like WhatsApp can create in-between learning spaces, where language learning, social identity, and task completion interconnect. It also highlights the challenges of maintaining L2 use outside formal settings, emphasizing that language learning in mobile-mediated environments greatly depends on shared objectives, learner agency, and sustained teacher engagement.

## **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, Pratinestós 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<sup>a</sup>Luisa, és de un vale per un arreglo de 6€  
KAI: *I already have the first voucher, from the haberdashery M<sup>a</sup>Luisa, it's a voucher for a 6€ arrangement*
- 250 [Jul. 8 17:47:12] TEACHER 1: **Olé!!** 🍷🍷🍷
- 251 *(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 signal 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 supposedly 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).

## 6. Acknowledgments

The data presented here were collected within the research project ‘*Teachers as agents of transformation through their engagement in cross disciplinary innovative projects in the English classrooms (DATE)*’ sponsored by RecerCaixa 2016 (Project Ref.: 2016ACUP-001 (2017-2020)-LCF/PR/RC16/10100003). IP: Dolors Masats. We express our gratitude to the teachers and students who opened up their classrooms to us and let us become members of their community.

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#### 4.2.4 Publication 3

Pratginestós, C. (2025). Examining learner agency in plurilingual peer interactions: Managing participation in virtual and face-to-face tasks. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 18(3), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.1461>

##### **Brief summary**

This paper analyses how learner agency is enacted in plurilingual, task-based peer interactions in two complementary contexts: a virtual telecollaboration, and a face-to-face group task during the trip of a group of students from Catalonia to Greece. Through a socio-interactionist approach, the study focuses on how learners balance task progressivity (moving the task forward) and intersubjectivity (ensuring mutual understanding), and how their discursive actions reflect *behavioural*, *cognitive*, and *relational* aspects of agency. Conversation Analysis (CA) is employed as the methodological and analytical apparatus, allowing the study to trace how tasks are accomplished in real time through interaction.

In the virtual setting, a Catalan student, KAI, demonstrates high agency by self-selecting turns, managing technical disruptions, and fostering group inclusion. His reformulations, inclusive questions, and multimodal efforts (gestures, voice projection) illustrate his ability to balance task completion with spontaneous social engagement, highlighting his cognitive and relational adaptability.

In the face-to-face setting, KAI and his peer MIA engage with Greek students in a discussion on cultural topics. The minimally structured task challenges learners to take initiative. MIA frequently initiates topics and manages transitions, while KAI works to preserve mutual understanding. When miscommunications occur—such as cultural references not being understood—learners employ procedures like *candidate completions*, *reformulations*, and *cultural equivalences* to collaboratively overcome trouble. They often resort to the *let it pass* or

*make it normal* mechanisms rather than pointing out misunderstandings, preserving both flow and face.

Findings corroborate that learners' agency is not fixed but context-sensitive and co-constructed through interaction. Through their actions—ranging from managing turn-taking to navigating breakdowns—learners balance the *Academic Task Structure (ATS)* and the *Social Participation Structure (SPS)*. Learners enact behavioural agency through initiative and task management, cognitive agency in how they shape meaning, and relational agency through humour, inclusivity, and face-saving practices. Ultimately, the study argues that offering learners freedom within structured but flexible tasks fosters genuine engagement, responsibility, and development in interactional competence. These findings highlight the pedagogical value of translocal, plurilingual peer tasks that allow learners to co-construct meaning across linguistic boundaries at the time they develop both academic and social communication skills.



## Examining Learner Agency in Plurilingual Peer Interactions: Managing Participation in Virtual and Face-to-Face Tasks

*Anàlisi de l'agència de l'aprenent en interaccions plurilingües entre iguals: gestió de la participació en tasques virtuals i presencials*

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### Abstract

From socioconstructivist perspectives, learning is a social process that occurs through collaborative interaction. In task-based L2 learning, this involves a dynamic adaptation to the evolving circumstances of the task, integrating learning within the discursive actions learners perform when participating in the resolution of the task. This study explores how secondary students organise their participation and enact learner agency during plurilingual, task-based peer interactions in a transnational classroom proposal. Focusing on two scenarios – virtual telecollaboration and face-to-face group tasks – the study examines how learners navigate between *progressivity* (task advancement) and *intersubjectivity* (mutual understanding). Using Conversation Analysis, we analyze their discursive actions identifying behavioral, cognitive, and relational dimensions of agency. By focusing on learners' procedures to overcome challenges, co-construct meaning, and balance academic and social interactional goals, the study highlights the significance of peer interactions in fostering agency, proactive participation, as well as effective communication and successful task completion across linguistic boundaries.

**Keywords:** Learner agency; Task-Based Interaction; Participation; Progressivity and Intersubjectivity, Task-as-process

### Resum

Des d'una perspectiva socioconstructivista, l'aprenentatge és un procés social que es construeix a través de la interacció. En un enfocament d'ensenyament de L2 basat en tasques, això suposa una adaptació dinàmica a les exigències discursives. Aquest estudi analitza com estudiants de secundària organitzen la seva participació i exerceixen la seva agentivitat en una proposta d'aula transnacional, en dos contextos: la telecol·laboració virtual i les tasques presencials en grup. L'objectiu és explorar com els aprenents troben l'equilibri entre la progressivitat (per fer avançar la tasca) i la intersubjectivitat (per assegurar la comprensió mútua). A través de l'Anàlisi de la Conversa, s'identifiquen dimensions conductuals, cognitives i relacionals de l'agentivitat en les seves accions discursives. L'estudi posa en relleu les estratègies emprades pels aprenents per superar dificultats, coconstruir significat i equilibrar objectius acadèmics i socials. En centrar-se en les interaccions plurilingües entre iguals, es mostra com aquestes afavoreixen l'agentivitat, una participació activa i una comunicació eficaç, contribuint així a l'èxit en la realització de les tasques més enllà de les fronteres lingüístiques.

**Paraules clau:** Agència de l'aprenent; Interacció basada en tasques; Participació; Progressivitat i Intersubjectivitat; Tasca com a procés



## INTRODUCTION

Interaction in task-based learning involves adapting to the task's unfolding circumstances, which means learning is embedded in the discursive actions learners take when they participate in the task at hand. Learning, from a socioconstructivist perspective, is a social process that occurs mainly through interaction (Hall, 1993; Hellermann, 2007; Lantolf, 2000). In line with this view, 'situated learning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) acknowledges learning as a social practice that allows learners to put their linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural competences at work to gain knowledge and develop communicative skills through socially contextualised tasks. During social interaction, we rely on a set of "routinized yet context-sensitive procedures with which we reason our way through the moment-to-moment unfolding of our interactions" (Hall et al., 2011, pp. 2–3). Thus, examining the organizational systems of participation in particular contexts of use is essential to understand how learning occurs.

In educational settings, participation emerges through the actions and resources interactants use to establish interactional order during the development of a particular communicative event (Firth, 1996), where language and embodied actions provide crucial resources for the achievement of social order (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2005). In second language classrooms, pair and group tasks are particularly significant because they provide learners with more possibilities of active participation than teacher-learner interactions, and give learners greater freedom to determine the topic and manage the interaction (Masats, 2008), enhancing in turn their agentic role. The discourse between non-expert speakers tends to be more exploratory, partly because the absence of a teacher assessing the interaction allows learners to take more risks (Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2000). Additionally, peer interactions provide opportunities for collaboration and collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994).

This study examines how a group of secondary school students in Catalonia and Greece engage in peer interactions during a telecollaboration classroom that ends up with a trip to Greece. Designed within the framework of a transnational initiative, the classroom proposal provided opportunities for students to engage in peer interactions in *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF). We analyse learners' participation across different stages of this project, both in online and face-to-face interactions, focusing on how they participate in these different scenarios using plurilingual and multimodal resources to achieve task progress and mutual understanding. The study focuses on learners' agency as they balance *intersubjectivity*

(Heritage, 2007) and *progressivity* (Schegloff, 2006) to advance tasks and achieve mutual understanding. The analysis builds on the categorisation of the learners' discursive actions—the verbal and non-verbal moves used to construct meaning and coordinate interaction—driven by their *agency*, understood as the capacity to act intentionally and become responsible for their learning and actions. This agency is dynamically shaped by their interactions with sociocultural, relational, and contextual factors (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Mercer, 2011).

This paper begins with a theoretical framework integrating key concepts from different fields. It examines learners' participation in task-based interactions by addressing the balance between two key features of social interaction—intersubjectivity and progressivity—and by exploring the dynamic nature of learner agency through its behavioural, cognitive and relational dimensions. This is followed by a description of the research context, outlining the objectives and the methodological approach used. The analysis then focuses on two scenarios: one based on a virtual connection and the other on face-to-face interaction. The article concludes with a discussion of findings and their implications.

## LEARNERS' PARTICIPATION AND AGENCY IN TASK-BASED INTERACTIONS

### Exploring tasked-based interactions

According to the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and its approach to the construct of 'task' in the field of second language learning, tasks are not static constructs but dynamic, co-constructed activities locally and historically shaped by the participants (Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004). In this framework, tasks are not predefined entities that dictate the interaction, but practices reflexively defined and accomplished by learners and collaboratively (re)configured in relationship to partners (Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004).

Breen's (1989) distinction between *task-as-workplan* and *task-as-process* is particularly relevant here: the former provides the structure of what both the teacher and the learners are expected to do, while the latter informs of the process that unfolds as learners co-construct meaning and collaborate to achieve the task's goals. Studying the *task-as-process* thus involves analyzing how learners interpret and orient themselves to the tasks assigned (Ellis, 2003). For that matter, examining how learners engage with the task through the categorisation of observable actions is relevant to understand how learners organize their participation, address challenges, and collaboratively advance the interaction in an attempt to balance intersubjectivity and progressivity.

### Balancing intersubjectivity and progressivity

*Intersubjectivity* (Heritage, 2007), or ‘shared understanding’, is a key feature of social interaction that allows participants to coordinate their actions and achieve mutual comprehension. *Progressivity* (Schegloff, 2006), in contrast, signals the forward-moving nature of interaction, where participants work to ensure the task advances smoothly. These notions often coexist in all types of interactions, but particularly in task-based interactions, although tensions can arise when “progressivity is pitted against intersubjectivity” (Heritage, 2007, p. 308), that is, progressivity is prioritized over achieving full mutual understanding. Participants must regularly negotiate between the tension of (a) acquiring a certain level of shared understanding, at the time they maintain and pay attention to the linguistic and cultural diversity of all participants, and (b) progressing forward with the talk. For language learners, this involves ensuring the task accomplishment (Heritage, 2007) through the adoption of all the possible resources that enable them to continue with the current activity (Markaki et al, 2012). In this intersubjectivity-progressivity axis, progressivity includes actions that drive the task towards its resolution, including indicators such as efficiency, immediacy, and simplicity (Borràs, 2013). Intersubjectivity, however, refers to participants’ needs through equity (vs. efficiency), collaboration (vs. immediacy), and complexity (vs. simplicity). To manage this balance and to resolve situations of communicative tension, participants mobilize resources like English as lingua franca (ELF), multimodality, language alternation, or creativity and hybrid forms (Borràs, 2013). This balance often emerges through cooperation towards a shared understanding that is “good enough” for practical purposes (Garfinkel, 1967).

*Progressivity* refers to the forward movement of interaction, where participants prioritize the progression of talk over addressing every detail. To ensure progressivity, participants use specific procedures like ‘let it pass’ and ‘make it normal’. ‘Let it pass’ is the listener’s strategy to allow unclear or unfamiliar language (e.g., ‘grammar infelicities’ or ‘unidiomatic clause constructions’) to go unaddressed, assuming the meaning will either become clear or prove irrelevant as the conversation progresses (Firth, 1996). This reflects a passive stance by avoiding focusing on minor misunderstandings, making these issues interactionally insignificant. In contrast, ‘make it normal’ takes a more active, though implicit, role in interpreting and understanding the communication taking place (Firth, 1996) not only by constructing the interactional order but also by creating the appearance of order. However, in this scenario, as Firth notes, the listener avoids ‘other-repairs’ or offering ‘candidate completions,’ which would indicate the interlocutor’s statements are

perceived as problematic. *Letting* hybrid or creative (or invented) forms *pass* is common, especially in ELF interactions, where such forms are rarely explicitly highlighted (unless they hinder understanding). In any case, both procedures help manage the interactional work and favour the progression of talk, which is essential to the development of the 'Academic Task Structure' (ATS). The ATS refers to the structured stages necessary to complete a task, where each step contributes to achieving the overall goal. In addition, these strategies help establish interactional order (Firth, 1996), fostering progressivity while aligning with the 'Social Participation Structure' (SPS). The SPS, as discussed by Erickson (1982) as a duality with the ATS, governs the interactional rights and obligations of group members. It consists of conversational rules that regulate turn-taking, sequence organisation, and participation norms. This structure reflects the dynamic negotiation of social relationships, where participants balance the need to maintain group cohesion with the progression of talk.

*Intersubjectivity*, however, can manifest through collaborative actions such as 'candidate completions' (Firth, 1996), when one participant finishes another's interrupted turn, interpreting the initial speaker's hesitations and pauses as a request for assistance or clarification. This aligns with Smit's (2010) notion of 'joint forces,' that emphasizes participants' mutual effort to contribute to the communicative exchange through cooperative work, especially, in repair sequences (Borràs & Moore, 2019). Repairs, as Smit (2010) claims, are seen as a first-order interactional necessity in aligning the speaker's intention with the listener's interpretation to build 'shared understanding'. Therefore, once more, the more formal aspects of language are not given attention unless they become relevant in the negotiation of meaning — that is, when learners must explicitly work to understand and express meaning in L2. This process facilitates learning by productively linking input, internal learner capacities (particularly selective attention), and output (Long, 1996).

In task-oriented interactions, despite occasional imperfections or breakdowns in intersubjectivity, participants often prioritise progressivity to fully resolving misunderstandings. *Hetero-repairs*, where one participant addresses another's error or misunderstanding using multimodal resources (gestures, laughter, or changes in tone), help maintain sufficient intersubjectivity to keep the activity moving forward, without entirely pausing the interaction (Mondada, 2014). Participants use implicit cues or 'covert claims' to signal the need for repair while maintaining the flow of communication (Mondada, 2016; Stivers, 2001). In our study, the risk of breakdowns in intersubjectivity is higher compared to L1 interactions due to a less apparent or accessible 'shared knowledge' and 'common ground'.

However, learners' sustained engagement reflects their *agency*, shaping their participation despite these challenges, as elaborated in the following section.

### Learner agency and participation

Agency has traditionally been defined as being an individual's will and capacity to act, but recent studies frame it as a relational, embodied, socially situated, and dynamically adaptive process (Bouchard & Glasgow, 2019; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Bui & Filipi, 2024). Learner agency is emergent, spatially and temporarily situated, achieved, relational, changeable through iteration and co-adaptation, heterarchical and multidimensional (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). Agency is *emergent* as it exists in a specific time and space while being influenced by past, present, and future experiences. Agency is also *relational*, since it develops "in relationship with others and with the world" (Miller, 2014), as learners continuously co-adapt to each other, driving changes in agency through iterative processes. Finally, agency is *multidimensional* and influenced by intrapersonal factors. It operates simultaneously across three levels of learner engagement: *behavioural*, *cognitive*, and *emotional*. These dimensions are observable in learners' discursive actions—their communicative moves to build meaning and manage interaction. The *behavioural* aspect relates to participation, interaction patterns, and turn allocation and turn selection processes. The *cognitive* dimension concerns how participants construct their turns and understand and convey meaning. The emotional dimension – which we will refer to as *relational*, as in Pratginestós & Masats (2021) to distinguish it from emotions and intrapersonal factors - focuses on affective and interactive indicators of social presence, such as humour, inclusive or engaging language, fostering group cohesion. When the focus is on L2 learning, Larsen-Freeman (2019) claims that although it occurs within a larger sociohistorical ecology, it is ultimately shaped by the actions of agentive learners in specific contexts, with particular goals and collaborators. In this vein, Gao (2010), concluded that agency arises from the balanced interaction of contextual affordances and learners' strategic choices.

Agency is not a personal attribute, but a relationship between learners and what their context affords (Driver et al., 2021). When given meaningful interactions and favourable conditions, learners may start to feel responsible for their own learning, by taking initiative and learning from mistakes while developing the ability to adapt and persevere to overcome obstacles and create opportunities to learn. Such actions and more or less deliberate decisions influence participation and learning, understood as "the development of increasingly effective ways of dealing with the world and its meanings" (van Lier, 2000, pp. 246-247). Parallel to this, Mercer

(2011) distinguishes between feeling agentive and acting agentively, which involves the choice to engage and participate actively or, conversely, to intentionally refrain from participation or action. This is why this study focuses on how learners enact agency in interactions (not how agentive they feel) through the use of interactional resources.

## METHODOLOGY

This study draws on data from a transnational classroom proposal involving two groups of secondary students—one from Catalonia and one from Greece. The students participated in a telecollaboration and mobility project conducted in English, as part of a larger collaborative research project and innovation teaching initiative (DATE Project). The classroom project aimed to provide Catalan adolescents aged 14-15 from a state high school in the Barcelona metropolitan area with meaningful opportunities to use and engage in English during the different stages of the classroom project. The initiative engaged an entire cohort of approximately 50 Catalan students and a class of around 30 Greek students from a partner school, with 10 selected Catalan students later joining the full Greek group for a trip to Greece. The focus is on the plurilingual peer interactions that emerged during the preparation and execution of some specific group tasks. These tasks were carried out collaboratively by both classes, under the support of two Catalan teachers—one also serving as the researcher—and a Greek teacher. Specific participants for each interaction are provided in the corresponding sections of the analysis.

Adopting an ethnographic single-case design, the study employs Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine how learners participate in the *task-as-process*, as opposed to analysing *task-as-workplan* (Breen, 1989; Seedhouse, 1999, 2005), within the sociointeractionist perspective (Mondada & Pekarek-Doehler, 2004). CA is regarded as a powerful tool to analyse how learners display agency (Bui & Filipi, 2024) to capture not only what participants say but especially how they say it.

Due to CA's detailed attention to turn-taking, sequence organisation, and the contextual flow of interactions (Sacks et al., 1974), extended excerpts are often necessary, since breaking these excerpts into smaller segments could disrupt the sequential coherence essential for understanding how the interaction unfolds. The transcription process is fundamental in CA, as it acts as the bridge between naturally occurring interactions and their analysis. Fine-grained transcriptions are essential for capturing the features of talk (i.e. pauses, overlaps, intonation, stress,

and non-verbal cues), which are fundamental for understanding turn-taking, sequence organization, and how participants negotiate meaning and, in this case, display agency. For this matter, we have used the transcriptions conventions developed by GREIP (Research Group for Education, Interaction and Plurilingualism), following the ones proposed by (Jefferson, 2004). We use (*italics*) for the researchers' comments and simple *italics* for the translation of the turns produced in Catalan or Spanish, all in shaded writing. To distinguish the languages used by the participants, we use **bold** for Catalan, *italics* for Spanish, and plain text for English. Anonymity and permissions were ensured.

### Research objectives

The study aims to achieve two main objectives to understand learners' participation and agency in task-based interactions:

The first objective is to explore how learners organise their participation in interaction, by engaging in the 'Social Participation Structure' (SPS) and collaboratively constructing the task through the 'Academic Task Structure' (ATS). A key focus is to identify how learners prioritise *progressivity* – ensuring the task moves forward–, while maintaining *intersubjectivity* – for mutual understanding. To achieve this, we investigate how learners structure their participation: What discursive actions do they use to balance task progressivity and intersubjectivity? By analysing participants' discursive actions, we aim to uncover the procedures they use to effectively manage and advance their interaction.

The second objective is to explore how learners' agency emerges in interaction across its *behavioural*, *cognitive*, and *relational* dimensions. Specifically, we explore how agency is reflected in their discursive actions. In this regard, we seek to answer: How do learners show their agency in interaction, and what role does it play in shaping participation and collaboration? What interactional resources do they use to organise participation, co-construct meaning, and build up relational bond?

Our analysis adopts an emic perspective, examining learners' decisions and resource use as displayed in the interaction. We will use Masats's (2008) *Task Execution Frame*, which categorizes actions as "doing the task", "managing the task", and "overcoming trouble", to articulate our analysis.

## ANALYSIS

The analysis is divided into two sections, illustrating the different scenarios the learners were exposed to. Excerpt 1 shows an online interaction between Catalan and Greek students, while excerpt 2 corresponds to a face-to-face group task during their time in Greece.

### The virtual encounter

In excerpt 1, some Catalan students (KAI, JOE, and SAM) and Greek students (MAR and ELE) meet online via Facebook Messenger. Their task is to discuss previously exchanged videos about local attractions. The students interact using an iPad and maintain visual and audio contact throughout, although the recording used for data transcription only included video of the Catalan students; the Greek students are heard but not seen due to the camera placement. Present in the session are the Catalan teacher-researcher (CAT TEACH), the Greek teacher (GREEK TEACH), who supervises the students in Greece, and a Catalan project volunteer (CAT VOL). Specially accountable is:

(a) how KAI takes initiative in organizing the interaction, self-allocating turns, and managing technical issues and disruptions to ensure understanding; and

(b) how agency emerges through KAI'S actions, involving peers, addressing challenges, and constructs turns combining task completion with spontaneous social interaction.

#### Excerpt 1. A virtual connection

- |    |              |  |
|----|--------------|--|
| 1  | CAT TEACH:   | <b>Vale, presenteu-vos (.) digueu HELLO/(.)</b> [my name is I don't know]<br>((ok (.) introduce yourselves (.) say HELLO/(.) [my name is I don't know])) |
| 2  | KAI:         | ok   |
| 3  | VOL:         | [my name is nananá]  |
| 4  | KAI:         | =HELLO GIRLS   |
| 5  | CAT VOL:     | =Hello girls (.) hahaha<br>((the other boys laugh too))  |
| 6  | KAI:         | [*ponte para aquí que no se te ve*] ((the other two boys get closer))<br>(((°Come closer that you can't be seen°)))                                      |
| 7  | GREEK TEACH: | [You are the one that wants to be a politician: right/]  |
| 8  | CAT TEACH:   | ((coming closer to the screen)) [=you are the/   |
| 9  | JOE:         | [no se escucha<br>((=we can't hear))   |
| 10 | GREEK TEACH: | =you are the one who wants to be a politician: when you xxx  |
| 11 | CAT TEACH:   | ((pointing at KAI: and smiling)) [=yes he wants to be a politician:  |

- 12 KAI: [YES I want to be a politicia:n  
 13 CAT TEACH: =yes (.) well done Greek teacher  
 14 KAI: ((laughs))  
 15 CAT TEACH: ((trying to find a better position for the iPad screen)) **a veure quina cosa (.) com ho aguantó això/**  
 16 ((let's see (.) how can I hold this right/))  
 17 CAT VOL: **=ja (.) és que no sé com es posa això** ((she touches the ipad too and puts a bottle behind the iPad to hold it upright))  
 ((= ok (.) the thing is that I don't know how to place it))  
 ((some indiscernible voices from the Greek participants))  
 18  
 19 KAI: **We have technical problems sorry** ((cupping his hands to project his voice))  
 20 CAT TEACH: **=ara ho veieu bé/**  
 ((=can you see well now/))  
 21 KAI: [sí]  
 22 JOE: [sí]  
 23 CAT VOL: **a veure (.) si us tireu una mica enrere hi cabreu tots (.)** ((the boys move backwards a bit)) **més**  
 24 **més** ((they move a little more backwards))  
 25 ((let's see (.) if you move backwards a little, everyone will fit))  
**perfecte** ((puts her thumb up)) xxx  
 ((perfect))  
 26 KAI: o:k (0.2)  
 27 ((some indiscernible voices from the Greek participants))  
 28 KAI: HELLO GIRLS (.) what are your names/  
 29 MAR My name is xxx  
 30 ELE: I am eleni xx  
 31 KAI:/JOE/SAM: ((nod and smile))  
 32 KAI: OK NICE TO MEET YOU  
 ((they all laugh loud))  
 34 KAI: MY NAME IS KAI: ((putting his hand on his chest))  
 35 JOE: °My name is jose° ((putting his hand on his chest))  
 36 SAM °My name is sam° ((with his hand in his pocket))  
 37 CAT TEACH: °Speak up speak up° ((moving her hands upwards, standing behind the group))  
 38 CAT VOL: =louder louder ((moving her hands upwards))  
 39 CAT TEACH: =You need to speak up  
 40 CAT VOL: °que si no no se sent°  
 °otherwise they can't hear you°  
 41 KAI: =OK  
 42 CAT TEACH: well (.) °joe and sam especially° yeah/  
 43 You are fine kai: hahaha  
 (0.3)  
 45 KAI: Do you have any question/  
 46 GREEK VOL: your names/ (.) kai: and the other two/  
 [...] ((others arrive and some distraction))  
 47 KAI: ((facing the screen and ((cupping his hands to project his voice))  
 Ok so:: the teachers told me that we have to talk abo::ut places to visit here (.) right/

KAI's discursive actions reveal how he organises participation, manages disruptions, and fosters collaborative engagement. To start with, KAI follows the teachers' instructions (l.1, 3), but he does not reproduce the whole pre-set sentence provided by the teachers and adapts it, opting for a more spontaneous response, "HELLO GIRLS" (l.4), delivered in a loud, vibrant voice to overcome sound difficulties. This turn meets the task's requirements, as far as KAI understands them within the ATS, but it goes beyond the mere task execution by resembling a more spontaneous social interaction (developing SPS). This turn demonstrates KAI's agency at the three levels: self-allocating the first turn (behavioural), constructing the turn balancing task advancement with spontaneity (cognitive), and using a lively greeting to engage participants socially, denoting social presence (relational).

Following the volunteer's amused reactions (l.5), KAI's agency can be indexed again when he asks his classmate to move closer to the camera (l.6), an action to 'manage the task' and ensure all participants are included and have access to the task at hand, thus prioritising social equity and collaboration over immediate task efficiency.

As the interaction faces technical disruptions—when the iPad falls and prompts the teacher to try to place it back to a suitable position—KAI quickly responds with a self-allocated turn, addressing the Greek participants to provide both an explanation and an apology for the situation (l.19). His orientation to intersubjectivity is evident here, as he strives to reintegrate the Greek participants, who were momentarily excluded, back into the interaction. His verbal and non-verbal cues (cupping his hands to project his voice) reinforce his effort to maintain mutual understanding across both ends of the virtual interaction. Once the technical issues are resolved, KAI focuses once again on the task's progressivity, restoring the original objective of 'doing the task', by recycling his initial turn from line 4. He does so (l.28) by expanding it, selecting the Greek participants at the other end, and addressing them with a direct question. Their response (l.29&30) triggers another natural, spontaneous turn (l.32). Here, KAI effectively simulates ordinary conversation (aligning with the SPS), while reinforcing his agentive role by demonstrating social presence and relational engagement. Immediately afterwards, without any previous direct prompt, KAI self-allocates another turn (l.34), states his name, and emphasizes the gesture by placing his hand on his chest—an action mirrored by JOE and, to a lesser extent, by SAM, who simply states his name. The sequence concludes with KAI's final agentive contributions. On the one hand, his assertive question, "do you have any question/" (l.45), revealing his effort to continue 'doing the task' and resume the interaction after a disruption caused by some

unexpected students entering the room, underscores his self-assigned responsibility for following the initial instruction and, therefore, maintaining the task's progressivity. The same applies to turn 47, when in another attempt to 'manage the task', by explicitly recalling the instructions to restart and advance the task. Yet, as in earlier turns (l.6, l.19), KAI demonstrates a resilient effort to preserve intersubjectivity, keeping all participants engaged and maintaining mutual understanding.

KAI's behaviour illustrates a dynamic balance between a preference for task progression with intersubjectivity, as he successfully manages participation, adapts to challenges, and maintains mutual understanding among participants. His self-initiated turns, spontaneous responses, and efforts to include all participants show that agency is not only about meeting the task objectives but also about creating and maintaining participant engagement.

### A face-to-face interaction

Excerpt 2 captures an episode of the face-to-face encounter during the Catalan students' trip to Greece. It captures the first five minutes of the task in which two Catalan students (KAI and MIA) and two Greek students (IAN and SIA) form a group for a 15-minute open-ended discussion (with minimal instructions) on cultural topics. We observe how learners attempt to bring up various topics to meet the task's requirements based on their understanding of the ATS and the broader ecology of the activity. For clarity, excerpt 2 is divided into three parts (2a, 2b & 2c).

This excerpt illustrates how learners engage in open-ended task-based interaction at the time they face challenges such as topic management, linguistic mediation and some moments of misalignment. Notably, MIA and KAI display agency through their efforts to 'do the task', 'manage the task' and 'overcome trouble' (Masats, 2008), striving to maintain progressivity without neglecting intersubjectivity. The excerpt is a good example their collaboration, topic initiation, repair and reformulation, showing learners' strategic decisions and their ability to adapt to the evolving circumstances of the task and the interaction.

#### Excerpt 2a

- 1 MIA: o:h (.) o:k (0.2) a:nd the typical sport o:f of Spain i:s footba:ll
- 2 KAI: =yes (.) football it's very famous (.)
- 3 MIA: yes
- 4 IAN: yes
- 5 KAI: =soccer

- 6 IAN: =messi  
 7 ((all laughing))  
 8 KAI: messi (.) piqué: (.) and these people  
 9 [yes  
 10 MIA: [yes (..) *cómo se dice de qué equipo eres/ ((looking at KAI))*  
*how do you say what team do you support/*  
 11 KAI: e:hm (..) do you have any:: (.) you are in any::  
 12 MIA: [e:hm any:: team  
 13 KAI: any football team/  
 14 IAN: =us/  
 15 MIA: =yes  
 16 IAN: a::: (.) yes I guess (.) I'm in the football team (.) of our school  
 17 KAI: yes  
 18 IAN: and Sia is not (.) hahaha °she doesn't play football°  
 19 SIA: °no (.) I don't°  
 20 KAI: =and do you like like any specific club/ (.) I don't know like for example (.) Barça: (.) madrid/  
 21 IAN: I'm gonna be xxxx <I don't (.) watch (.) a lot (.) of football (.) but (.)> I do like Barcelona  
 22 KAI: A::... ((clapping)) BARÇA (.) **força Barça**  
 23 MIA: [no (.) a mi is Atletico de madrid  
 24 KAI: =She's atletico

As in excerpt 1, the excerpt starts with a clear preference for progressivity, with MIA self-selecting to introduce a new topic (l.1), moving the task forward by transitioning from one subject - not provided in the transcript ('typical' fast food)- to another (football as a 'typical' sport in Spain). The shift of topic, though thematically unrelated, demonstrates MIA's understanding of the task objective, which involves engaging in an exchange of typical practices and activities from their respective cultures and countries. In response, KAI builds on MIA's turn, expanding (l.2) and providing another word to clarify the discussion (l.5: soccer), which supports the task's progression. One of the Greek participants, IAN, references a well-known public figure (l.6: messi), thus showing alignment with the other participants by making a contribution to the communicative exchange so that the interaction keeps progressing. These actions reflect the participants' active orientation towards advancing the task while maintaining intersubjectivity as they join forces (Smit, 2010) engaging in cooperative work.

We then see how MIA, again aligned with the task goal, is determined to expand the topic she has initiated. However, to do so, she must first 'overcome trouble', requiring an intralinguistic mediation to navigate the challenge (l.10: yes (..) *cómo se dice de qué equipo eres/*). She does so producing a side sequence in Spanish with a participant-related code-switch addressed to KAI. In response to

her collaboration request, KAI takes a second to construct a turn in which he attempts to capture the idea put forward by MIA (l.11). A moment of hesitation, however, gives MIA a cue and an evident transition-relevance place (TRP) for stepping in and completing his sentence (l.12). This candidate completion, together with the reaffirmation in the next turn produced by KAI (l.13), illustrates their will to collaborate to build 'shared understanding' and can be seen as a first-order interactional necessity in the process of aligning the speaker's intention with the listener's interpretation, which, at the same time, could be interpreted as a preference for progressivity. Her subsequent request for help (in Spanish) from KAI (l.10) to 'overcome trouble' reveals her cognitive awareness of the need for linguistic support to achieve task goals, and also her determination to ensure mutual understanding. KAI's response, though hesitant, reveals his willingness to collaboratively build the required meaning (l.11-13), further demonstrating a strong enactment of learner agency through co-construction and turn-taking.

Despite the Catalan learners' efforts to make themselves understood, an explicit breakdown in intersubjectivity temporarily halts the interaction as the task cannot progress. The question co-constructed by the Catalan learners in turns 11-13 does not correspond exactly to the question posed in Spanish by MIA. On the other hand, and probably as a result of this not very accurate translation, the question is not answered immediately by the Greek participants because a clarification is required by IAN before doing so (l.14). It is then when we observe that IAN has misinterpreted the question and, instead of answering the question about the football team they support, he provides some information about the football team they play in, not only by saying he plays in his school football team (line 16), but also answering on behalf of SIA (l.18), the other Greek student, who, according to IAN does not play football at all (which is confirmed by SIA herself in l.19). At this point, KAI, rather than pointing out IAN's misinterpretation directly, chooses to strategically reformulate MIA's original turn (l.20), presenting it as a natural continuation of the interaction. He does it without pointing out the breakdown but 'making it normal' with an introductory "and" (l.20) to reinforce the impression that it is just another related topic being added to continue 'doing the task'. This discursive action reveals an enactment of the learner's cognitive agency for the way the turn is strategically constructed, but we can also identify the will to preserve the interlocutor's face to avoid underscoring the loss of intersubjectivity, which can be traced as the enactment of relational agency.

A similar mechanism, to avoid drawing attention to a loss of intersubjectivity or an inaccurate grammatical form (as is the case), is observed in turns 23-24,

when KAI reformulates a plurilingual turn produced by MIA (l.23) without highlighting any specific problem, thus ‘making it normal’ by just reformulating the sentence with a parallel structure. Likewise, as the interaction unfolds in Excerpt 2b, some other challenges to intersubjectivity also become relevant, particularly when cultural references are not immediately recognised. The next part explores the procedures learners employ to face these challenges.

## Excerpt 2b

- 38 MIA: a::nd typica:l sport of Greece/  
 39 KAI: =yes  
 40 IAN: ah...now/ (.) basketball has become more popular (.) because of iannis antetokoumpo/ (..) the very famous player/  
 41 KAI: =ye:ah\  
 42 MIA: °o:k°  
 43 IAN: =recently he gained a lot of fame and he's (.) he's from greece and he's very good  
 44 KAI: [o:k]  
 45 MIA: [o:k]  
 46 IAN: he's a: (.) they say he's the second lebron james  
 47 MIA: =[oh]  
 48 KAI: [oh]  
 49 TEACH: he's the second/  
 50 IAN: lebron james/  
 51 TEACH: ah (.) the second lebron james/  
 52 IAN: yeah (.) well like  
 53 KAI: =we have pau gasol that it's very good  
 54 MIA: =yeah (.) pau gasol in the: basketball  
 55 IAN: I don't know him but  
 56 MIA: =haha (..)  
 57 IAN: =but yeah ((laughing))

This excerpt illustrates how learners negotiate meaning and manage misunderstanding without explicitly underscoring breaks in intersubjectivity. An example is the breakdown that occurs after IAN mentions a famous Greek basketball player, Giannis Antetokounmpo (l.40-l.43). MIA and KAI's initial responses (l.41 & l.42) suggest they do not fully recognise the reference. Their hesitant tone, as indicated by the falling intonation and a noticeably softer volume of their turns, prompts IAN to produce another turn to offer additional information in an attempt to ‘overcome trouble’ and to clarify his point. MIA and KAI, however, react with a confirmation check (again with a hesitant soft intonation) but do not expand further as they had otherwise done earlier. In response to that reaction, the Greek learner continues to provide some more information so that they become aware of the

importance of the public figure and his impact on Greek basketball (1.43 & 1.46). IAN also includes a reference to Lebron James to help clarify the reference. It is then when KAI finally seems to grasp the relevance of Antetokounmpo by referencing a comparable figure from Spanish basketball (Pau Gasol), restoring ‘shared understanding’ through cultural equivalence. Unlike MIA and KAI, IAN explicitly recognises that he does not know Pau Gasol and ends his turn with a ‘but yeah’ (1.57), meaning he grasps the parallelism. These are then two ways of facing an upcoming breakdown in mutual understanding. In the first case, the Catalan learners seem to prioritise progressivity rather than insisting on clarifying the exact message delivered in IAN’s turn, whereas in the second case, IAN openly acknowledges the gap. In both cases, however, participants avoid directly misunderstanding, which could be attributed to the preference to not threaten each other’s face. This sequence not only illustrates the learners’ active role in negotiating meaning but also their strategic use of cultural knowledge to sustain the conversation and ensure progressivity.

Turn 58 (2c) opens the last sequence of our analysis, which we have differentiated from the previous because a new topic is introduced.

#### Excerpt 2c

- 58 MIA: *a ver (.) qué más*  
 ((let's see (.) what else))
- 59 KAI: =I don't know (.) mhm (0.2)
- 60 KAI: here (.) you have a government on the region or it's just on the central government
- 61 IAN: again\
- 62 KAI: do you have any specific government on your region/ (.) of chrysoupoli or
- 63 IAN: =like/
- 64 KAI: [or it's only in athens/
- 65 IAN: to go:: where\
- 66 KAI: I don't know for example (.) in our country we have the government of catalonia (.) and the government of spain
- 67
- 68 MIA: =yes yes
- 69 KAI: it's like autonon:mical
- 70 IAN: =oh::
- 71 KAI: =do you have it here or no/
- 72 IAN: yes (.) ok (.) we have the:: president of chrysoupolis (.) for example
- 73 KAI: =yeah
- 74 IAN: =but then we have the president of whole Greece (.)

75	KAI:	and do you have like different/ (.) and and do	MIA: ((to the teacher that has just approached)) <i>ah y que no gobiernan en grecia en plan que no gobiernan en grecia solo tienen (.) en plan en cada pueblo solo tienen un presidente y ya está</i> <i>oh and that they do not rule in Greece like they do not rule in Greece they only have (.) like in every town they only have one president and that's it</i>
76		you have li:ke	
77			
78			
79	KAI:	=and do you have like a president of xxx how	TEACHER: a mayor
80		it's called this region/	
81	IAN:	it's (.)there is a president that (.) is for the whole Greece	
82	KAI:	=yes/	
83	IAN:	and that is mitsotakis the (.) a new president (.) and that is for the whole Greece (.)	
84			MIA: ((addressing the teacher that has approached)) <i>ah yes ah que sí que tienen</i> <i>((ah yes oh they do have it))</i>

We now focus on how learners collaboratively manage task progression and overcome challenges to mutual understanding, demonstrating their agency through their observable decisions and discursive moves. The excerpt begins with MIA's attempt to 'manage the task' by self-initiating a new topic and inviting others to participate, which marks the beginning of a complex exchange including both a main and a parallel side sequence (marked with shadowed text). The analysis highlights how KAI keeps working to overcome a breakdown in understanding by adapting his explanations and providing culturally relevant examples. Parallely, we observe how MIA is able to identify, acknowledge, and repair her own misinterpretation in a side sequence (marked in shadowed text).

As noted, MIA is again responsible for making the task move forward in a clear attempt to 'manage the task'. This time, with a turn in Spanish, clearly addressed to KAI, she invites him to collaboratively think of more topics to be brought to the interaction (l.58: *a ver (.) qué más*: let's see (.) what else). In response to her invitation and after a hesitant turn, KAI produces a turn in which he comes up with a new topic (l.60). This turn, however, opens quite a challenging sequence that will put the task on hold and that is especially relevant for our analysis because we see how learners collaboratively succeed in 'overcoming trouble' and co-constructing meaning, despite the initial struggle for mutual understanding. To make himself understood, KAI takes multiple turns (66, 69, 71, 75 and 79), reformulating his explanation and offering examples specific to the Greek context, in an effort to facilitate understanding. His persistence and adaptability reflect a strong

behavioral and cognitive engagement with the task, as he continuously self-allocates turns and deploys different discursive procedures to resolve the understanding. This episode features the learners' ability to 'overcome trouble' consisting of a lack of understanding, and to collaboratively co-construct meaning, even when the interaction is temporarily put on hold.

Another accountable episode is the side sequence occurring alongside the main sequence. While KAI and IAN compare governments in Spain and Greece (l.75-83), SHEI and a Catalan teacher hold a separate exchange (l.76-84). MIA, in a parallel sequence with the Catalan teacher (l.75-79 & 84), misinterprets part of the conversation, initially reporting incorrect information about the Greek political system (l.76-78). However, she re-engages with the main sequence and successfully repairs her previous statement (line 84), demonstrating her agency by acknowledging, repairing and voicing her misunderstanding.

Overall, the sequence reveals how MIA's participation is primarily oriented toward task advancement, as she frequently initiates new topics, while KAI's efforts are more focused on achieving mutual understanding, often through strategic reformulations and clarifications. Both learners exhibit strong agency, using a variety of discursive procedures to co-construct meaning and ensure the task's progress, despite momentary disruptions and occasional communication challenges.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Through a detailed analysis of the *task-as-process* (Breen, 1989) of two different communicative scenarios from a socioconstructivist perspective (Hellerman, 2007; Lantolf, 2000), this study demonstrates that learner agency dynamically shapes how learners organise participation. By analysing learners' participation in task-based interactions, we observe how participants balance *progressivity* (Schegloff, 2006) and *intersubjectivity* (Heritage, 2007) to co-construct meaning, adapt to challenges, and maintain mutual understanding throughout the discursive actions they take part in.

In the virtual connection (excerpt 1), the analysis reveals how learners display agency by managing participation and addressing the constraints of the online setting. We can specially observe this in KAI's discursive actions, which underscore his agency on the three levels Larsen-Freeman (2019) describes. Cognitively, he constructs his turns to adapt his responses to the other participants with different available resources. Behaviourally, he (self-)allocates turns, greeting participants spontaneously and addressing disruptions to manage the task flow. Finally, his

relational agency emerges through discursive moves aimed at fostering group cohesion by ensuring all participants remain engaged and included. KAI's strategic moves show that agency extends beyond meeting the task objectives (ATS) to foster a natural and socially engaging interaction (SPS) (Erickson, 1982, 2004). His use of spontaneous and socially oriented turns (as in l.19, l.28, l.32, l.45, l.47; e1), therefore, demonstrates how learner agency serves not only to achieve the academic objectives of the task — which aligns with the preference for progressivity — but also to maintain social presence and ensure equal participation among participants — which could be understood as a need for intersubjectivity. In this vein, the virtual nature of the meeting adds complexity to the situation and, at some point, even some confusion, but the learners' adaptability and determination shows their ability to adjust to the limitations of the online medium while, once again, finding the right balance between progressivity and intersubjectivity. These findings align with Firth's (1996) concepts of 'let it pass' and 'make it normal', as learners prioritize task progress over minor breakdowns or unidiomatic forms, allowing the interaction to continue to advance naturally whenever possible.

In the face-to-face interaction (excerpt 2), the analysis offers a clear example of learner agency enactment as learners collaborate and collectively scaffold each other (Donato, 1994) to meet the requirements of the task. The interplay between the tasks progress and mutual understanding is especially visible when the students encounter communication breakdowns, i.e. breakages in mutual understanding in different episodes of the sequence (l.11-21 (2a); 40-52 (2b); 60-83 (2c)). In this case, agency is displayed through rephrasing, clarification (in the form of candidate completion (Firth, 1996) and cultural comparisons to 'overcome trouble', which enabled learners to co-construct meaning despite temporary interruptions of the interaction. KAI's strategic reformulation of MIA's turn to preserve the flow of interaction in line 20 (e2a), without underlining her peer's misinterpretation, is a clear demonstration of his cognitive and relational agency. This, together with the frequent allocation of new topics by MIA (e.g. l.1(2a), 38(2b), 58(2c)), in order to continue 'doing the task', shows how the learners navigate the requirements of completing the tasks while maintaining social cohesion.

In both scenarios, learner agency appears as a multidimensional, adaptive construct—behavioural, cognitive, and relational (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Bouchard & Glasgow, 2019). Behaviourally, students took initiatives in '*doing*' and '*managing the task*', and '*overcoming trouble*' (according to Masats' (2008) categorisation) through turn-taking and self-allocating turns and topics, and taking the responsibility for carrying out the task. Cognitively, they deploy their strategic skills

when they adapt their turns and linguistic use to their addressees, incorporate plurilingual resources or extend or modify their contributions beyond the teacher's initial prompt. Their relational agency emerges in their efforts to maintain group cohesion and engagement through humour, reformulations to avoid pointing out misunderstandings, ensuring equitable participation and face-saving strategies to preserve intersubjectivity. These actions show that the learner's agency is not fixed but shaped by the context and expressed dynamically (Mercer, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2019), adapting to the emerging characteristics of every communicative event.

Learner interactions reveal discursive actions orient toward progressivity, intersubjectivity, or both. Actions ensuring the task moves forward, such as topic allocation and management, proactive turn-taking, candidate completions (Firth, 1996) or the unsolicited expansion of teacher prompts are key to preserving *progressivity*. In contrast, reformulations of others' contributions, face-saving strategies, and the use of gestures or humour help maintain mutual understanding and engagement, i.e. *intersubjectivity*.

Finally, our study reveals that learner agency is central to second language learning, especially in plurilingual peer-led task-based interactions, where students have to participate in interactions which are both task-related and social. In this context, balancing progressivity and intersubjectivity when participating in task-based interactions is crucial, because learners have to address both the academic task objectives and the social aspects of the interaction, aligning with the duality between the ATS and the SPS discussed by Erickson (2004). Offering learners the opportunity to engage in task-based interactions with peers (without direct teacher mediation), in which they are given the autonomy to work on tasks freely, exploring linguistic forms and taking risks (Masats, 2008; Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2000), may promote an atmosphere where mutual understanding and task progress are equally prioritised. This may, in turn, encourage learners to become responsible for their own learning process, thus, become more agentic, allowing them not only work to complete tasks successfully, but also grow in their ability to communicate effectively and cooperatively across linguistic boundaries, beyond the mere availability of linguistic forms. As Pekarek-Doehler and Pochon-Berger (2015) argue, what evolves over time as part of learners' interactional competence, and thus their ability to interact socially in a L2, is not so much the access to linguistic forms, but the emergence of new interactional purposes for using them. Finally, the study suggests that presenting learners with spaces to engage in peer interactions where they are given the opportunity to participate autonomously and collaboratively in tasks

can lead to richer and more effective learning experiences (Pratginestós, 2022; Pratginestós & Masats, 2024).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank all the learners and members of the two school communities who made this study both possible and deeply enriching. This contribution was produced under the auspices of the PhD in Education programme at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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Pratginestós, C. (2025). Examining Learner Agency in Plurilingual Peer Interactions: Managing Participation in Virtual and Face-to-Face Tasks. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 18(3), e1461. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.1461>



Rebut / Recibido / Received / Reçu: 16-12-2024  
Acceptat / Aceptado / Accepted / Accepté: 25-04-2025

<https://revistes.uab.cat/jtl3/>

### 4.3. Synthesis and Findings of the Publications

While each publication in the compendium addresses its own distinct questions and contexts, together they form a coherent body of work as their findings relate to the three topics selected in this broader study. This section first presents an overview of the four publications that make up the compendium, outlining their respective focus, theoretical frameworks, and research contexts (see Table 4 below). Then it summarizes the contributions of each publication to the study of participation, language choice and agency enactment.

Title	Main Focus	Theoretical Framework	Context
<b>Publication 1:</b> <b>Interactional Competence in Transnational Plurilingual Peer Interactions</b>	Examines how learners engage in task-based peer interaction using ELF and develop interactional competence.	Interactional Competence; Plurilingual practices; Progressivity; Intersubjectivity; CA-for-SLA (let it pass; make it normal)	Catalan and Greek students in ELF-based classroom exchanges (in-person)
<b>Publication 1b:</b> <b>Learning English in Translocal Exchanges in Instagram Chat</b>	Analyses how Instagram chat supports informal English learning and learner agency.	Learner Agency; Digital Wilds and Informal Learning; Multimodal and Plurilingual Communication; CA adapted to Instagram	Instagram interactions between Catalan and Greek students post-project
<b>Publication 2:</b> <b>Exploring Language Alternation in an 'In-Between Learning Scenario'</b>	Explores language choices in a WhatsApp group as shaping a hybrid learning scenario.	Practiced Language Policy; Situated learning; Language Choice; Medium of interaction; Membership Categorization; CA adapted to WhatsApp	WhatsApp group chat involving students and teachers planning a trip
<b>Publication 3:</b> <b>Examining Learner Agency in Plurilingual Peer Interactions</b>	Investigates learner agency in managing participation and task progress across contexts.	Socio-interactionist approach to Learning; Learner Agency (3 dimensions); Task-as-process; Progressivity; Intersubjectivity; CA-for-SLA (let it pass; make it normal)	Virtual and face-to-face task interactions during a transnational project

Table 4. Overview of the publications of the compendium

#### 4.3.1. On Participation in Plurilingual Interaction.

The four studies corroborate that learner participation was situated and shaped by the communicative affordances and characteristics of each of the analysed interactional scenarios.

Findings in Publication 1—on task-oriented classroom interactions between Greek and Catalan peers during a face-to-face encounter—reveal that learners co-construct participation through the management of turn-taking and topic development. This process unfolds around the axis of intersubjectivity (the negotiation of shared understanding, Heritage, 2007) and progressivity (the effort to keep the task moving forward, Schegloff, 2006). To maintain the task flow while addressing comprehension gaps, learners employed interactional procedures such as let it pass and make it normal (Firth, 1996), together with multimodal and embodied scaffolding. These resources enabled them to manage actual communication breakdowns or even prevent potential ones. The findings also reveal that participation in talk-in-interaction in the analysed scenario is characterised by the interplay between two complementary structures: the Social Participation Structure (SPS)—oriented to the rules of an ordinary interaction and focused on sustaining intersubjectivity—, and the Academic Task Structure (ATS), which entailed full deployment of different interactive resources to support task progressivity. At the same time, it is also shown how the balance between intersubjectivity and progressivity depends on how learners interpreted the task at hand and how they attempted to fulfil the task demands.

In Publication 1b—which examined learner interactions on Instagram during a translocal social media exchange—participation was shaped by platform norms which learners were very familiar with. Learners took profit of Instagram's affordances, including the ability to combine text and images, use emojis, and interact through comments, to engage in situated interactions by producing textual and multimodal messages—organised either as compact or split message units or turns and coordinated according to the platform requirements. These messages blended English with Catalan, Spanish and Greek in ways that promoted peer alignment and authentic

and pragmatic use of the language. The analysis of participation shows that it cannot be measured only by the amount of talk produced. Both posting and not posting are meaningful, as being silent does not necessarily mean absence or disengagement. Moreover, the density of messages posted does not determine influence, as some learners with fewer or shorter turns were the ones who initiated more topics, whereas others sustained them. Participation was also characterised by the different types of contributions, ranging from extended posts to minimal messages such as emoji, acronyms or code-switches, all of which played a significant role in the development of talk-in-interaction.

In Publication 2, participation in a WhatsApp chat evolved with time as learners renegotiated the communicative purpose of the space—which shifted from a perceived extension of classroom language practice to a tool for logistical coordination and peer connection. This evolution reshaped participation and showed learners' capacity to reinterpret interactional norms. Participation within the chat, in this case, was shaped by how learners understood the communicative space and the new community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) co-constructed within it. This scenario highlights tensions between the agendas of students and teachers, which can be seen in how participants align with each other and interpret the task at hand. Learners' participation—like their language choices (as further discussed in Section 5.1.2)—is not simply a matter of individual preference. Instead, it is socially situated and shaped by the co-interpretation of the communicative event, especially depending on who holds control over topic management. Our analysis also shows how participation was initially teacher-led—with English as the medium of interaction (as discussed in Section 5.1.2)—and task progression was also managed by the teachers. Yet, as students gained control over topic management, they also redefined participation, challenging the agreed language policy and shifting towards a plurilingual medium. Participation was thus not determined by the volume of

messages posted but by the learners' ability to select and initiate topics, negotiate norms, and sustain interaction as the control over the interaction moved from teachers to students.

Publication 3 reinforces the idea that—even across modalities (face-to-face and online)—learners prioritised shared understanding and task accomplishment, employing a range of multimodal and linguistic resources to do so. The findings show how participation unfolds in complex classroom moments, where learners co-construct interaction by drawing on their plurilingual and multimodal resources in the different scenarios of their communicative practices. Participation is linked to how learners interpret task demands, and how they align with peers, roles, and social positioning. In particular—as described in our paper—learners used embodied and plurilingual resources to manage turns and negotiate roles. The analysis also highlights that participation is dynamically shaped by learner agency, expressed cognitively, behaviourally, and relationally, as further discussed in Section 5.1.3. Learners displayed cognitive agency by adapting their turns and deploying different procedures such as rephrasing, clarification, and candidate completions; behavioural agency through self-allocating turns, initiating topics, and sustaining task progression; and relational agency, to maintain cohesion and inclusive participation through humour, reformulation, and face-saving strategies. Through these discursive actions—when engaged in doing, managing the task or overcoming trouble (Masats, 2008)—learners balanced progressivity—moving the task forward—with intersubjectivity—maintaining mutual understanding. This occurred in the different scenarios analysed, with learners adapting flexibly to the affordances and constraints of each scenario, reflecting therefore the interplay between the Academic Task Structure (ATS) and the Social Participation Structure (SPS). The findings reveal therefore that participation is collaboratively constructed equally in both physical and digital spaces—even when these are non-conventional and dislocated in time, place, or participant configuration.

#### 4.3.2. On the Dynamics of Language Choice

Language choice in the plurilingual interactions analysed throughout the four different publications was not static or predetermined, nor an individual preference, but co-constructed and dependant on the context. In this vein, language choice emerged as a strategic, socially constructed, and negotiated practice, influenced by both implicit group norms and learners' own goals.

Publication 1 demonstrated that Catalan and Greek learners deployed plurilingual resources—e.g., code-switching, literal translation—and multimodal ones—e.g. embodied scaffolding, sounds, gestures—to facilitate understanding and negotiate meaning, even when orienting to *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF), as they mostly did. Findings therefore show that learners used plurilingual resources to scaffold participation, relying on Spanish and Catalan to clarify meaning with other peers, while maintaining a general preference for English. Language use changed according to the task demands, comprehension needs, and peer's reactions.

In Publication 1b, learners thus used plurilingual practices and language alternation in Instagram posts to connect with or distance themselves from peers, depending on their communicative goals. In this vein, participants mixed languages in their posts to either foster shared understanding or to convey a secret message targeting only a specific group of participants. Besides, learners showed a high degree of plurilingual awareness, flexibly selecting the most effective semiotic—through emoji, for example—and linguistic resources to reach their communicative goals. This demonstrates that language choice in plurilingual interactions is not an individual choice alone, but a co-constructed practice shaped by the will to align with peers, as well as with the interactional norms.

In Publication 2, with an explicit focus on learners' language choice, a *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012) emerges within a WhatsApp group, in which English was initially used for practice purposes and is seen as an extension of a classroom project. Over time,

however, learners took hold of the digital space and started orienting toward Catalan or Spanish as the nature of communicative task changed—indicating that language choice followed interactional and practical needs rather than fixed individual preferences. Since language choice is a category-bound activity, closely linked to the social norms of participation, our analysis focused on how participants negotiated the *medium of interaction*. The notion of *practiced language policy* was used to demonstrate how group norms around English were negotiated and reconfigured as the interaction evolved. This process was interactive as participants decided (collaboratively but implicitly) when and why to alternate between languages, according to communicative purpose and alignment. Besides, in this particular interaction, control over topic selection—and by extension, over interactional norms—also significantly influence how language was used. When teachers led the interaction, English was dominant. Here, the *doing being teacher* identity was instrumental for language selection: when the adult participants oriented to the teacher role, language choice aligned with institutional expectations—favouring English as the *medium of interaction*, as it would have been in the original classroom they belonged to. In this way, the teacher identity was a key element in shaping language choice. Yet, as the interaction evolved, and students enacted their agency by initiating the topics or the discussions, Catalan and Spanish were used more frequently. This led to the emergence of a flexible, plurilingual mode of communication that became the new norm, implicitly accepted by all participants.

Finally, although Publication 3 does not explicitly focus on language choice, the analysis reveals that learners strategically alternated between languages to support mutual comprehension and maintain task progressivity. That is, learners' language choices were linked to peer alignment, role negotiation within the group, and interactional needs. For example, learners who participated the most tend to use English to lead the interaction, whereas others—or the same learners in different situations—used Catalan or Spanish to foster inclusion or repair

common communication breakdowns. Consequently, the study demonstrates how language use can work as a flexible resource to manage participation and collaboration effectively.

#### 4.3.3. On the Role of Agency in Language Learning

All the publications presented in this dissertation treat agency as a dynamic, and multidimensional phenomenon that is influenced by learners' objectives, identities, and their available resources to manage interaction, although not all of them discuss it explicitly. Agency in our study is understood not simply as an individual choice, but as relational, responsive to context, and multidimensional. Therefore, it is an interactional process that depends on learners' ability to position themselves, shape the interaction, and express their identities rather than just being a question of personal choice.

Although Publication 1 did not explicitly analyse agency, learners' strategic use of resources and their commitment to making the tasks progress—even under challenging conditions—reflected agentic behaviour. More specifically, learners showed their agency by asking for clarification, maintaining peer alignment despite difficulties, and managing task progression. They therefore demonstrated their ability to shape interaction by sustaining shared understanding (intersubjectivity) and maintaining task orientation (progressivity).

Publication 1b explicitly examined learner agency demonstrating how students actively shaped their learning experiences within a social media context, particularly within one-to-one and group Instagram chats. The analysis of the Instagram interactions that emerged spontaneously from a translocal exchange project between learners in Catalonia and Greece reveals that learner agency plays a key role in shaping participation outside formal and more conventional educational contexts. In the absence of teacher mediation, learners took initiative in selecting topics, managing turn-taking, and co-constructing meaning through *English as a lingua franca*. Their agency was enacted *behaviourally* through posting and turn management; *cognitively* through strategic language use, adaptation of turns, and integration of various

resources; and *relationally* through the use of emojis, humour, and inclusive discourse practices. These modes of participation reflect the learners' dynamic ability to adapt to the demands of informal digital communication, and to negotiate shared understanding despite linguistic limitations. The constraints of the Instagram platform—such as the limited possibility to follow the message thread—and its affordances—such as the use of multimodal elements—encouraged learners to organise interaction creatively through message units that combined text, image, and emoji. This had an impact on how agency was expressed. Besides, it is to highlight that learners' participation in Instagram chats—as shown in our analysis—was not simply about interacting: it was also about constructing meaning, creating social bonds, and representing oneself. The analysis shows that learners demonstrated agency by initiating communication and deciding how and when to participate to better align with their own objectives. The way learners interacted within the platform—which they were familiar with—fostered learner agency by offering them a space where they could have the control over participation, experiment with language use—taking risks when needed—, and engage in a meaningful real-world interaction beyond the limitations of a traditional classroom setting.

Publication 2 did not explicitly focus on agency, but it can still be identified in the interaction analysed. Findings highlighted how learners challenged communicative norms—e.g., maintaining the use of English—and redefined the WhatsApp interaction. This change involved a redefinition of participant roles, a strategic alternation between languages, and a challenge of the initial top-down structure of interaction. Learners' agency became particularly evident in how they restructured group collaboration and power distribution, and how they showed control over the communicative space. Instead of remaining passive, they deployed agency by redefining the chat's communicative purpose, negotiating language uses, and renegotiating participation norms to suit their needs and goals better. These agentic actions reflected a

growing sense of control over the process, demonstrating how digital spaces can enable learners to cooperatively negotiate meaning and roles in ways that go far beyond the classroom doors.

Publication 3 explicitly examined agency across its *behavioural, cognitive, and relational* dimensions, demonstrating that agency is dynamic and dependant on the context. Learners enacted agency not only in choosing languages or engaging with tasks, but also in projecting future identities—for instance, in selecting English as means to prepare for future travel or study experience abroad. This aligns with a view that understands agency as being socially embedded, forward-looking, and shaped by learners' broader life trajectories (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). At the same time, in the analysis of the classroom interaction, agency could be traced by examining how learners positioned themselves in relation to their peers. Some learners maintained a regular presence and led the task management, while others enacted agency in a different manner: for instance, by participating little or withdrawing from the interaction. This shows that agency is not only about participation, but also about how learners negotiate roles and engage or refuse to participate. Moreover, the study shows that agency is especially relevant in peer plurilingual task-based interactions, where learners must simultaneously try to meet academic task objectives and care for interpersonal relationships. In doing so, they need to find balance between the demands of the *Academic Task Structure (ATS)* and the *Social Participation Structure (SPS)* (Erickson, 2004). Finally, in peer interactions without the immediate teacher's intervention—as is mostly the case of the interactions analysed—it has been proven that when learners are given the autonomy to explore linguistic forms, they take risks to co-construct meaning (Masats, 2008; Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2000), and they also demonstrate an ability to balance progressivity with intersubjectivity.

# ■ CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

- Theoretical contributions
- Methodological Contributions
- Pedagogical Contributions
- Challenges, Limitations and Directions for Future Research
- Concluding Remarks

## 5. CONCLUSIONS: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The present thesis by compendium of publications is situated within the field of language education and adopts a sociocultural perspective on learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, among others). Here learning is understood as a socially situated practice, as it unfolds in a specific context, and is mediated by cultural tools and practices. In language education, this means that developing competence is inseparable from the communicative situations in which learners participate. This view aligns with the belief supported by the strong socio-interactionist perspective (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004) which holds that interaction is the basic site of communicative activities and, consequently, of learning. Collaboration in task-based activities offers a particularly relevant context for studying interaction, especially peer interaction, as it represents a structured but still open space in which learners engage in problem-solving, negotiation of meaning, and co-construction of knowledge. As exposed in the four studies included in this compendium, these interactions do not only provide opportunities for learners to co-construct meaning (Long, 1996; Swain, 2000) but also foster language learning as learners strategically draw on their plurilingual repertoires, making their own language choices, as scaffolding mechanisms to participate in the target language and complete cognitive and communicative tasks (Llompert-Esbert et al., 2020). These practices highlight the important role of plurilingual resources but also illustrate how the organisation of participation—through turn-taking, peer and/or task alignment, and coordination of actions—is a key mechanism for engaging in talk-in-interaction and co-constructing opportunities for learning. In addition, the way learners organise participation highlights how learners enact agency and take an active role in shaping their own learning trajectories (van Lier, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2019).

Building on these general frameworks and having presented the core of this thesis through the four publications that make up this compendium, this section now aims to discuss the key findings in an integrated matter in relation to the overarching objective of our study and to the

research questions that guided it (see Section 1.2).

The conclusions presented here highlight the contributions of the thesis in three interrelated dimensions –theoretical, methodological and pedagogical. These three dimensions are presented in separate sections because they outline the different but complementary ways in which the study contributes to both the academic and professional fields, as it advances the theoretical understanding in second language learning, it adapts and refines a research approach, and it finally offers some insights on the teaching practice. To do so, Section 5.1 addresses the research questions and discusses the theoretical contributions of the study to the field of research in SLA. Section 5.2 outlines the methodological contributions of our research apparatus, including the adaptation of CA conventions to the analysis of digital-mediated scenarios and the identification and description of a hybrid learning scenario. Section 5.3 addresses the pedagogical implications of the findings and offers some specific recommendations for teachers. Additionally, Section 5.4 provides a brief reflection on the study’s challenges, limitations, and directions for future research.

## **5.2. Theoretical Contributions**

This section discusses the theoretical contributions of the study, organised around the three key areas of (1) *participation* and learning as a collective process in plurilingual interactions (Section 5.1.1), (2) *language choice* in plurilingual interactions (Section 5.1.2), and (3) *learner agency* in the co-construction of talk-in-interaction (Section 5.1.3), which correspond thematically to the three main research questions formulated in Section 1.2.

In the previous chapter (see Section 4.3), the findings were presented in relation to how these topics were addressed in the different publications of the compendium. Here, the findings are presented in an integrated manner. First, the research questions are answered in relation to the guiding sub-questions (presented in Section 3.1.2). These sub-questions, rather than being addressed separately or sequentially, are used to provide a framework for interpreting the

findings of each article and, collectively, for providing a synthesised response to the main research questions. Second, as this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how learners' participation, language choice, and agency interrelate in talk-in-interaction, the responses to the three questions are interwoven, thereby offering insights into the interactional architecture of plurilingual encounters that go beyond approaches examining these dimensions in isolation.

***Research Question 1: How do learners organise participation in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?***

The four studies corroborate that learners' participation in plurilingual interaction—whether exclusively among peers or with the presence of a teacher—is situated, dynamic, and shaped by the communicative affordances and constraints of each scenario and reshaped by the learners' interpretations of the tasks at hand. Both in the face-to-face and online modalities explored, learners constantly tried to balance the need to maintain shared understanding and ensure task progress. In classroom interactions—Publication 1 and Publication 3—this was evident in how Greek and Catalan peers co-constructed participation through procedures such as *let it pass* and *make it normal*, as well as multimodal scaffolding practices. These practices illustrate how learners oriented simultaneously to intersubjectivity (Heritage, 2007) and task progressivity (Schegloff, 2006), demonstrating that participation is organised through the relationship of the Social Participation Structure (SPS) and the Academic Task Structure (ATS). The findings also suggest that the way learners negotiated this balance depended on their interpretations of the task (self-)assigned and their roles within it, which highlights the situated nature of participation.

In digitally mediated and dislocated scenarios, learners demonstrated similar orientations towards shared understanding and task completion, but this form of participation

was determined by the specific affordances and constraints of each scenario. On Instagram—Publication 1b—participation was characterised by the use of platform conventions which the learners were familiar with and was expressed through multimodal and plurilingual posts that promoted peer alignment and authentic engagement. In WhatsApp interactions—Publication 2—participation evolved over time as learners renegotiated the communicative purpose of the chat—from a classroom extension to a space for coordination. Such renegotiation reshaped the interactional norms in the newly created community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These shifts also created tensions between the agendas of learners and teachers alike, yet they highlighted learners’ ability to reinterpret participation according to their own goals. Finally, classroom and online data—Publication 3—reinforced that participation is collaboratively constructed through multimodal and plurilingual resources, even in complex or dislocated contexts.

In general, therefore, participation is a collaborative, situated, and multimodal process that is sensitive to contextual affordances, participant composition, and learners’ previous experiences. This thesis further demonstrates that authentic and meaningful tasks enhance engagement and agency, illustrating how participation in plurilingual interaction—whether exclusively among peers or supported by teachers—contributes directly to the development of learners’ *Interactional Competence* (IC). This is evidenced through the negotiation of roles and the management of turns in talk-in-interaction across the diverse learning spaces.

***Research Question 2: How does learners’ language choices emerge in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?***

The findings reveal that learners’ language choices during plurilingual peer interaction are highly dynamic, context-dependent, and socially negotiated rather than predetermined. Across the scenarios explored, language choice was shaped by interactional needs, task demands, and

the implicit or explicit norms emerging within the group. In face-to-face classroom interactions—Publication 1—learners oriented toward *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) but alternated with Catalan and Spanish as scaffolding resources when mutual understanding or task progress was at risk. This flexible use of plurilingual repertoires—including code-switching, literal translation and embodied interaction—shows that language choice was primarily guided by the goal of ensuring understanding and maintaining task progress. Learners’ decisions were therefore closely tied to the interactional context, peer alignment, and task requirements.

The interactions explored on a social media platform show how *practiced language policies* (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012) emerged through collaborative negotiation and evolved with time. On Instagram—Publication 1b—learners alternated languages strategically to include or exclude peers, demonstrating alignment with or differentiation from interactants depending on their communicative goals. On WhatsApp—Publication 2—the group initially used English, following the teacher’s expectations and the classroom habitual orientation, but this gradually changed as students reinterpreted the purpose of the space. Over time, Catalan and Spanish became increasingly dominant, illustrating how the *practiced language policy* in the chat was co-constructed, fluid, and linked to the incipient *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Importantly, the identity of *being a teacher* played a role in shaping this policy. When adults oriented to institutional expectations, English predominated; when students took control of topic management, plurilingual practices became the norm. Even in analyses not explicitly centred on language choice—e.g. Publication 3—learners’ alternation between languages was closely linked to peer alignment, role negotiation, and identity construction. Learners with higher participation often used English to manage the interaction, though they also switched to Catalan or Spanish to foster inclusion, repair breakdowns, or maintain task progress.

Together, these findings show that learners’ plurilingual repertoires operated as flexible resources for scaffolding meaning, managing participation, and constructing social identities.

Language choice was therefore not merely an individual preference but a co-constructed activity evolving in response to contextual affordances, peer relations, and institutional norms. In some scenarios, as the one described in Publication 2, the negotiation of language use was closely tied to the emergence of a new *community of practice*, highlighting plurilingual interaction as an ideal site for learners to position themselves and their peers in the group, engage in meaning-making, and develop their *Interactional Competence* (IC).

***Research Question 3: How do learners enact agency in talk-in-interaction across different scenarios?***

The four studies show that learner agency in plurilingual peer interaction emerges as a dynamic, multidimensional, and relational process that shapes both participation and language choice across contexts. Agency is not solely linked to individual decision-making but is enacted through learners' positioning, negotiation of roles, and efforts to achieve both academic and social objectives.

In face-to-face plurilingual interactions between the Catalan and Greek students—Publication 1—, agency is evident in learners' strategic use of resources to keep tasks moving forward despite communicative challenges, such as asking for clarification or deploying multimodal scaffolding to maintain *intersubjectivity* and *progressivity*. These actions reflect learners' ability to act with initiative so that interactions flow and align with task demands. Similarly, in Publications 2 and 3, learners displayed *behavioural*, *cognitive*, and *relational* dimensions of agency, not only in engaging with tasks and languages but also in projecting future identities—for instance, choosing English in preparation for study or mobility abroad. Here, agency is understood as embedded in broader trajectories (Larsen-Freeman, 2019), forward-looking, and responsive to both short- and long-term goals.

In *dislocated* and digital contexts, learners' agency also becomes particularly visible. On Instagram—Publication 1b—learners actively shape participation without teacher intervention, taking initiative to choose topics, manage turns, and co-construct meaning through linguistic and multimodal resources. Their use of emojis, humour, and creative messages highlights how agency is enacted behaviourally, cognitively, and relationally, while also constructing identity and social bonds. The multimodal affordances of the platform—familiar to the learners— encourage experimentation, risk-taking, and alignment of participation with personal objectives, illustrating how digital spaces can foster agency by offering autonomy and authentic communicative goals.

In WhatsApp interactions—Publication 2—, learner agency is observable in the renegotiation of communicative norms, particularly when students challenge the initial teacher-led orientation toward English, redefine roles, and collectively reshape the purpose of the space. These actions illustrate that learners enact agency not only to manage participation but also to challenge institutional expectations and co-construct a flexible plurilingual communicative mode.

Across all scenarios, learner agency is closely linked to negotiating task demands and interpersonal relationships. Agency is enacted through balancing the *Academic Task Structure* (ATS) with the *Social Participation Structure* (SPS) (Erickson, 2004), as learners aim to meet institutional expectations while maintaining fluid peer relationship. Importantly, agency does not always manifest as active participation; in some cases, not contributing to the interaction or limiting involvement also constitutes an agentive personal stance.

Overall, these findings reveal that learner agency is a socioculturally situated process shaped by context, peer alignment, and evolving learner identities. By enacting agency, learners influence how participation and language choice unfold, construct meaningful learning

trajectories and create opportunities that foster *interactional competence* in both formal and informal learning spaces.

### A holistic approach to learners’ participation, language choice and agency enactment in plurilingual interactions

Drawing on a sociocultural and plurilingual perspective and using Conversation Analysis as a research approach, this study corroborates that learning is a dynamic and situated process unfolding through learners’ *participation, language choice* and *agency* in plurilingual (peer) task-based interaction. These aspects are not isolated; rather, they are co-constructed in talk-in-interaction and jointly shape plurilingual, task-oriented peer communication. This integrated view advances our understanding of the sociocultural mechanisms that shape L2 learning in diverse plurilingual settings. Figure 9 illustrates the key contribution of this thesis: a model of how participation, language choice, and agency interact in real time across diverse, *dislocated* settings.

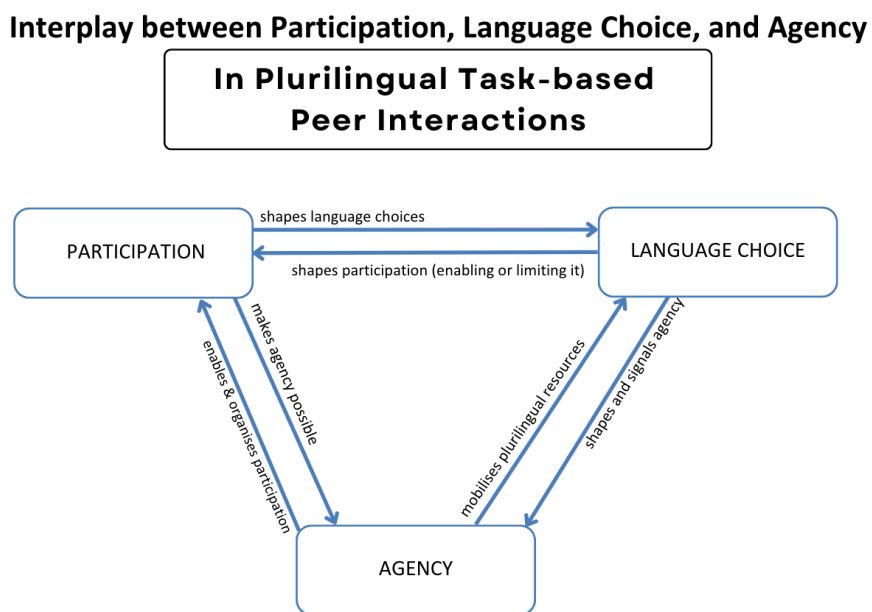


Figure 9. Interplay between participation, language choice, and agency in plurilingual task-based peer interactions

**According to this model, then:**

- **learners' participation**—and how learners organise it—
  - creates the conditions for *agency* to be enacted, and
  - shapes *language choices*
- **learners' language choices**
  - shape *participation*, enabling or limiting it,
  - index *agency* and alignment with the task and with peers.
- **agency**
  - shapes how participation is organised, and
  - prompts learners to make language choices—drawing on their plurilingual repertoire—according to the communicative event.

This holistic approach underscores the significance of the compendium for the field of second language learning, providing evidence that actual learning is always socially situated and context-dependent. It also offers a foundation for future research and innovative teaching practices, encouraging both researchers and teachers (see Section 5.3) to advocate firmly for the conceptualization of language learning as a dynamic, plurilingual practice that is always socially embedded.

The following section turns to the methodological contributions of the study, showing how learners' participation, language choice, and agency were investigated in both face-to-face and digital contexts.

### **5.3. Methodological Contributions**

Building on the findings presented above, this section highlights the methodological contributions of the study. to research on plurilingual peer interaction, both within classroom-based learning scenarios, and in contexts that go beyond the classroom doors. The study

combines interactional micro-analysis, through *Conversation Analysis (CA)*—which has proven to be useful analytical tool to explore tasks as research constructs—with an ethnographic approach to examine how learners engage in communication across different times, spaces, and participant compositions. By examining both formal and informal scenarios, the study captures a wide range of language learners’ interactions, including spontaneous communication managed by learners beyond traditional institutional contexts. In this vein, the four studies show that authentic, technology-mediated communication, occurring outside conventional classroom settings—and often underrepresented in formal research—can provide a valuable site for observing learners’ everyday language use, interactional behaviour and plurilingual choices.

One notable theoretical and methodological contribution of this thesis lies in how learner agency is conceptualised and operationalised in the analysis. Publications 1b and 3 approach agency as a set of observable interactional moves, examining how learners engage in various discursive actions— such as *doing the task*, *managing the task* and *overcoming trouble* (Masats,2008)—to complete the task and participate in the interaction. Rather than viewing agency as a psychological trait, the thesis develops a method for identifying it in talk-in-interaction, considering its three dimensions and tracing them through learners’ discursive actions.

The thesis makes three other significant methodological contributions to research on SLA. First, it introduces a new scenario that does not neatly fit within existing categories, which we named *in-between learning scenario* (See Publication 2). Second, it addresses the challenge of identifying and featuring *turns* in computer- or mobile-mediated interactions (see Publications 1b and 2). Third, it establishes conventions for representing turns, speakers and overlaps in digital interaction data (see Publication 1b).

The following section discusses the first of these contributions—the identification and conceptualisation of the *in-between learning scenario*.

### *Identifying an in-between learning scenario*

As mentioned earlier, the context examined in Publication 2—a WhatsApp interaction chat created by the teacher/researcher to have a direct instant communication channel with the Catalan students to organise a trip— was defined as an in-between learning scenario. This is so for several reasons. First, although the interaction does not follow the structure or objectives of the regular classroom agenda, participants continue to position themselves and others according to their classroom roles as teachers and students. Second, the interaction occurs beyond the physical and temporary boundaries of the school setting—after the academic period has ended—at a time when teachers are not expected to assign formal tasks, assess student performance, or provide pedagogical feedback. This contrasts with other studies (e.g., Tragant et al., 2021), in which WhatsApp was used to deliver optional language learning tasks as part of a structured, intensive summer course. Third, the learning context cannot be considered entirely informal or as taking place *in the wild* (Clark et al., 2011), as the interaction is neither spontaneous nor student-initiated; rather, it is both facilitated and initiated by the teacher. Our contribution lies in conceptualising this type of WhatsApp interaction not simply as an extension of classroom practice nor as fully in the wild communication, but as an in-between learning scenario. Thus, as explored in Publication 2, this *in-between learning scenario* can be characterised as 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.

While previous research has shown that WhatsApp and other text-based online platforms can expand opportunities for collaboration beyond the classroom (Cassany, et al., 2019, and

Sauro, 2009, for example) or foster English use through both on-task and off-task exchanges (Tragant et al., 2021), our analysis focuses on a different situation. In this case, it is the teacher that initiates interaction, but learners progressively reinterpret and reshape the communicative space. In doing so, the study expands the categorisation of learning contexts in computer- and mobile-mediated environments and provides a framework for understanding hybrid forms of participation that make the line between classroom and out-of-school learning less clear.

### *Challenging the notion of turn*

A key challenge addressed in this thesis (see Section 3.3.3) was the need to redefine what constitutes a *turn* in mobile chat applications such as WhatsApp and Instagram, where communication is asynchronous, often fragmented, and multimodal. To address this, Publications 1b and 2 propose an extension of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) categorisation of Turn Construction Units (TCUs). In addition to the established units in Conversation Analysis—lexical (words), phrasal (phrases), clausal (clauses) and sentential (sentences)—the analysis incorporates further resources as meaningful TCU components in their own right: visual (pictures, gifs, emojis), audial (instant recorded oral messages), audio-visual (videos), and hypertextual (links to other multimodal texts) units.

Additionally, to explain the organisation of interaction in digital settings, the notion of *message unit* was coined for Publication 1b and later applied in Publication 2. This concept captures how users segment their contributions into either *compact message units* (produced and delivered without interruption), or *split message units* (when a message is broken into several posts, allowing other participants to take the floor before it is fully delivered), as discussed in Section 3.3.3. Conceptualising messages in this way enables the analysis of overlaps, pauses, and interruptions in digital spaces, as well as the integration of multimodal elements—such as emojis, gifs, images, or voice messages—acknowledging their role in meaning-making

beyond spoken or written language. The examples in Section 3.3.3—drawn from both Instagram and WhatsApp conversations—illustrate how this framework captures the multimodal complexity of learners' everyday interactions and highlights the role of these resources in constructing shared understanding.

#### *Adapting CA transcription conventions*

A key challenge addressed in this thesis (see Section 3.3.3) relates to how different digital applications feature interaction and learner participation. For instance, identifying overlap in Instagram chats is complex because turns do not physically overlap. Although participants may compose messages at the same time, their posts appear sequentially once published. Moreover, unlike WhatsApp, Instagram does not record the exact posting time—at least at the time of this study—making it impossible to measure overlaps or infer pauses. When messages are not exchanged synchronously, it becomes difficult to determine whether two messages were produced simultaneously or after a temporal gap. On the contrary, features like time indicators and the option to reply to specific messages in WhatsApp, help create the sense that messages are connected, which supports what has been referred to as *virtual adjacency* (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003).

Although overlapping threads in Instagram chats make conversational coherence harder to follow, contextual and thematic cues still allow identification of turn adjacency. This was often achieved through the use of vocatives, which signal direct address between participants. To preserve these interactional features while ensuring anonymity, the study implemented a systematic method of manipulating screenshots. Usernames and profile pictures were concealed and replaced with alphanumeric identifiers (e.g., C1, G1), allowing vocatives to continue functioning as markers of turn adjacency while ensuring participants' anonymity. This procedure preserved essential interactional features and enabled reliable analysis of conversational links. A similar approach was applied to WhatsApp interactions using three-letter

pseudonyms (e.g., NER, PAN), balancing privacy protection with the need to maintain traceable conversational structures. These insights expand the scope of traditional CA, making it more suitable and flexible for the analysis of plurilingual peer interaction across mobile, multimodal, and asynchronous settings.

#### **5.4. Pedagogical Contributions**

This thesis also offers pedagogical contributions to plurilingual education, particularly regarding how learning is planned and implemented in both more traditional, formally structured classroom settings and more *dislocated*, informal learning spaces. This section provides suggestions for how teachers can foster connections between formal and informal learning contexts.

Across all publications, the findings demonstrate that language learners can draw on their full plurilingual repertoire—not only strategically as a scaffolding mechanism to overcome challenges, but also to maintain interaction flow, build interpersonal relationships, and support peer learning. For example, allowing learners to resort to Catalan or Spanish during moments of difficulty enabled meaningful participation that might not have occurred under a rigid *English-only* policy. Recognising and valuing learners' plurilingual repertoires, while still encouraging orientation toward the target language, creates more inclusive comfortable spaces. When learners mobilise their entire repertoire, they are better prepared to achieve communicative goals, co-construct understanding, and participate agentively, which, in turn, supports more meaningful and successful language learning experiences.

The studies also show how learners employ diverse and creative ways of managing participation and target language use, particularly when engaged in less conventional interactions, such as those occurring in online contexts or dislocated learning spaces. These findings may inspire teachers to design tasks that promote learner autonomy, peer-led interactions, and flexible modalities. Creating the necessary conditions for student-initiated

communication, rather than over-guiding interaction, aligns classroom practice with learners' real-life communicative experiences—especially those occurring in digital spaces—, fosters engagement, gives learners responsibility over their learning process and enhances interactional competence development.

While learner-centred and digitally mediated interactions provide fertile ground for language development, technology alone does not ensure authentic use of the target language. The use of technology by itself does not solve a current challenge faced by many language teachers in regular classrooms: getting students to use the target language naturally—and to recognise the need to do so—particularly when both teachers and learners share the same habitual language(s). Therefore, it is still essential for researchers and teachers to continue reflecting on the most effective practices to ensure that students are offered meaningful and engaging opportunities to use the target language in an agentive way. As this research has shown, when used strategically, mobile-mediated communication, especially through telecollaborative initiatives can enhance—but not guarantee—interaction in the target language.

Finally, the studies reveal varying degrees of agency, which shaped both participation and language choices. This was especially evident in *dislocated* contexts, where learners have (more) control over when, how, and with whom they interact. These findings highlight the importance of teaching models that prioritise learner autonomy—including *task-based* or *project-based learning* (PBL), online exchanges, and peer (tele)collaboration. Teachers can support these practices by creating open-ended tasks—with more or less direct teacher mediation—, enabling learners to negotiate roles and interactional norms, take greater risks, and assume responsibility for their learning. In doing so, learners become more agentive, developing not only task completion skills, but also the ability to communicate successfully beyond linguistic boundaries, and the mere knowledge of linguistic forms.

Building on these pedagogical contributions, the following recommendations are offered as practical guidance for teachers. The insights of this research have been translated into three practical guidelines to use in additional language classrooms to support the development of learners' plurilingual skills, agentive behaviours, and interactional competence.

### ***Recommendations for Teachers***

- ***Value learners' plurilingual repertoire while encouraging orientation to the target language***

Recognise and value learners' full linguistic repertoires as legitimate resources for learning. Allowing learners to alternate between languages flexibly supports comprehension, facilitates interactional flow, and fosters peer collaboration. At the same time, it remains essential to encourage learners to orient to the target language and to create spaces where they are explicitly prompted to use it. Not implementing a rigid *English-only* policy does not mean abandoning the orientation toward the target language; rather, it ensures that its use is meaningful and supported by plurilingual practices.

- ***Design tasks that foster learner autonomy and enable student-initiated communication***

Design and implement open-ended, peer-collaborative tasks in which learners negotiate roles, manage interaction, and decide on possible outcomes. This promotes agency and responsibility for their own learning process. Allow and encourage student-initiated communication, providing the necessary conditions and support rather than over-guiding peer interaction. In addition to enhancing agency and responsibility, this approach can help learners develop confidence in managing authentic, plurilingual exchanges.

- ***Bridge formal and informal learning through meaningful technology use***

Connect classroom practices with learners' real-life communicative experiences, particularly in digital contexts. Social media and instant messaging tools can increase opportunities for plurilingual interaction (e.g. through international telecollaborative projects). However, these tools should be integrated strategically, with appropriate scaffolding to support agentive and purposeful participation. Still, we should bear in mind that technology alone does not guarantee authentic or effective use of the target language.

## **5.5. Challenges, Research Limitations, and Future Research Directions**

The four studies in this compendium are qualitative single-case studies, which means their findings may be less easily transferable to other contexts. As discussed in Section 3.1.1., however, this type of research has its own validity. Even with its focus on single episodes, it offers powerful insights into situated learning processes and a nuanced understanding of how learners engage in plurilingual task-based interaction in specific contexts.

This research approach has *temporal* limitations. The data analysed—including WhatsApp and Instagram interactions—cover only a short period, making it difficult to observe how learners' behaviours, identities, and interactional and plurilingual competences change over time. Future research could address this through longitudinal studies or by combining Conversation Analysis—relevant for its close attention to situated, moment-by-moment interaction—with complementary qualitative methods such as narrative approaches or richer ethnographic data. Such combinations would allow for a more complete understanding how plurilingual and interactional competences develop and transform over extended periods of time.

On a different level, researching learners in digital spaces involved practical and ethical challenges. On a practical level, the challenges relate to understanding and interpreting the

specific features of each platform and young learners' communicative practices when using them. Researchers must familiarise themselves with platform affordances and the everyday practices of young participants to interpret the data accurately. In this vein, a further methodological challenge is that digital interactions rely heavily on non-verbal and semiotic resources (e.g., emojis, images, reactions, and multimodal story features), which are difficult to capture and transcribe systematically using conventional transcription practices. Furthermore, digital platforms (i.e. Instagram and WhatsApp) evolve rapidly, making it difficult for studies in digital interaction to remain fully up to date. Nevertheless, because this study focuses on how learners interact across three key dimensions—participation, language choice and agency enactment—in diverse dislocated scenarios, the findings remain relevant and broadly transferable beyond the specific technological conditions in which the data were produced.

From an ethical perspective, although maximum care was taken to protect participants' identity at all times, research in digitally mediated youth interactions inevitably raises important considerations regarding consent, data ownership, and the blurred boundaries between private and public spaces, especially when conducting research with young participants. Finally, although the main focus of this thesis is on the learner interactions, teachers and task design also play a significant role in both process and outcomes. Future research could examine more explicitly how teachers' presence, attitudes and positioning influence learners' participation, language choice and agency. Similarly, the positionality of the researchers—especially when they are part of the data—warrants further reflection.

Despite these challenges, the limitations outlined above also suggest stimulating opportunities for future research. Longitudinal studies, and analyses that integrate digital and linguistic ethnography could offer deeper understandings into how plurilingual competence and interactional practices develop over time. Additionally, expanding the research to include other aspects, such as task design, teacher mediation, and even researcher positionality, would help

build a more holistic understanding of plurilingual learning ecologies. As digital interactional practices and communicative environments continue to evolve, they open new possibilities for exploring participation, agency, and language choice. In this vein, the present thesis not only identifies constraints but also points to productive directions for future studies, encouraging continued exploration of how young learners navigate and shape plurilingual spaces.

## 6. REFERENCES

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