

Resource bank for developing teacher education focusing on language learning of young (6-12 year old) children within a plurilingual framework

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We begin this document by defining constructs that inform plurilingualism and their development through research over time.

In the resource bank a list of discussion questions is also included, each with a list of some relevant references which can be used to inform the discussion of language learning for young children (6-12 years) within a plurilingual framework with pre-service students.

In addition, some ‘classroom snapshots’ and suggestions for accompanying reflections questions are provided.

Defining terminology: An introduction

1 Definitions by Council of Europe

Plurilingualism refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as ‘mother tongue’ or ‘first language’ and any number of other languages or varieties. Thus, in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual (Council of Europe, 2014 n.d.).

According to Coste, Moore & Zarate (2009, vi), current interpretations ‘perceive languages and speakers’ plurilingual and pluricultural competence as fluid, dynamic and changing over situations and time’.

Multilingualism refers to the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one ‘variety of language’ i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognized as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety (Council of Europe, 2014 n.d.).

2 Critiques of the Council of Europe definitions

- i. Globally, the term *multilingualism* is widely used to cover both individual and societal ability to use more than one language. Thus, in many contexts beyond Europe the term *plurilingualism* is unfamiliar and unused.
- ii. Widdowson (2014, p.10) argues that both multilingualism and plurilingualism are ‘concerned with abilities in different languages and the extension of a linguistic

repertoire'. This terminology assumes that individual languages are static entities, with clearly defined boundaries, adopting a conservative interpretation of the nature of language, predicated on the notion of an ideal native speaker model. Recent research in the field of *translanguaging* challenges this construct, arguing in support of the construct *translanguaging* as 'a way to capture the fluid language practices of bilinguals' (Garcia & Li, 2014, p.5). As such, they propose that 'translanguaging extends our traditional definitions of language and bilingualism and disrupts traditional boundaries'.

References

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- Widdowson, H. (2014). Rethinking language education: a challenge to tradition. *Conference presentation, Quality education and language competences for 21st century society: traditions, challenges and visions*. Graz, Austria. 11th April 2014.

For a useful general reference, covering many contemporary concerns for schools and parents, see: Conteh, J. & Meier, G. (2014). *The Multilingual Turn in Languages Education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Suggested discussion questions and related articles to inform the discussion

- 1) How can all students' linguistic resources support what children learn in the first year of English classes? Can children who already have multiple languages handle foreign language classes?

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Dual Language Showcase at the Thornwood School:
<http://www.thornwoodps.ca/dual/index.htm>

García, O. (2009) *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell/Wiley.

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Swain, M., Lapkin, Rowen, N. & Hart, D. (1990). The role of mother tongue literacy in third language learning. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 3(1), 65-81.

Thomas, J. (1988). The role played by metalinguistic awareness in second and third language learning. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 9, 235-246.

2) What should be the balance of L1 and L2 use in the classroom? For teachers? For students?

Cameron, L. (2001). Language choice and language learning in Cameron, L. *Teaching Languages to young learners*. Cambridge.

Cook, Vivian (2001). Using the First Language in the Classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, vol. 57, no. 3, p. 402-423

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power, and Pedagogy. Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Dahl, A. & Vulchanova, M.D. (2014): Naturalistic acquisition in an early language classroom in *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol 5. Article 329 p.

Dailey-O Cain, J & G. Libscher (2009). Teacher and Student Use of the First Language in Foreign Language Classroom Interactions: Functions and Applications In: M. Turnbull, & J. Dailey-O’Cain (Eds.). *First Language Use in Second and Foreign Language Learning* (p.131-144). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Stille, S., & Cummins, J. (2013). Foundation for learning: Engaging plurilingual students' linguistic repertoires in the elementary classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 630-638.

3) How much oral participation should teachers encourage/require? In which languages?

Azkarai, A., & Imaz Agirre, A. (2016). Negotiation of Meaning Strategies in Child EFL Mainstream and CLIL Settings. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol.50: 844-870.

Cummins, J. (2013). Foundation for learning: Engaging plurilingual students' linguistic repertoires in the elementary classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 630-638.

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Fleta, T. (2014). Active listening for second language learning in the early years. In: Mourão, S. & Lourenço, M. (Eds.). *Early Years Second Language Education: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

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Pinter, A. (2011). Language Learning Processes in Childhood: First and Second Languages. In *Children Learning Second Languages* (pp. 37-65). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

4) How should written foreign language be included in language classes? How does this differ for 6-7 year olds, vs 1-12 year olds? Why?

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Snapshots from the classroom

Snapshot 1

‘How can all students’ linguistic resources support what children learn in the first year of English classes? Can children who already have multiple languages handle foreign language classes?’

Year 1 English with a group of 22 7-year old learners who have been taught English for approximately 10 months, 1 lesson per week. It is the first lesson in a unit based on the storybook ‘The Gruffalo’ by Julia Donaldson.

The teacher shows the students front covers of the storybook 'The Gruffalo' in different languages on the whiteboard. A learner recognizes the Spanish version, he points out the Spanish cover page, and pronounces the name of the Gruffalo in Spanish. Another learner recognizes the title in Urdu. 'Look at the Russian version with different kinds of letters', says the teacher. Then a learner recognizes the Turkish version and says, 'My parents say it, but not that much'. The class comments on the Welsh cover, which also looks different, and they show great interest in it. Is there a Japanese front page? 'My dad knows Italian', a learner says, 'I have a friend, who comes from France', says another. The learners are very involved in the conversation and keen on participating. After the activity finishes a student asks the teacher: 'Is it really in all languages?' 'Many', the teacher answers, 'Also in Arabic?', 'Yes, also in Arabic', 'Also in Somali?' he mutters. The teacher doesn't hear him.

Suggested reflection questions:

1. How do the students, in general, respond to the different front pages?
2. Do you see signs of increased linguistic awareness for all students?
3. Do you see signs of students drawing on their existing linguistic resources?
4. What are your thoughts on the exchange between the teacher and the student, who has Somali background, at the end?

Snapshot 2

'What should be the balance of L1 and L2 use in the classroom? For teachers? For students?'

Context: Year 1 English with a group of 22 7-year old learners who have been taught English for approximately 2 months, 1 lesson per week. The teacher has made a conscious choice to speak English to her students most of the time.

It's time for English. The teacher, who is also the Danish teacher, is preparing the room while the students are outside. The students are used to calling the teacher by her first name. She puts on a bright yellow vest that she uses for English class and goes outside to bring the students in: 'Ok everybody, find your partner, 'Ok, ready, let's go inside. The students respond in Danish and she replies in English: S: 'My drawing isn't any good! (dk)', T: 'That's ok, nevermind' At the end of the lesson a student explains to me that in English class her name isn't Karen, but 'Miss K'

Suggested reflection questions:

1. What are some strategies that the teacher applies to maintain English as a classroom language?
2. What would have been different if she had spoken the school language (in this case Danish)?
3. How do you think the student feels when the teacher answers responds to her remark in Danish, in English?
4. Do you think it benefits students' language acquisition that she speaks English – how?

5. Can you think of situations where it would be appropriate for the teacher to speak the school language during English class – when?