

Chapter 13

Focus on Multilingualism as an Approach in Educational Contexts

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Abstract “Focus on Multilingualism” is a holistic approach to the study of multilingualism in educational contexts. This approach can be characterized by focusing on the following three elements: the multilingual speaker, the whole linguistic repertoire and the context. Multilingual speakers use languages as a resource to communicate successfully and to develop their own identities through multilingual practices. In this chapter, “Focus on Multilingualism” is illustrated with examples from multilingual education in the Basque Country.

Keywords Language ideology · Multilingual education · Cross-linguistic interaction

13.1 Introduction

Language always has an important role in the school curriculum not only because language (or language arts) is usually one of the compulsory school subjects in primary and secondary school but also because the content of any other subject is learnt and taught through language along with other semiotic signs (gestures, images, etc). Moreover, school is much more than a learning and teaching institution, it is also a place where social interaction takes place, and language has an important role in this interaction.

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In the European context, the European Commission has as a policy goal that all European citizens have to be able to speak two European languages in addition to their mother tongue (Commission of the European Communities 2003). The main policy measures to achieve this goal are to start instruction in a foreign language from an early age, and the use of foreign languages as additional languages of instruction. The latter is usually known as “Content and Language Integrated Learning” (CLIL) in the European context (Coyle et al. 2010; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013). The most common foreign language in the school curriculum is English with the exception of English-speaking countries. Other languages such as French, German or Spanish are also studied as foreign languages. In some bilingual regions, minority languages are used in education such as German in South Tyrol, Welsh in Wales, Catalan in Catalonia or Basque in the Basque Country. The combination of foreign, national and minority languages can result in a strong presence of language arts subjects in the curriculum, and multilingual education may use different languages as languages of instruction (Cenoz and Gorter, 2008; Cenoz 2009). At the same time, the linguistic diversity of schools is increased by the presence of students with other home languages that are not part of the school curriculum (Extra and Gorter 2008). Multilingualism in school contexts is also a well-known phenomenon in other parts of the world (Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzman 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas et al. 2009).

Taking into account that schools set the teaching and learning of languages amongst their most important goals, it is not surprising that research on multilingualism in school settings has focused on the measurement of language proficiency in one or more languages (see, for example, Johnstone 2002; Genesee et al. 2006; Baker 2011). The focus has been on language as a system and research studies have looked at linguistic, cultural, economic, political and social factors that influence language acquisition (Brisk 1998). When looking at the acquisition of language proficiency, languages have been considered as separate entities and the transfer of elements from one language into another has traditionally been regarded as negative. This position is related to the development of monolingual ideologies that developed hard boundaries between languages and associated individual languages with states, nations and empires (see Martin-Jones, Blackledge and Creese 2012). These ideologies are still influential in school contexts. In fact, many teachers believe that they have to isolate the target language from other languages students use, and research has tested oral or written comprehension and production in each separate language in very controlled situations. As Musk (2010, p. 182) says, the predilection for language competence has sidelined the communicative function of language.

A different approach to the study of multilingualism in education is to place the emphasis on spontaneous multilingual speech in its social context. This approach considers language as a social resource and it highlights individual agency when using different languages and other semiotic devices and makes reference to heteroglossia (Creese and Blackledge 2011). The simultaneous use of different languages in school contexts has been referred to as “flexible bilingualism” (Blackledge and Creese 2010) or “translanguaging” (García 2009; Creese and Blackledge 2010).

In this chapter, we propose an alternative to the traditional focus on monolingualism, which we call the “Focus on Multilingualism” approach. In the following, we first define “Focus on Multilingualism” and its scope and then explain its three

dimensions and its application to multilingual education. Examples are provided from schools in the Basque Country that aim at multilingualism in Basque, Spanish and English.

13.2 What Is “Focus on Multilingualism”?

“Focus on Multilingualism” is an approach to research in education that has important teaching and learning implications. It is related to concepts such as “flexible bilingualism” (Blackledge and Creese 2010) or “translanguaging” (García 2009). According to Blackledge and Creese (2010, p. 109), “flexible bilingualism represents a view of language as a social resource (Heller 2007) without clear boundaries, which places the speaker at the heart of the interaction”. García and Sylvan (2011, p. 389) define translanguaging as “the process by which bilingual students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices in order to make sense of, and communicate in, multilingual classrooms”. Both concepts are a reaction to the ideology of separate bilingualism.

“Focus on Multilingualism” shares the heteroglossic character of multilingualism with the concepts of flexible bilingualism and translanguaging. Similarly to the proposal made by Creese and Blackledge (2011), it places the language users at the centre rather than the languages. It is also close to “translanguaging” because “it considers multiple language practices in interrelationship” (García 2009, p. 7). However, the scope of “Focus on Multilingualism” is in some aspects also different from “flexible bilingualism” and “translanguaging”.

“Focus on Multilingualism” has its roots in multilingual education understood as “the use of two or more languages in education provided that schools aim at multilingualism and multiliteracy” (Cenoz 2012). According to this definition, multilingual education includes schools and higher education institutions provided that the acquisition of competencies in different languages is a goal. Some examples of multilingual education are schools aiming at multilingualism in bilingual regions where a minority language is spoken such as Wales, Catalonia, South Tyrol or the Basque Country in Europe. Another example of multilingual education is Canadian immersion where French is used as the language of instruction for English first language learners, or dual immersion schools in the USA with English and Spanish as the languages of instruction. Additional examples are Intercultural Bilingual Education in Latin America which uses indigenous languages and Spanish, or international schools in different parts of the world. All these different types of schools aim at developing proficiency in two or more languages. Schools that aim at multilingualism can be found in some parts of the world and can involve different types of languages, different pedagogies and sociolinguistic contexts. In practice, it is impossible to develop a straightforward typology of multilingual education involving two or more languages because of the great diversity of elements involved. Following Hornberger (1989), the “Continua of Multilingual Education” is an alternative to typologies that can be used to analyse and compare the complex reality of multilingual education resulting from the interaction of linguistic, sociolinguistic

and educational variables such as linguistic distance, status of the languages or the use of languages in the curriculum (Cenoz 2009). The “Continua of Multilingual Education” can be used as a tool to describe different types of multilingual education and make international comparisons.

“Focus on Multilingualism” uses Hornberger’s idea of continua and looks at the languages in the school curriculum as linguistic systems and at multilingual practices in which speakers use their multiple linguistic resources in interaction. Therefore, it looks at the interrelationship at two different levels. “Focus on Multilingualism” considers that languages can be distinct entities because they are treated as such by social actors in the school context who study languages as a subject or as language arts. For example, English, Basque and Spanish are compulsory school subjects in primary and secondary Basque schools and French is an optional subject in secondary school. Basque is the main language of instruction but also Spanish and English are used as languages of instruction. The four languages are considered separate objects in the school context and they are listed as such on the timetable.

Languages are also treated as distinct objects by many other researchers in multilingual education who tend to focus on issues such as the acquisition of proficiency in one specific language, the transfer from one language to another or the acquisition of content taught through a specific language. In comparison to school ideologies and research traditions that create solid boundaries between languages, “Focus on Multilingualism” considers that boundaries should be more flexible, as will be discussed in the next sections. “Focus on Multilingualism” also considers complex discourse practices that can be more often found in spontaneous interaction amongst multilingual students both at school and outside school. In these situations, translanguaging is a common practice amongst multilinguals. It can have a pedagogical value but this value in many contexts has not been explored sufficiently.

“Focus on Multilingualism” originates in situations where three languages are part of the school curriculum. Having three or more languages in the curriculum is quite common in many parts of the world such as India (Mohanty 2008), China (Jiang et al. 2007), Morocco (Ennaji 2005), Luxembourg (Kirsch 2006) or the Netherlands (Gorter and Van der Meer 2008), to mention just a few. “Focus on Multilingualism” is also a valid approach for schools with two languages in the curriculum but when it comes to research the complexity of school multilingualism involving three or more languages can provide the opportunity to observe interesting patterns of interrelationships involving different directions. “Focus on Multilingualism” is an approach for teaching and research in multilingual education that relates the way multilingual students (and multilingual speakers in general) use their communicative resources in spontaneous conversation to the way languages are learnt and taught at school. It analyses the gap between the traditional focus on one language at a time at school and in research and real multilingualism that considers all the languages and multilingual discursive practices. It explores the possibility of establishing bridges that can link these two realities so that multilingual students can use their own resources to a larger extent in formal education.

In the next sections, we will look at the three dimensions that we distinguish in “Focus on Multilingualism”: (1) the multilingual speaker; (2) the whole linguistic repertoire and (3) the social context.

13.3 The Multilingual Speaker

The communicative skills of multilingual speakers have traditionally been measured from a monolingual perspective against the yardstick of the ideal native speaker of each of the languages involved. This practice produces a sense of failure and lack of self-confidence when learning languages because the level to be reached in the target language is seen as an impossible goal (Cook 2010). When more than two languages are learnt at school, the possibility of becoming “an ideal multilingual” with native competence in several languages is even more remote. The idea of the bilingual who is expected to be like two monolinguals (that can be extended to the idea of the multilingual as several multilinguals) was criticized by Grosjean almost 30 years ago (Grosjean 1985). Grosjean proposed a holistic view of bilingualism, according to which bilinguals are considered as fully competent speaker-hearers who have a unique linguistic profile. In the field of second language acquisition, Cook (1992) proposed the notion of “multicompetence” as a complex type of competence, which is qualitatively different from the competence of monolingual speakers of a language. Cook (2003, p. 2) defines “multicompetence” as “the knowledge of more than one language in the same mind”, a concept based on the idea of the second language user as a whole person in opposition to the monolingual native speaker.

In the real world, multilinguals acquire and use their skills at different levels depending on their communicative purposes, and the holistic-multilingual approaches proposed by Grosjean and Cook seem to reflect multilingual speakers’ discursive practices more accurately. Being competent to communicate in several languages does not only imply acquiring syntactic rules or vocabulary but also implies using languages in different contexts. A multilingual speaker uses different languages either in isolation or mixed, for different purposes instead of using one language for all possible situations. An example of a Basque L1 speaker who is fluent in Spanish and is attending a course in English can be useful to illustrate this point. Itziar (not her real name) is a 20-year-old female student of Social Education at the University of the Basque Country. She has been asked to indicate which languages she uses in different situations. These questions were part of a questionnaire carried out to analyse the complexity of multilingual proficiency. More than 100 university students filled in a questionnaire on their perceived competence in three or more languages and the use of these languages in different everyday life activities. Itziar’s answers are given below:

- **Talking about a personal problem with a close friend.** Only if I always speak Basque to this friend I would use Basque, otherwise I use Spanish.

- **Chatting on the internet.** If it is with my friends I would use Basque, if it is that I just join a “chat” I think that I would use Spanish.
- **Reading the newspaper.** I usually read newspapers in Basque and Spanish.
- **Listening to what your friend did at the weekend.** That would be in Basque, I have very few friends who use Spanish to talk about daily things.
- **Writing an application for a job including your CV.** As we live in the Basque Country I would use Basque but there can be exceptions. I have my CV ready in Basque but if I need a job in Spain I would translate it.
- **Reading a novel.** I tend to use Spanish, there are more things to read in Spanish and the things I am interested in are usually written in Spanish.
- **Watching a movie.** The same as for books, usually in Spanish.
- **Listening to a lecture on multilingual education.** In Spanish or Basque, I could follow well in both, but not so well in English.
- **Reading a legal text like the Basque Country Official Gazette.** I would read it in Spanish because we have learned most technical words in Spanish.
- **Sending an e-mail to ask for information about a job.** I would look at the information first and then depending on what it is I would use Spanish or Basque.
- **Sending an SMS to a friend.** Basque or Spanish depending on the friend.
- **Talking to a doctor in hospital about a health problem.** I would probably use Spanish because most doctors prefer to speak Spanish.

This example shows that Itziar alternates the use of Basque and Spanish depending on the activity and the interlocutor. In comparison, a monolingual student with Spanish as the first language will use only Spanish for all activities and with all interlocutors. Itziar as a bilingual speaker will have fewer opportunities to use each of the languages for each of the activities and there are some activities that she does preferably in Basque, others in Spanish and others in both languages. It may be difficult for Itziar to read a legal text equally well in Basque and Spanish because she is not used to reading this type of text in Basque, even if she is a native speaker of Basque. The type of competence Itziar has in either Basque or Spanish is difficult to isolate without considering the other language because they are intertwined. If we adopt a holistic multilingual view, we can consider Itziar a competent bilingual speaker who can carry out many activities in both Basque and Spanish and navigate between languages according to the context. She is not less competent than a monolingual speaker because she can carry out all these activities. However, she is different from a monolingual speaker because she uses one or two languages (or even three) and she can even do so in different ways using her bilingual repertoire. The holistic approach to bilingualism proposed by Grosjean (1995, 2008) or the concept of multicompetence proposed by Cook (1992) seem more adequate approaches to define Itziar’s competence than a practically non-existent monolingual speaker of Basque and a monolingual native speaker of Spanish when looking at Itziar’s communicative competencies and language practices.

Even though the ideas proposed by Grosjean (2008) and Cook (1992) have received attention in studies on multilingualism and second/third language acquisition and are often mentioned in the literature, they have rarely been put into practice in

research and teaching. The atomistic/monolingual native speaker ideal competence is still the reference for researchers and language teachers who usually focus on one target language at a time. “Focus on Multilingualism” proposes to consider multilingual speakers as such and not as monolingual speakers of each of the languages because monolingual competence cannot be applied to multilingualism (see also Jessner 2008). The communicative competence of multilingual speakers is fluid, not fixed, difficult to measure but real. “Focus on Multilingualism” looks at multilingual speakers and proposes to look at the different ways these speakers learn and use their languages without comparing them to ideal native speakers of different languages.

13.4 The Whole Linguistic Repertoire

As we have seen in the previous section, multilingual speakers navigate between languages. However, the intersection between languages has not received enough attention (Gorter 2013). This is quite surprising if we take into consideration that, as Li Wei and Wu (2009, p. 193) point out, codeswitching is “the most distinctive behaviour of the bilingual speaker”. The study of codeswitching has been an important development in sociolinguistics (see, for example, Gardner-Chloros 2009) but it has received less attention in research conducted in educational settings. In general, the language separation ideology is well rooted in education and teaching practices try to avoid translation and the interaction between languages, and have been referred to as “parallel monolingualism” (Heller 1999, p. 271), “two solitudes” (Cummins 2005, p. 588) or “separate bilingualism” (Blackledge and Creese 2010). The preference for what Li Wei (2011, p. 374) calls the “One Language Only (OLON) or One Language at a Time (OLAT) ideology” creates a gap between school communication and the practices of multilingual speakers in real life.

Interaction between the languages can be analysed with reference to approaches to second language acquisition based on the Complex systems theory or dynamic systems theory (De Bot et al. 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Van Geert 2008; Jessner 2006). In his volume on developmental psychology, Van Geert (1994) compares the similarities and differences between a child learning about time telling and money counting in terms of connected growers. There is support because both growers share some underlying principles and there can be strategies learnt in one that can be applied to the other. At the same time, there is competition between these growers because the child needs resources such as time, attention and effort to learn them. There can also be some confusion because the time units and the money units are different (adding to 60 in the case of time and to 100 with money). This example can be applied to learning two or more languages at school. The relationship between the languages can be at the same time competitive and supportive. Learning languages require resources such as time, effort, attention and interest. This is clearly seen at school and there have been many attempts in different parts of the world to try to get more time for second and foreign languages by

learning language and content at the same time as is done in multilingual education programs including immersion or CLIL. The use of languages as the medium of instruction optimizes some of the resources necessary to learn languages. At the same time, learning different languages can also be seen as connected and supportive growers. Language learning involves a series of cognitive processes that are shared independently of the target language. By learning a language, multilinguals also acquire principles and strategies that can support the acquisition of other languages. This idea has already been pointed out in research on third language acquisition (see Cenoz 2013) but has not been developed sufficiently in research and teaching in the context of multilingual education.

“Focus on Multilingualism” proposes that all languages used by multilingual speakers and learners can act as connected growers. Using the image of weaving, we can think of the longitudinal threads, or warp, as the languages that are being learnt. They are vertical and parallel and they do not touch each other, they are the languages in the curriculum that are separate from each other. However, we can add the lateral threads, the weft, so as to create the interlacing or interaction between these languages and the processes of learning them. The weft goes across the curriculum of languages and establishes interrelationships. The weft adds support to the cloth even if it also requires time, effort, attention and interest.

Research that goes beyond two languages into third language acquisition and use has had an important development in the last years and has provided some evidence about the interaction between languages (see, for an overview example, Aronin and Hufeisen 2009). One of the areas that has received most attention is cross-linguistic interaction (see De Angelis 2007; Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008). Findings in this area indicate that the first and second languages can influence the third language but also that learning an additional language can have an effect on previously known languages (Cook 2003). This mutual interaction can be illustrated by what multilingual speakers say when reflecting on the process of learning and using languages.

The art of language learning may lie not in the acquisition of an individual language but in mastery of the learning process itself. (Tonkin 2009, p. 201)

My speech demonstrates all kinds of cross-linguistic influence: influence from one mother tongue to another; from a mother tongue to a second language; from a mother tongue to a third language; from a second language to a mother tongue; and from a second language to a third language. ...

(Kamanga 2009, p. 124)

Cross-linguistic interaction has been studied particularly at the lexical level but the interaction between languages takes place at other levels as well. The examples from classroom and Internet interaction in the rest of this chapter were collected as part of a research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (EDU 2009-11601) aimed at investigating multilingual competence in school contexts. The data collection included class observations, questionnaires and interviews in five multilingual schools and students were also asked to write compositions in Basque, Spanish and English. The class observations and interviews were recorded and transcribed. All the students were in the 3rd year of second-

ary school and were fluent in Basque and Spanish but also studied English as a third language. Furthermore, the project included interactions from Tuenti, a very popular Spanish networking service similar to Facebook. A group of five secondary school students agreed to provide examples of their interactions on Tuenti outside school and in this chapter we present one of the interactions. The interactions were edited by the students so as to remove personal names.

The following utterances produced by a secondary school student in the Basque Country when writing a composition in Basque, Spanish and English provide an example of interaction at the discourse level. They are the first sentence of compositions produced by the same student when describing different pictures for each of the languages on different days:

- *STU Irudi honetan, baso baten erdian dagoen laku bat ikus dezakegu
[In this picture, we can see a lake that is in the middle of a forest]
- *STU En esta imagen, podemos ver una granja, que está siendo visitada por
unos niños y sus padres
[In this picture, we can see a farm that is being visited by some children
and their parents]
- *STU In this picture we can see the inner part of a house

This example shows that the student uses the same strategy for the opening sentence of the composition in the three languages even if the pictures and the languages are different and the compositions were written on different days. It is a clear case of transfer at the discourse level. The student is using a strategy acquired to write a description in Basque which she also applies when writing a description in Spanish and English; the latter is a language in which her competence is more limited. Students are not encouraged to interrelate their languages but as multilingual speakers, they use their resources in different languages when they have to complete the task of writing a composition.

Multilingual speakers are not always aware of the resources they have and they may not use them because they are not activated. An example of the way language separation can result in less efficient learning can be found at the morphosyntactic level when looking at in the case of Basque, French and Spanish. Basque is a highly inflected non-Indoeuropean language that is considered as completely different from the rest of the languages in the curriculum. Basque is the main language of instruction in most Basque schools in the Basque Autonomous Community where Spanish is the dominant language in society. English is taught as a foreign language but also as an additional language of instruction and French is an optional second foreign language in secondary school. One of the most interesting linguistic features of Basque is that it is an ergative language that has a special ending for the subject of transitive verbs and uses different auxiliaries for transitive and intransitive verbs. So for example in sentences 1 and 2 “Mikel” has the ending “ek” and becomes “Mikelek” because it is the subject of a transitive verb but in sentence 3 it is just “Mikel” because the verb is intransitive. Transitive and intransitive verbs also have different auxiliaries in Basque:

1. Mikelek Aneri liburua ematen dio	<Mikel gives Ane the book>
2. Mikelek Ane ikusten du	<Mikel sees Ane>
3. Mikel hondartzara doa	<Mikel goes to the beach>

This distinction in Basque is already known in an implicit way by secondary school students even if they are not speakers of Basque as a first language because in most cases they have had Basque as the language of instruction for all the school subjects (except Spanish and English) over 10 years.

This grammatical distinction in Basque can be useful for learning some tenses in French such as the “*passé composé*” that uses different auxiliaries for transitive and intransitive verbs as can be seen in sentences 4 and 5.

4. Mikelek Ane ikusi du	Mikel a vu Ane	< Mikel has seen Ane >
5. Mikel hondartzara joan da	Mikel est allé à la plage	< Mikel has gone to the beach >

Both Basque and French use different auxiliaries depending on the transitivity of the verb and therefore Basque can be used as a resource.

The distinction can also be very useful when secondary school students learn how to analyse the syntax of Spanish sentences in grammar classes. Their Basque makes a clear difference between transitive and intransitive verbs and has a specific declension ending for indirect objects. Students already know these distinctions in an implicit way because of one of the languages in their repertoire. However, the strict language separation of the syllabuses for the different languages prevents most students from benefitting from this knowledge because they are not usually made aware of it. The ideology of language separation does not allow them to benefit from their own multilingualism. The idea behind “Focus on Multilingualism” is the opposite. The languages in the multilingual speakers’ repertoire need to be activated in order to support the acquisition and the metalinguistic reflection of other languages. It considers the complexity of multilingualism and the way the different subsystems are connected across the languages in their development, and the way they support each other. By looking at the different languages and their interactions in research, new trends and patterns can be identified (see Cenoz and Gorter 2011).

13.5 The Social Context

Multilingual speakers acquire and use languages while engaging in language practices in a social context. Multilingualism has a social dimension, not only a linguistic dimension. Multilinguals use their linguistic resources in a social context and shape this context in communicative interaction (see also Canagarajah 2007, Kramsch 2010). The traditional monolingual ideology of school contexts focuses on teaching languages as codes and, when it is teacher-centred, it provides few opportunities for interaction as part of pedagogical practices. When interaction between teachers and students takes place in the classroom, it is expected to be in the designated lan-

guage. School organization reinforces this separation of languages by having one teacher for each language or using colours or other codes to identify the designated language. However, research on multilingual practices in the classroom has shown that both students and teachers use their linguistic resources to a certain extent in spite of the constraints (see Lin and Martin 2005; Li Wei and Martin 2009; Li Wei 2011; Blackledge and Creese 2010).

In fact, classrooms are more multilingual than institutional ideologies want them to be. The following example based on an observation of a Physics class in a Basque-medium secondary school illustrates this point:

The teacher uses a laptop with a beamer for all to see, Windows and MS-Word are in Basque. The teacher uses Basque when addressing the students but she uses some Spanish when talking to herself saying things like “*menudo rebote se ha pillado*” < isn’t she angry! >, “*qué tonta soy*” < silly me! >. Most of the students use Basque when talking to each other but some students also use some Spanish.

Here follows another example from the same classroom but now it is the English language class with another teacher:

Students listen to an English text that they can read at the same time in their textbooks. The teacher repeats the main ideas of the text in English, and afterwards she explains parts of it in Basque or in Basque and Spanish so as to make sure that students understand correctly. The teacher uses English most of the time when addressing students, but the students answer in Spanish and sometimes in Basque. The English used by students is only for short answers to direct questions and there is no spontaneous use of English by students.

These examples show that there is a difference between the strict allocation of languages in a multilingual school and the real language practices. The Physics class is supposed to be in Basque only but the teacher and some students also use Spanish. The English class is supposed to be in English only but Basque and Spanish are used both by the teacher and the students. These examples of interaction in the class go against the official policy of separation but are closer to spontaneous discursive practices. “Focus on Multilingualism” looks at such multilingual practices both at school and outside school so as to compare multilingual practices in different contexts (see also Gorter 2013).

When students are not constrained by school regulations about language use in class, they can use their resources in more creative ways. In many cases, groups of secondary school students who meet at school but get together for leisure activities can be regarded as a community of practice because they “develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values—in short, practices—as a function of their joint involvement in mutual activity” (Lave and Wenger 1991). Adolescent students develop their multilingual and multicultural identities both at school and out-of-school (see also Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003; Creese and Blackledge 2010, 2011). It is in these natural contexts that multilinguals have more possibilities to use languages as a resource in successful communication. One of these natural contexts is chatting on the Internet, a medium of communication which is extremely popular amongst adolescents.

The following interaction was provided by the multilingual students who took part in it. They are 14-year-old secondary school students chatting on Saturday eve-

ning after they have been out in the city where they have seen each other at a distance but they did not get together. Jon (male) and Miren (female) are fictional names. The actual conversation is in bold. The translation into English and the conventional written form are given in italics (B = Basque, S = Spanish and E = English).

Jon: **zmz??** <how are you? >(B: *Zer moduz?*)

Miren: **osond ta z¿** <very well and you? >(B: *Oso ondo eta zu?*)

Jon: **osond**<very well> (B: *Oso ondo*)

Miren: **te e vistoo**<*I saw you*> (S: *Te he visto*)

Jon: **yaa yo tambienn pero stabas lejos**<*I also saw you but you were far away*> (S: *Ya yo también pero estabas lejos*)

Miren: **jeje barka x no saludartee eh!**<*jeje sorry for not saying hello eh*> (B/S: *¡Jeje barkatu por no saludarte!*)

Jon: **jajajja lasai** =><*jajajja it's ok*>(B: *jajajja lasai*)

Miren: **te e visto ta, bien kon el skate**<*I have also seen you with the skate*> (S/E: *Te he visto también con el skate*)

Jon: **jajjaja es de un amigo**<*jajjaja it is my friend's*>(S: *jajjaja es de un amigo*)

Miren: **ok ya sabes andaar? sk no te e vistoo andandoo**<*can you skate? I didn't see you skating?*>(E/S: *Ok ¿ya sabes andar? Es que no te he visto andando*)

Jon: **bueno mas o menos**<*well more or less*>(S: *Bueno más o menos*)

Miren: jej<*jej*>

Jon: **necesito algo de praktika y tal..**<*I need a bit of practice or so*> (S: *necesito algo de práctica y tal*)

Miren: **osea no no¿**<*so no no*>(S: *o sea no no*)

Jon: **bueno si el suelo sta liso y no ai nadie cercaa sii**<*well if the ground is flat and there is nobody near me yes*>(S: *Bueno si el suelo está liso y no hay nadie cerca si*)

Miren: **balee osea komo yooo y te has kaiidoo¿**<*ok like me, did you fall?*>(S: *Vale o sea como yo y ¿te has caído?*)

Jon: **qbaa ke yoo kontrolo**<*of course not, I manage*>(S: *Que va que yo controlo*)

Miren: **aaah! balee sois muxps en la kuadrilla no?** < *aaah! Ok ok are you a lot in your kuadrilla* * > (S: *aaah! Vale sois muchos en la cuadrilla ¿no?*)

Jon: **25 o asi bosotras?** <*25 or so and you*> (S: *25 o así vosotras?*)

Miren: **15o asii**<*15 or so*>(S: *15 o así*)

Jon: **okk**<*ok*>(E: <*oki*>)

Miren: **tienes el msn instalaau¿** <*do you have msn installed*> (S/E: *¿Tienes el msn instalado?*)

Jon: **noo me konekto por ebuddy** <*no I make the connections through ebuddy*> (S/E: *No me conecto por ebuddy*)

(NB *cuadrilla is the regular group of friends)

This conversation shows how multilingual students navigate amongst languages in their private conversations and how they develop their own creative multilingual voices combining languages and other semiotic devices. A first analysis of this con-

versation identifies three languages: Basque (B), Spanish (S) and English (E) and some characteristics of Internet communication such as the lengthening of vowels (yooo, yoo), spelling (kontrolo, konekto) or abbreviations (zmz??). There are signs that cannot be assigned to any of the languages (aaah! jajjaja, jeje). At the same time, the conversation shows that there are no clear boundaries between the three languages involved and that it is quite difficult to separate the languages from other semiotic signs in the conversation. There are words like “msn” or “ok” which come from English but are used in Spanish and Basque commonly by some speakers. The integration of the word “barka” (*sorry*) in a Spanish utterance does not seem to carry any extra meaning. Musk (2010) also reported “a seamless bilingual medium, whereby the boundaries between languages or codes are at most only loosely maintained” when 17-year-old bilinguals in a Welsh–English bilingual secondary school took part in focus group discussions at school. The linguistic practices of these students and their peers are heteroglossic and combine different forms and signs. As we have already seen, the Tuenti interaction discussed here has not taken place at school and students have more possibilities to be creative and to flout linguistic conventions. The conversation is the result of using semiotic resources that combine languages and other signs.

13.6 Implications for Teaching and Research on Multilingual Education

“Focus on Multilingualism” proposes to consider multilingual students as multilingual speakers and not as deficient monolinguals both when teaching and learning at school and when conducting research on school multilingualism. It highlights the agency of multilingual students so that they can benefit from their multiple repertoires when learning languages and content at school. Multilingual students have more experience than monolingual students as language learners and language users but this experience is less likely to be used if languages are kept completely separate at school. Even if students and teachers occasionally switch and mix their languages in the classroom, there is a loss of resources when languages are kept separate. The ideology of language separation is usually fixed with the idea that students should speak their languages as “pure as possible” (see also Jørgensen 2005).

“Focus on Multilingualism” highlights the need to integrate the curricula of the different languages so as to trigger more benefits of being multilingual. Taking into account that resources for processing languages are limited and that time devoted to language learning at school is also limited, it is desirable to benefit from connected growers that can be easily transferred amongst languages. Weaving the tapestry of languages is not only about the warp but also about the weft. Through a strong integration in the curricula of the different languages, the connections are more likely to be activated. As Block (2007, p. 80) points out “there is a need for teachers to draw on the considerable language resources that such students bring with them to class”.

There is also a need to bridge the gap between out-of-school multilingual and multimodal practices and formal school practices. In the case of multilingualism, one of these resources is the ability to combine different languages in communication. As we have already seen, teachers and students use their multilingual resources in class but particularly outside the class in Tuenti interactions. The combination of different semiotic resources including multilingual texts is widespread outside the classroom in sectors such as advertising where images, fonts, symbols and colours are mixed with languages. However, beliefs about language separation are still strong in school settings. School activities that look at out-of-school communicative practices in order to develop communicative awareness could be useful.

Even if it is true that multilinguals not only engage in multilingual practices but that their discursive practices can also be monolingual, it is important for the school not to ignore the existence of multilingual practices. Even if multilingual schools have as an aim the development of literacy skills in different languages, multilingual practices from communication outside school can be used to develop awareness about different discursive practices and their characteristics. “Focus on Multilingualism” is an approach for teaching, learning and research in multilingual education that can be considered as heteroglossic because it looks at the simultaneous activation and use of languages and other signs by multilingual speakers.

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