

Preschool education

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Introduction¹

To be authentic and effective, the multilingual turn (May 2014; Meier 2017) should begin in the early years as it is there where “key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed and foundations for later language learning are laid” (European Commission 2006). This is the perspective argued for in this chapter and the suggested path is to follow what is labelled Pedagogy of Diversity, which would entail the introduction to the plurilingual and pluricultural paradigm in a way that is both coherent and respectful with the needs and abilities of young learners.

The Pedagogy of Diversity derives from two different perspectives towards very young learners: a developmental perspective and a pedagogic one. The developmental perspective takes into account the literature on well-being at early ages (Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke 2011; Sutherland and Mukadam 2018, among others), which focuses on creating the appropriate conditions for very young learners at their settings while respecting and promoting their identities, which includes their home language and culture. The pedagogic perspective follows the integrated plurilingual approach of language learning and teaching, which redefines the role home languages should have in the language classroom and delves into the development of plurilingual and intercultural competencies by looking at the way own-languages are used in early childhood education classrooms (European Commission 2006; Hall and Cook 2013; Corcoll and Flores 2018). It also relates to inclusive classrooms. Even though inclusion often tends to refer to teaching a common curriculum to all students, while acknowledging differences among learners (Westwood 2018, p. ix), actively welcoming language and culture diversity should also be taken into account when building inclusive classrooms. As well as special needs or learning difficulties, language and culture heritage is recognized as a source of diversity in the new trends on inclusive and adaptive teaching (Westwood 2018) and it is also recognized in the pedagogical approach that is at the basis of this chapter, namely, Pedagogy of Diversity.

Historical perspectives

When addressing aspects concerning translation and education in early years, the viewpoint is necessarily quite transversal. For this reason, the historical perspective described in this

section will be presented from three different viewpoints which aim to tackle the basic issues that need to be considered when dealing with plurilingualism in early years. These viewpoints are: very young learners and well-being, very young learners and language learning, and very young learners and diversity.

Very young learners and well-being

The EURYDICE (2009) document identifies how effective preschool education can promote lifelong learning and provide opportunities to increase equality by supporting children in reaching their full potential. It also points out that “what seems essential for all approaches is a positive socio-emotional climate, with emotionally safe and stable relationships, with sensitive-responsive, non-intrusive teachers” (p. 32). Thus, a respectful environment as well as sensitive teachers seem to be key issues in the educational approach to be followed in early years. Amongst the different dimensions of well-being identified by Sutherland and Mukadam (2018, p. 27), there are three in which language development is key: toddlers’ development and learning, toddlers’ voice and expressions, and toddlers’ early languages. In a linguistically diverse setting, language development will necessary include aspects that may be related to one or more of the languages.

Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke also note how “the way children feel about themselves is not innate or inherited. It is learned. . . . Positive self-esteem depends upon whether children feel that others accept them and see them as competent and worthwhile” (2011, p. 3). This logically implies acceptance of children’s home languages and cultures which, in our opinion, is best developed through an integrated plurilingual approach. Through the Pedagogy of Diversity approach described in this chapter, the focus is placed on teachers acknowledging and valuing children’s home languages, but also on making children aware of the diversity around them and learning to value and respect it, whatever the educational context.

Very young learners and language learning

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2018) follows the distinction that was already established in the 2001 edition (Council of Europe 2001) between multilingualism and plurilingualism: the former is understood as the coexistence of different languages at the social or individual level, whereas the latter is defined as the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user or learner.

Very often in our educational context, the distinction between multilingual and plurilingual approaches as described in the Common European Framework is not actually followed. This means that there are many settings where several languages are taught (thus they call themselves plurilingual settings) but those languages are taught in isolation (thus following a monolingual approach), thus generating a monolingual view of plurilingualism (Wilson and González Davies 2016). This is the approach that is traditionally followed, for instance, in dual language education or (two-way) immersion or bilingual programmes.

It is also true that, on many occasions, when children’s home languages are used, this is for classroom management purposes, such as giving instructions for an activity or disciplining the group. When working with very young learners, it will also include expressing physical needs or emotions (Scheffler and Domińska 2018). Be that as it may, this use of languages does not really cover what the plurilingual approach claims.

The literature on plurilingualism, however, seems to indicate that the traditionally labelled monolingual bias is slowly being substituted by a more open view of the role of languages in

classrooms and new conceptual visions arise, which are linked to terms such as translanguaging (García 2009), code-meshing (Canagarajah 2011), multi-competence (Cook 2007), among many others. This shift of perspective is linked to the multilingual turn, which encompasses a major shift in perceptions regarding the learning of languages. Meier (2017) highlights the changes which have taken place in our perceptions of not only the ways in which languages are learned, but also languages and learners in their own right, pointing to a reconceptualization of knowledge as co-constructed and based upon the linguistic repertoire of teachers and learners. The question is whether this shift has as yet influenced classroom practice.

Very young learners and diversity

All those involved in education who work with very young learners and their families are well aware that this is a highly sensitive stage in terms of concerns or fears families may have, but also in terms of the influence relevant adults may have on children as key figures in their lives. It is also the stage where foundations can be laid for future citizens to grow and develop as responsible global citizens.

An approach that may be relevant here is the diversity pedagogy theory (Sheets 2005, 2009), which entails there are culturally inclusive teachers who develop pedagogical behaviours that foster inclusion of other languages and cultures and promote students' cultural displays in their classrooms.

Moving a step further from Sheet's theory, the Pedagogy of Diversity approach (Corcoll and Flores 2018) suggests that practitioners should create opportunities for young learners to experience linguistic and cultural diversity at their settings and schools. Following this approach, this diversity should not only be made visible but also acknowledged and used in the learning process by looking at language and language learning from a complex and enriching perspective. In this sense, the focus should not be primarily placed on acquiring words in an additional language but on acquiring a positive attitude towards learning words in an additional language. This implies learning languages whilst developing the understanding that those languages that we are familiar with are not the only ones, or even the most important ones, in the world. It means beginning to hear and notice similarities and differences among the languages that surround us and, ultimately, developing an interest in and respect towards them. As children grow, the plurilingual approach and its implementation in formal contexts becomes more complex, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Although cultural and linguistic inclusion is not part of its theoretical foundation, this perspective seems coherent with the Universal Design for Learning approach (Meyer et al. 2014), which advocates for multimodality in teaching that can help overcome learning difficulties that children may have. At the end of the day, it is a perspective that calls upon flexibility on behalf of the teacher, as well as acceptance and respect for differences on behalf of the whole learning community.

The three historical perspectives described in this section (very young learners and well-being, very young and language learning, and very young learners and diversity) lead into the pedagogic approach that will be described in what follows and specified in a number of strategies that, if followed, can help a setting turn into a plurilingual setting.

Research approaches and key findings

Recently, some research has been carried out on the language uses of very young learners (García 2011; Schwartz and Asli 2014; Marzà and Ríos 2016; Pontier and Gort 2016; Portolès

and Martí 2017; Scheffler and Domińska 2018, among others). The focus is primarily placed on the use that young learners and their teachers make of languages in diverse multilingual or plurilingual settings, that is, on describing what is happening in classrooms. In this sense, a key finding reported by García (2011) and researched by Portolès and Martí (2017) establishes the use of diverse languages in the classroom by children in order to carry out the following functions: to mediate understanding; to co-construct meaning; to construct meaning within oneself; and to include, to exclude, and to show knowledge. Whilst the categories may differ when reading other authors, the focus tends to be the same: identify the (sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious) *reason* behind a certain linguistic use in order to explain it.

Based on this descriptive perspective, this section is devoted to describing research into the language uses of very young plurilingual learners (age 4) and their teachers in an educational setting, as well as presenting the key findings. The ulterior aim, however, is not solely descriptive as we link the description of language use to the justification of the pedagogical approach taken in this chapter. Hence we would like to place the focus not so much on what is done but on what could be done in order to promote a true plurilingual approach.

We felt the need of carrying out this research to collect data on the spontaneous plurilingual uses of very young children in an international school context where many languages exist side by side but where there is no recorded systematicity in the way they are used alongside the target language. Also, it was important to collect more data as there seems to be a lack of research on this topic: “despite this recent interest [in the use of home languages in the classroom] there is, as yet, very little data that documents the extent and purpose of own-language use in English language teaching” (Hall and Cook 2013, p. 7).

This study follows a qualitative research approach. Data was gathered in a school setting in Catalonia. The school was chosen because it is an international school with a great diversity of cultures and languages amongst its students and staff, which means that the development of the plurilingual approach and a systematic use of translation and other plurilingual strategies would be coherent and natural. However, despite the fact that this plurilingual and intercultural reality forms part of everyone’s daily life at school, the degree to which plurilingual competences are used and developed within the classroom is inconsistent and unstructured in part because the main focus in early years is on the acquisition of English in a mainly immersion setting, where English is not the main language of the host community.

This priority is shared by all agents involved, including children, families and staff, a point which was clearly reflected in interviews with teachers. As it is, this seems to be quite often the case in our more and more globalized schools. The focus of this research is to analyze what happens when very young plurilingual learners and their teachers interact in a context where a systematic plurilingual methodology has not been developed. The findings provide the basis for the pedagogic strategies described in this chapter.

The research procedure has implied video-recording two hour-long sessions in which teachers carried out group problem-solving activities with their students (ages 4 and 5) as a response to a story. The teachers were asked to carry out their usual lessons, so the situation, the classroom activities, and the topics of conversation have not been pre-selected in any way. In other words, the research is not experimental but ecological.

The conversations were transcribed and analyzed following a thematic coding analysis, through which the language uses of the children and their teachers were identified. A grounded research methodology allowed researchers to draw main categories and subcategories from the data. The following findings section describes the main categories that were identified and discusses them.

Following the recordings, semi-structured interviews with teachers were carried out in which issues such as their perception of and opinion on the use of several languages in the school context was obtained. This is a very relevant aspect as it is clear that the teachers' linguistic attitudes will depend greatly on these opinions and perceptions and will influence how the linguistic landscapes will become visible in the classrooms. This is possibly always so as "the extent to which own-language use occurs in a class depends on the attitudes of teachers and learners towards its legitimacy and value in the ELT classroom" (Hall and Cook 2013, p. 10) but it could be claimed that it may be even more relevant when analyzing very young learners' speech, given their reliance on the adult figure. Due to space constraints, the results obtained through these interviews will not be discussed in depth in this chapter. However, some references to the interview contents will be made when they can enrich the discussion on the children's productions.

The participants in the study are 24 children, two teachers and two teaching assistants. In the analysis of the data in Table 4.1, adults (teachers, teaching assistants and researcher) are referred to as T1, T2, T3, and T4 and Res (researcher); The children are identified numerically (i.e. C1, C2, etc.) in order to protect their anonymity and where responses were made by an unidentifiable child or children the letters Ch or Chn have been used. Two groups of children and adults have participated in the research (Table 4.1):

Table 4.1 Participants in the research

<i>Group 1 (4-year-olds)</i>	<i>Group 2 (4-year-olds)</i>
3 adults (class teacher, teaching assistant, researcher all with fluent use of 2 to 3 languages)	3 adults (class teacher, teaching assistant, researcher all with fluent use of 2 to 4 languages)
13 children whose own languages include: Spanish, Catalan, English, Russian, Chinese, and Romanian	11 children whose own languages include: Spanish, Catalan, English, Chinese, and Italian

This research complies with ethical standards. Permission to record and analyze classroom-based data for research purposes has been obtained from families and school and anonymity maintained at all times.

Findings

The discussion of our findings is organized following the main categories (see Table 4.2) regarding plurilingual uses that were identified after the analysis of the transcribed video recordings.

Classroom activity and language use

Regarding language uses in the classroom, the first aspect that should be mentioned is that they are very clearly related to the kind of activity which is taking place. Our data show that when the lesson is teacher-led, as when the teacher is telling a story, the children basically respond with short answers or mirror the teacher's words (see excerpt 1). That is, they do not make much use of their plurilingual repertoire.

Table 4.2 Main plurilingual uses identified in the data

Plurilingual uses

- 1 Classroom activity and language use
 - 2 Use of rephrasing or recasting
 - 3 Use of other languages promoted by the teacher
 - 4 Non-use of translation
 - 5 Acknowledgement of other languages
 - 6 Use of code-switching in peer talk
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Excerpt 1

- T1:* If I hide from my . . . if I hide . . . if I hide from the day, maybe it'll go away he thought. It didn't go away. Time to get up, said his mum. Here's mummy saying "Come on, Splat, it's time to get up. Time to go to cat school". Yes, C9?
- C9:* It's a . . . it's a pencil.
- T1:* A pencil, yes. "Time to get dressed" said his mum. "I don't have any clean socks. Maybe . . . Maybe I should go to school tomorrow instead" said Splat. "You don't wear socks" said his mum. Do cats wear socks?
- Chn:* No
- T1:* "I'm having a bad hair day, mum, maybe I should go to school tomorrow instead", said Splat. His mum combed his hair. "Purrfect", she said.
- C5:* Purrfect?

In contrast, when the children are engaged in an activity (for example, an art and craft activity) and they are working in small groups with the adults in the classroom circulating, then their language uses are more varied and richer and they use, for instance, code-switching (see excerpts 2 and 3).

Excerpt 2

- C21:* C15, we need to talk
- C15:* Un poco más
- C21:* No, tenemos más sellotape aquí. Corta. No, allí, no. Desde allí

Excerpt 3

- T1:* Now. . . . A real mouse, no, maybe we could make mice later, plasticine mice or something, or paint mice. So, I was thinking
- C3:* Oh my golly!
- C8:* Olé olé olé . . .

Looking into children's use of languages while considering the actual classroom activity that is taking place is especially interesting because it shows that children's use of language is not random. In fact, as plurilingual speakers, they make decisions – albeit unconsciously – about which language to use with whom and when (Grosjean 1982, 2010). In our opinion, this shows that, were the plurilingual approach systematically developed, the children's use of their language repertoires and diverse communication styles would become richer.

Use of rephrasing or recasting

Another aspect that is worth mentioning and that derives from the analysis of our data is that the teacher quite often rephrases children's words in order to correct their mistakes (see excerpt 4).

Excerpt 4

- C1: My granddad have a accordion
T2: He has an accordion? Does he play it?

Rephrasing or recasting is very common strategy used by teachers, especially language teachers, and it links with the idea of giving immediate feedback to children. Research has proven that recast is by far the most widely used technique and yet it results in the lowest rate of repair by students. In contrast, elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetition of error not only led to higher rates of uptake (i.e. noticing the feedback) but also highest rates of self or peer repair (Macaro 2005). That is, this type of feedback is not very efficient, as children may correct themselves after hearing the teacher's correction but they do not actually learn the corrected form as they have not noticed their mistake (see strategy 5, following).

In early ages, rephrasing can also be discouraged if we take into account what was first reported by US psycholinguists Jean Berko and Roger Brown in 1960:

A very interesting effect is known as the *fis phenomenon*. Several studies have reported intriguing conversations between a young child and an adult, showing that there can be a big difference between what children hear and what they can say

(Crystal 2007, p. 87)

The *fis phenomenon* refers to a conversation between a child and an adult in which the child referred to his inflated fish as *fis*. The adult noticed and imitating the child's pronunciation said "*is this your fis?*", to which the child answered "*no, my fis*" thus showing he could hear the right pronunciation but was not able to produce it yet. Excerpt 5 shows how the teacher's correction is not noticed by the child, who is paying attention exclusively to the content and not the form:

Excerpt 5

- C5: And he has eight
T2: He's eight years old?
C5: Yes

Use of other languages promoted by teacher

Excerpt 6 is the only instance in our data in which Teacher 2 promotes the use of another language by a child and actually asks him to give her the answer in Spanish. However, she gets the words in Spanish (*moscas*) and gives a similar one to the children in English (bugs), but does not use this instance to create a communicative need around this that could help children acquire the new word or understand that the word *bugs* does not exactly correspond to *moscas*. The use of strategies 3 or 4 could have been useful here.

Excerpt 6

T2: And what does the frog eat?

C2: Moscas

T2: What does he eat?

Ch: One moment

T2: Tell me in Spanish.

C4: Moscas

T2: Ah bugs

Non-use of translation

As was described earlier, even though this is clearly a diverse and plurilingual setting, the language approach is mostly monolingual in the sense that languages are academically separated into different compartments (social use of languages may differ). An example of this can be seen in excerpts 7 and 8 where the teacher clearly opts for not using translation when the child asks for a word. In excerpt 7, C16 (a child) explicitly shows that he does not understand a word and the teacher gives him a related word that she knows the child will understand. Even though this solves the communication problem at stake, the teacher does not actually solve the child's doubt. Clearly, this could be done by expanding her answer (i.e. dessert is what you have at the end of your meal and it could be a fruit, like a banana or an apple, but also a cake) which can take too long in a classroom context, but also by translating into Spanish or another language known by both the teacher and the child. This is, at the end of the day, what plurilingual speakers do among themselves.

Furthermore, excerpt 8 makes this non-use of translation even more apparent as, in a different conversation, a child offers to translate for a peer and the teacher refuses, again limiting the use of plurilingual mediation strategies on the part of the child.

Excerpt 7

C16: I don't know what is dessert

T3: Dessert is like cake

C17: I wanna make a cake

Excerpt 8

C18: You don't like it? I'll tell him in Spanish so he understands me

T4: No, he understands. C16, what do you want to do with this? Where do you want to put it?

C23: In the top

Although this non-use of translation is understandable in an immersion context, from a plurilingual perspective, it may entail the loss of some learning opportunities that could arise if translation was used systematically and made salient for the children, as it is clearly one of the communicative strategies they will need to master as plurilingual speakers. Moreover, home language use has been identified in research as the most effective way of learning vocabulary (Hall and Cook 2013, p. 9) so it seems to be the case that, by not using translation, teachers are missing learning opportunities. Interestingly, this contrasts with what teachers reported of

their classroom practice in interviews, in which translation by peers, other students or media is used on occasion, but rarely with the teacher themselves as translator in order to preserve their role as linguistic model.

Acknowledgement of other languages

There is only one instance in our data (excerpt 9) in which a child acknowledges his/her knowledge of another language (Spanish). Once more, this can be understandable in an immersion context where the promotion of the target language is key, but from the integrated plurilingual perspective (especially taking into account strategies 1 and 6), there may be learning opportunities lost.

Excerpt 9

- T4: Look you can also push it through, you can make a hole and push it through
 C14: I know something in Eng . . . I know something in Spanish
 T3: You are going to make one basket . . . and in that basket you need to put

In this excerpt, the child wants to show that he knows something in Spanish but his interest in sharing this is not picked up by the teacher nor any other child. Clearly, this is not the response that teachers would normally have in any other circumstance, as, especially in early years, children's voices are always taken into account and respected. However, when it comes to the presence of other languages in the classroom, this sometimes changes as teachers may believe that they are not helping the children when acknowledging their plurilingual repertoires. As one teacher, T1, commented: "If there was a native, maybe English, or inserting a Spanish word maybe, for example, secretly I . . . I quite like that, I, They're playing with the words, they're"

Although all the teachers who were spoken to clearly recognized and welcomed the skills that their students have, there is a sense that it is inappropriate for them to celebrate them openly and that they, as models, should avoid using other languages overtly.

There are two instances in our data that show how the work on the target language (English) can also help improve children's home language (Spanish in this case). These instances involve the use of the words *hole* and *handle*. On both occasions, the children show that they do not know these words and, more than probably, they do not know them in English or in their home language (remember they are 4-year-olds). The teachers give them the words in English (as shown in excerpts 10 and 11) and these words become salient in their conversation: they are used over and over, as if to indicate that the children are repeating them in order to acquire them.

Excerpt 10

(the children are making baskets in groups with the materials given by the teacher)

- T4: Look you can also push it through, you can make a **hole** and push it through
 C21: How will we make a **hole**?
 C14: I made a . . . I made a . . . I already made a basket. I made a basket
 T4: because you push it through, if you push it through it'll come out the other end and you can make a **hole**

- C21: You can make a **hole**?
T4: Mmm . . . you need to try first.
C15: I don't can. Puede ser un **hole**, ¿vale?
C21: ¿Por qué?
C15: Porque así puede
C23: We need some more of these, we need some more
C16: I need sticks
C15: No, it can stay out of **hole**. Pero así puedo acabar eso, ¿vale? Porque el se haga **hole** porqué así pueda acabar esto, ¿vale?
T4: Ok, yes, and then C16 can do it and C19. Do you want to put it on?
C15: A **hole**.
C21: I don't think you
C15: Yo tengo a tope el **hole**

The systematic use of **hole** in English even when children are code-switching into Spanish (*Puede ser un hole, ¿vale?*; *Yo tengo a tope el hole*) could indicate that the child does not know the word in his home language or else that he enjoys saying this word and so it has become salient in his speech. This is an excellent moment to give him the word in the other languages in his repertoire as there is a real need for the acquisition of new knowledge.

Excerpt 11

- C2: Now I do it for . . . for close the door and open the door
T2: Do you know what that's called? Do you remember what T1 called it?
T2: A **handle**
C2: **Handle**
T2: You've got a **handle**. Good boy. Very good.
T2: No, no, we can get another piece, but did you hear what C8 said? C8 why do we need to have that piece?
C8: For the **handle**
Ch: The **handle**
C3: We need to have a golden piece for the **handle**
Ch: And then me
T1: Right . . . right . . . listen . . . let me do . . . let me do some more first
T2: We can get a gold piece for the **handle**
C3: C2 . . . C2's . . . C2's got the **handle**
T2: Yeah. C2 has the **handle** for the door
T2: What's the magic glue? What's something else that we can sometimes use?
C4: I do a this
R: And what's that? A **handle**
T1: What are you making, C9?
C13: I need the **handle**.

In this case, there is no use of code-switching (notably this is not the same group as the one with hole case, which may be relevant), but it can be seen how both children and teachers are looking for opportunities to keep using and repeating the word handle. It is important to note how the teacher gives C2 the word when he shows verbally that he does not know it (C2: Now I do it for . . . for close the door and open the door). The teacher immediately reacts, notices

that there is a real need for a word and tells it to the child. Other children seem to pick it up and use it on different occasions, but towards the end of excerpt 11 we see how C4 has not acquired it (C4: I do a this) and, in this case, the researcher repeats the key word.

From a plurilingual perspective, a real need for a word such as the one described earlier would be an excellent occasion for using translation and help children learn these words also in their home language, thus helping them establish a connection that would make language more memorable (see strategies 3 and 5 in the following section).

Use of code-switching in peer talk

Code-switching implies alternating languages in a single conversation. Only plurilingual speakers can do this naturally and spontaneously and, most importantly, they only do it when speaking with other plurilingual speakers, that is, when the interlocutor can understand the bilingual message. Grosjean (1982) defines code-switching as part of a two-stage decision where bilinguals first decide which base language they are going to use – and this may depend on the weighting of a number of factors, such as the participant, the degree of intimacy, the degree of fluency, the setting or situation, among many others – and, second, decide whether to use CS. This second decision will only take place when the bilingual is addressing another bilingual and, even if it is delayed, “what is sure is that this stage does exist, because a bilingual will codeswitch in certain situations but not in others” (Grosjean 1982, p. 145). Code-switching, then,

not only fills a momentary linguistic need, it is also a very useful communicative resource. . . . It takes place quite unconsciously; speakers are often quite unaware that they are switching from one language to another. Their main concern is with communicating a message or intent, and they know that the other person will understand them whether they use one or two languages.

(Grosjean 1982, p. 148)

In our research, the use children make of code-switching clearly indicates this decision-making process. Firstly, they tend to code-switch when talking to one another and hardly ever when talking to their teachers (participant-oriented code-switching, in Grosjean’s words), as seen in excerpt 12:

Excerpt 12

C9: Is more? There is more?

C9: There is more? C5, se puede traer more?

C5: Espera

Second, they also use code-switching when the word is not readily available to them, as seen in the example of ‘hole’ (vocabulary-oriented code-switching, in Grosjean’s words). However, there is a common conception in interviews with teachers that code-switching happens because students are looking for the most available word, implying a lack of effort rather than competence. Whereas vocabulary-oriented code-switching provides an unplanned opportunity for language development by drawing on the child’s own language background, if the teacher believes that code-switching occurs because the child is simply using what Grosjean refers to as “the most available word”, their response is more likely to be a prompt or reminder to use the target language.

Pedagogic approaches and methods

In the early years, as a child moves from the familiar setting of the home to other environments, they encounter new forms of linguistic input, which may include registers, accents or even languages other than their own. This exposure to language in its broadest sense enables them to construct meaning from the world around them through contact with others. To the very young child, this input is no more and no less than a means to communicate.

In the early stages of language production, a child will explore and create forms based upon those he has already encountered. His speech contains non-standard items, which provide starting points for building and consolidating learning. Where plurilingual elements appear side by side, a similar process but a wider range of linguistic devices are being explored. However, progress is frequently measured in terms of standard usage of target linguistic norms at the expense of communicative competence. Expectations that are made of young children in terms of language production should take into account their level of maturity and skills at applying what they have encountered in their environment.

The Pedagogy of Diversity approach further implies that settings and schools should create the right conditions for languages to be used by families and educators as well as making languages visible all around, which means making diverse identities visible in the setting. Surrounding children with diverse linguistic and cultural inputs may help them develop into the plurilingual, globalized speakers needed in today's world. The link between diversity and identity construction is an aspect to take into account, especially in early ages. Children's individual identities are gradually defined through interaction with others, and one element that can clearly help to do so is language: the language spoken by the child, the language spoken by his friend at the setting, the language spoken by the practitioner, the language or languages used at home, and so on.

In sum and in our view, the pedagogic approach to follow to promote the multilingual turn in early ages should include the following strategies:

- 1 Make linguistic and cultural diversity visible at the setting. This visibility should be attained by using diverse visual support and including languages in any activity or routine followed at the setting: books and music in different languages, vocabulary work in different languages, etc. to avoid what Garcia and Kleyn describe as “although the light of their voice may be present, it is not always visible” (2016, p. 23). In Corcoll and Flores (2018, p. 166), an Internal Evaluation for Improvement Rubric to be used to assess visibility of home languages in the settings is presented.
- 2 Provide rich language models. Educators and families are the main source of language input for the children. This must be recognized and promoted by inviting adults to express themselves appropriately and, while adapting their talk to caretaker talk, aiming to broaden the vocabulary they generally use and consider new topics of conversation. Especially when the language of instruction is not the child's home language, then adequate exposure for intake to happen is required by providing children with sufficient access to quality examples of the target language for effective acquisition to take place. Clear, coherent models create patterns for students to follow and allow for repetition and reinforcement.
- 3 Use teaching approaches which are rich in language and focus on developing communication through meaningful experiences, creating natural spaces where languages can be lived and contextualized, both inside and outside the classroom. Used appropriately this provides a rich source of resources.

- 4 Suggest communication activities which promote the development of linguistic creativity. Linguistic creativity may be promoted by playing with language: inventing songs and poems, imitating accents or intonations, and so on.
- 5 Suggest communication activities which promote noticing similarities and differences among languages. By noticing we mean noting, observing or paying special attention to a particular item, generally as a prerequisite for learning (González-Davies and Scott-Tennent 2005, p. 163). This is especially relevant as “several studies suggest that, at least at an early age, bilingual children appear to be more sensitive to the structure of the language” (Schwartz and Asli 2014, p. 23) (Bialystok 2001).
- 6 Offer children the chance to show and share their linguistic and cultural identities. Invite children and their families to come to school and share their culture by reading stories, telling tales or singing songs in their home languages.
- 7 Develop a sensitivity and awareness on behalf of educators towards the ways in which very young children acquire language, and a recognition of the skills which they display in resolving linguistic dilemmas, whilst supporting and modelling a natural use of the target language. This does not require that the educator should be an expert in many languages, but that they should respond to learning opportunities as they arise allowing children (and their families) to become co-educators, using their plurilingual skills as intermediaries when the situation demands. By enabling this to happen the teacher retains the role of linguistic model, yet sends the message that alternatives are both possible and welcomed.

Appropriate, sensitive exposure to linguistic diversity leads to awareness of otherness, allowing for concepts to be explored and developed and forming a basis for future learning. This viewpoint, together with a structured school approach and training is especially relevant if some good practices are to become an essential part of the school system.

Conclusions and future directions

The aim of this chapter has been to present a pedagogic approach to be followed in early years with the aim of promoting the plurilingual approach in a way that is coherent with the needs of the children, their families, and their settings. This pedagogic approach has been named Pedagogy of Diversity and it has been specified through the description of eight different strategies that can be developed in early childhood and primary educational settings.

Prior to the description of the pedagogic approach, the historical approach presented earlier intended to focus on several aspects that are key when thinking about the promotion of plurilingual education in early years, namely: very young learners and well-being, very young learners and language learning, and very young learners and diversity. Clearly, each one of these topics is a field of research on its own, so their inclusion here is certainly limited but also necessary when the complexity of working with very young learners is understood.

A small-scale study is also described previously to support the pedagogic approach described. This study is a snapshot of two classroom moments. It cannot and should not be considered to be a complete picture of the complex use of languages in a whole school setting, nor to be representative of the behaviours of other students or teachers, but it does provide us with evidence of real language practices of both teachers and children. The presence of a camera and the presence of the teacher/researcher, although very familiar to both students and staff, inevitably influence behaviours to some degree. We witness children using English as their main language of communication, which corresponds to expectations and the aims of the

school, but we also observe situations in which children naturally draw upon their knowledge of another language (in this case Spanish) for specific purposes and needs.

In the light of these observations we would argue that a more structured inclusion of the child's linguistic resources/repertoire can support and develop their overall acquisition, of both the home and the target language. In order to fully use the learning opportunities which such contexts provide, the teacher's role is vital, requiring flexibility, sensitivity, and a clear vision of themselves as linguistic model but also as a co-learner. Further research is recommended into younger age groups and contexts in which there is a different mixture of home languages.

Further reading

Corcoll López, C. and Flores, C. (2018) Toddlers' early languages, in Sutherland, H. and Mukadam, Y. (eds) *Supporting Toddlers' Wellbeing in Early Years Settings: Strategies and Tools for Practitioners and Teachers*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp. 161–177.

This chapter has a main focus on the role language and (additional) language learning can have in promoting toddlers' well-being.

Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Clarke, P. (2011) *Supporting Identity, Diversity and Language in the Early Years*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

This book provides the basis for professional development in working with young children in a diverse society.

Meier, G. (2017) The multilingual turn as a critical movement in education: Assumptions, challenges and a need for reflection. *Applied Linguistics Review*. 8(1), pp. 131–161.

This article has a main focus on the description of the development and consequences the multilingual turn has had in the last few years.

Related topics

translanguaging, language awareness, early years provision

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