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Plurilingual Education: the Gap between Regulations and Didactical Practices

The Translanguaging Approach as a Pedagogical Bridge

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Abstract

Plurilingualism is a key term in the international panorama: it can refer both to a pedagogical approach whose goal is to develop a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and to a means that helps to approach language education in a new way and to give equal value to all linguistic and cultural expressions. After describing the main features of plurilingualism, the dissertation focuses on the analysis of the various European and Italian documents that discuss the necessity to spread the plurilingual theory and practices, especially in the school environment. By making a parallel examination of the current situation at a national and European level, the dissertation highlights the existence of a significant gap between theory and practice, showing a lack of continuity between the good intentions and the suggestions that are present in the documents and what really happens inside schools. This discrepancy is confirmed by some Italian primary school teachers who participated in an interview that discussed their knowledge of the topic, their opinions and what is (or is not) done in their classes to promote plurilingualism. To conclude, translanguaging is presented as a possible practical solution: it is a new pedagogical approach that might represent a first step towards the creation of a multilingual space in Italian classrooms in accordance with European and national guidelines.

Introduction

> When one speaks about preserving linguistic diversity and the right of all communities to live
> in their own language, one frequently appeals to the economic cost that all this could imply.
> However, it would also be necessary to evaluate the economic cost of language substitution:
> How much does marginality cost?
> What price do we pay for the loss of a tool such as language for adjusting to environment?
> What is the cost of an education that uses a code which does not fit the environment? What is
> the cost of a pseudo-education in predominating languages which does not capacitate one use
> them properly? How much...? (International PEN Club, 1998, p. 16).

The words that conclude the introduction to *The universal declaration of linguistic rights* refer to
one of the most precious gifts that nature gave us: language ability. It is a capacity that belongs to
all human beings and gives us the power to express ourselves through words, and as such it makes
us all equals. At the same time, it is what differentiates us: not only because it is an ability that
translates into hundreds of thousands of languages spoken by people all over the world, but also
because each individual's linguistic repertoire will never be identical to the one of another, for it is
made up of all our life experiences and linguistic contacts that make us unique, different. And yet, it
is exactly this diversity that characterises each one of us that makes us all alike. "Unity in diversity"
is the motto of the Council of Europe (COE), an institution whose mission has been to promote,
through the publication of recommendations, documents, and instruments, the plurilingualism
approach as a means to preserve language diversity in Europe, and at the same time to fill future
European citizens with a sense of curiosity, open-mindedness and respect for languages through
language education. For over half a century now, the COE and other European institutions have
invited the various European governments to modify and adapt their language policies to dedicate
some space to plurilingualism and to all the teachings and strategies that allow European citizens to
develop a so-called plurilingual and pluri/intercultural education.

The answer that this dissertation asks is the following: in the light of all the recommendations, tools,
documents, etc. that were created to promote plurilingualism, what do European nations do (Italy
included) to turn these good intentions into reality? What is the current situation like in Europe and
Italy with regard to the actualization of concrete proposals that encourage the development of
language education towards plurilingualism? The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse in detail
the main European and Italian documents that have been published from the 1950s until now and
that deal with the themes of plurilingualism, language diversity, respect for every language,

valorisation of the national linguistic heritage and valorisation of the individual and collective linguistic repertoire; we will then proceed by examining which of these suggestions are translated into language policies, and at the same time we will try to individuate if there are (and which are) gaps that still divide theory from practice.

The first chapter constitutes an introduction to the world of plurilingualism and related themes. After presenting the characteristics of this key concept and the reasons why the plurilingual and pluricultural competence is particularly relevant and useful today, we will move on to the presentation and description of a specific kind of approaches, namely the pluralistic approaches, that are addressed by the various European institutions as the means through which it is possible to nurture a positive attitude towards plurilingualism, especially in the school context. We will then go through the main European and Italian documents that, starting from the last century, have dedicated particular attention to the matter of language diversity and its safeguard, focusing during the last decades on the new bearers of linguistic and cultural difference, i.e. people with a migratory background.

The second chapter takes these documents as a starting point to make a comparison between theory and practice, and to check which are the critical areas that present no correspondence between papers and reality. After analysing at a broader, European level, the scope of the investigation will concentrate on the Italian gaps. The chapter also includes the practical section of the dissertation, which consists of an interview with a small group of Italian primary school teachers (province of Vicenza) during which they discussed their knowledge about the topics of plurilingualism and language diversity, their opinions and beliefs about them, their initial education and professional development, and the plurilingual practices that are (or are not) adopted in their classes and schools. The goal of this interview is to provide the reader with a general overview (although limited to this group of interviewees) of the perception of these topics by teachers, who are the main protagonists of the school context, together with students; notwithstanding that the results cannot be generalised to the target population, this study could be developed and its scope could be enlarged to involve a larger number of participants.

With the third and last chapter we introduce a new approach that could be implemented in Italian schools to pursue the goals of plurilingualism, named translanguaging. After being developed in the United States through the work of the Cuny-Nysieb, translanguaging pedagogy was "exported" and adapted to the Italian context thanks to some projects, among which the one here presented, L'AltRoparlante. The chapter first describes the approach from a theoretical point of view to later discuss the two different contexts in which it was implemented (New York City and Italian schools),

showing that its flexibility makes it usable in various situations. The final presentation of some possible translanguaging activities and exercises to carry out with primary school pupils demonstrates that this approach can align with the European and national recommendations and can constitute a sort of pedagogical bridge that, through the use of the already existing linguistic resources that are present in the classroom, can help Italian students and teachers move towards plurilingualism, towards the learning of new languages, towards the respect for language diversity, towards the valorisation of the individual and collective plurilingual repertoire.

Chapter 1. Supporting plurilingual education

The purpose of this first chapter is to provide a general outlook of the topic of plurilingualism and plurilingual education, paying particular attention to the European and Italian panorama.

The first subchapter, "What is plurilingualism?" will contribute with a series of definitions and explanations for the main concepts related to this theme, namely plurilingualism, plurilingual competence, linguistic diversity, etc. In addition, it will examine the linguistic situation of Europe and present a series of reasons why a plurilingual approach and a valorisation of linguistic diversity are desperately needed for our European society. To conclude, it will illustrate the main benefits that plurilingualism can bring to learners.

In the second subchapter, we will be introduced to the interesting topic of "Pluralistic approaches". After listing the different existing types of the bi/plurilingual profile, a presentation of these approaches will follow, which will allow us to understand that these are the most suitable solution to implement plurilingual education.

The third subchapter will be dedicated to the set of documents, recommendations, frameworks and instruments that have been developed by the European Union and the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe to promote the spreading of actions oriented towards the safeguard of languages, the valorisation of an individual's linguistic repertoire, the implementation of policies and measures to sustain the good cause of plurilingualism. The documents that will be presented cover a range of approximately 70 years, starting from those published at the end of WWII to more recent ones.

An exploration of the documents published in Italy where we can find a reference to the themes of *educazione linguistica* and plurilingualism will be done in the fourth and last subchapter, with a focus on the revolutionising ideas presented in the *Dieci Tesi* by Giscel (a document ahead of its time) and more recent publications that treat these topics with a reference to the more and more multilingual classrooms in Italian schools and the presence of children with a migratory background.

1.1 What is plurilingualism?

The term and concept of plurilingualism is not new to the academic culture (it was first introduced in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* 1996), but despite the strong impact it had and continues to have on the European language education programmes over the last decades, it is still not often employed in the English-speaking academic culture (Piccardo, 2019). It

has found manifold and valid translations in other languages (e.g. *Plurilinguismo* in Italian), but the English term is scarcely utilised because scholars keep using the term "multilingualism" to make reference to all types of linguistic plurality. Nevertheless, by doing so, the risk is to neglect the significative difference between these two terms; this is why, in this first subchapter, general definitions of the term "plurilingualism" will be provided, in order to clearly distinguish it from "multilingualism". After listing a series of descriptors for plurilingual and pluricultural competence, this subchapter will contribute with a general overview of Europe and its linguistic diversity, focusing on the various advantages that plurilingualism can bring to learners and our society.

1.1.1 Plurilingualism and plurilingual competence: some definitions

The first time this term officially made its appearance in the language education environment was in 1996 in the second provisional version of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (henceforth CEFR) as a new concept of growing importance, to be distinguished from multilingualism (this distinction will be discussed in the next paragraph). The notion of plurilingualism, alongside the one of pluriculturalism, was elaborated "as a form of dynamic, creative process of 'languaging' across the boundaries of language varieties, as a methodology and as language policy aims" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30). We can find one of the first definitions of pluriligualism in the 2001 edition of the CEFR:

> […] the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4)

Taken from this perspective, it is possible to notice that the plurilingual approach is based around a new linguistic aim, which is not to pursue the ideal of the "native speaker" anymore, nor to master one, two, or more languages but as isolated entities; on the contrary, "the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5).

This plurilinguistic repertoire, as explained in the *Companion Volume* of the CEFR (2020), should provide the speaker with a plurilinguistic competence that practically allows them to:

a) switch from one language or dialect (or variety) to another;

b) express oneself in one language […] and understand a person speaking another;

c) call upon the knowledge of a number of languages […] to make sense of a text;

d) recognise words from a common international store in a new guise;

e) mediate between individuals with no common language […], even if possessing only a slight knowledge oneself;

f) bring the whole of one's linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression;

g) exploit paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.). (p. 30)

Another description of the concept of plurilingual competence can be found in Beacco et al.'s *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (2016), which presents it as:

[…] the ability to use a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs or interact with people from other backgrounds and contexts, and enrich that repertoire while doing so. The repertoire consists of resources which individual learners have acquired in all the languages they know or have learned, and which also relate to the cultures associated with those languages (languages of schooling, regional/minority and migration languages, modern or classical languages). The plurilingual perspective centres on learners and the development of their individual plurilingual repertoire, and not each specific language to be learned. (p. 20)

The stress is put on the fact that this composite competence enables the speaker, seen as a "social agent", to communicate and interact in their environment making use of their linguistic proficiency(ies) and their experience of various cultures, which exist as a whole and not as a juxtaposition of single and distinct competences (Council of Europe, 2001). This represents a counter-tendency in ordinary language education in most countries (Italy included), where the native speaker model is still predominant and leads teachers and learners to keep languages separated from one another, an attitude that plurilingualism undoubtedly tries to avoid, focusing instead "on the relationships between the languages an individual speaks, the underlying linguistic

mechanisms and cultural connotations, the personal linguistic and cultural trajectory as well as the persons' attitude toward language diversity, stressing openness, curiosity, and flexibility" (Piccardo, 2017, p. 2).

As we can see, both Piccardo's and the *Guide* definition bring on the cultural element together with the linguistic resources as a fundamental part of the plurilingual competence. In this sense, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are profoundly linked to each other, and in fact both the CEFR and the CEFRCV present them together under the same term: "plurilingual and pluricultural competence".

Figure 1

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence: descriptors
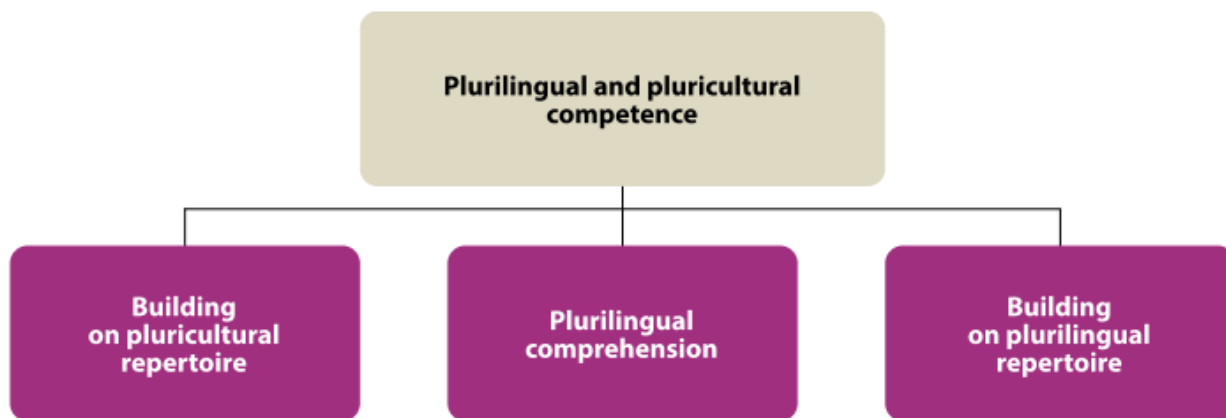
Note. The figure was taken from Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Page reference: 123. Available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr

The *Companion Volume* presents a series of descriptors for each CEFR level that describe a subject's ability and knowledge as far as the three fundamental competences that contribute to defining plurilingual and pluricultural competence are concerned: Building on pluricultural repertoire, Plurilingual comprehension, and Building on plurilingual repertoire.

Some key notions are at the basis of all these descriptors:

a) languages are interrelated and interconnected, especially at the level of the individual;
b) languages and cultures are not kept in separated mental compartments;

c) all knowledge and experience of languages contribute to building up communicative competence;

d) […] the goal [is] the ability (and willingness) to modulate their usage according to the social and communicative situation;

e) barriers between languages can be overcome in communication, and different languages can be used purposefully for conveying messages in the same situation. (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 123)

For each component, other notions are included to further clarify what it means to possess a plurilingual and pluricultural competence. For Building on pluricultural repertoire, most levels are organised around the concepts of "recognising and acting on cultural, socio-pragmatic and sociolinguistic conventions […]; recognising and interpreting similarities and differences in perspectives, practices, and events; evaluating neutrally and critically" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 124). The principal element that is present in the scale for Plurilingual comprehension is "capacity to use knowledge of and proficiency (even partial) in one or more languages as leverage for approaching texts in other languages, in order to achieve a communication goal" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 125). In Building on plurilingual repertoire, "as the social agent is building on their pluricultural repertoire, they are also engaged in exploiting all available linguistic resources in order to communicate effectively in a multilingual context and/or in a classic mediation situation" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 127), which practically translates into being able to adapt to the situation by adjusting one's linguistic production, using different linguistic codes if necessary, and being able to explain oneself in different languages.[1]

1.1.2 Plurilingualism versus multilingualism

As previously stated, the term plurilingualism is not particularly widespread among scholars writing in English, who prefer to use instead the term multilingualism to refer to all types of linguistic plurality. This conscious decision jeopardises the specificity of both terms, which shall not be used one instead of the other; or, to say it through Piccardo's words, "the concept of plurilingualism is an enriching one that offers great potential from both societal and educational viewpoints, and is not interchangeable with other notions" (2020, p. 186). A strong statement about keeping these two terms separate is even made in the CEFR, which informs that multilingualism coincides with "the

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1   For further information, see table of descriptors for each level in *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume* (2020, pp. 125-128).

knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). A multilingual classroom does not automatically coincide with a plurilingual one, especially when the languages spoken in that context are kept separate and there is no particular interest in exploiting the linguistic diversity, and the same can be said about a city or other environments (Piccardo, 2018). Another distinction of the terms is provided by Beacco et al. (2016), where it is possible to read that:

> […] plurilingualism is the ability to use more than one language – and accordingly sees languages from the standpoint of speakers and learners. Multilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the presence of several languages in a given geographical area, regardless of those who speak them (p. 20).

The difference itself is also deeply linked to the usage of the two Latin prefixes, *multi-* and *pluri-*, to indicate two distinct perspectives. On the one hand, the former stresses the presence of a multitude of languages that are present in a certain context but are not necessarily linked. On the other hand, the latter points to plurality, to communication among languages, that are valued for their difference but not treated as isolated entities: on the contrary, the plurilingual vision is fed by the contamination of languages and cultures that a person meets and acquires throughout their entire life, so that they can contribute to the building of a plurilingual repertoire. A similar distinction can be identified in the usage of the prefixes *multi-* and *inter-* when matched with the related concept of culture, where "multicultural" represents a multiplicity of cultures that are grouped but not always interconnected, while "intercultural" highlights a connection, a bond, a relationship between cultures, that are inserted into a dynamic context and vision (Balboni & Caon, 2015). Otherwise said, using a visual metaphor, "plurilingualism is not to be understood as a patchwork or a quilt of neatly arranged multicolored pieces, but rather as some watercolour painting, in which the different colours merge into one another seamlessly to create something unique" (Piccardo, 2020, p. 190).

1.1.3 English dominion and monolingual purity

What do European citizens think when it comes to promoting the knowledge of languages? The *Special Eurobarometer 386* survey (2012) investigated the opinions of 26.751 subjects aged 15 years and over, and the results show that almost three quarters of Europeans believe that all EU citizens should learn to speak more than one language (other than their mother tongue), and almost

everyone (98%) is convinced that foreign languages are going to be useful for their children in the future. At the same time, though, two main tendencies that are worth discussing emerge from this document. If it is true that almost every European values the importance of foreign languages, 79% of them think that English is the most useful one, while other languages are mentioned in smaller proportions (French and German 20% each, Spanish 16%, Chinese 14%, Russian 4%, Italian 2%). In addition, seven in ten respondents agree with the idea of European citizens acquiring the ability to speak a common language, the percentage lowering to 53% when asked about the adoption of a single language that Eu institutions should use to communicate with European people (European Commission, 2012). What are the reasons that lie behind these general tendencies?

It is commonly known that the supremacy of a language is not related to a supposed superiority in terms of linguistic structure, nor it has to do with how easy it is to learn it. The same can be assumed about English, which has gained the status of global language mainly because of the role of the United States as an economic, political, and military leader. The reason why European citizens believe English to be the best choice as a foreign language to acquire is probably connected to its wide usage all over the world (English as a Lingua Franca), and to the fact that the mastery of such language gives access to many career opportunities. And maybe it is exactly English that many Europeans would think of if they had to choose a single common language to use in order to communicate with others since it is perceived as the most useful one and it is already spoken by a vast majority of people. Considering these premises, is it possible to say that "the best method for human beings to understand each other and to become part of a tolerant and peaceful society would be to strive for linguistic uniformity"? (Glaser, 2005, p. 197). Why should people invest their time and energy to accomplish a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, when they could simply opt for a single common language to be used by everyone and everywhere?

As much valuable as it is being able to speak English today, this linguistic attitude goes against the principles of plurilingualism Europe is trying to promote, and the supremacy of this language does not simplify the process. In our English-dominated world, does it really make sense to start teaching this language to young pupils when they still are at pre-school? Being a Lingua Franca, it is able to satisfy all the communicative needs, so how much motivation are students left with to learn any other foreign languages if they already have what they need: a language to communicate with everyone? Why not teaching it as FL3 or even FL4, so that learners can better spread their motivation and dedicate their attention to other foreign languages learnt as FL1? (Glaser, 2005). It is undeniable that it is convenient to know English for the reasons mentioned above, but how many people already possess very high levels of proficiency in this language? Today, reaching "perfect" English skills is becoming a necessity, not to say a basic prerequisite for any job. And soon, the

value of these skills possessed by millions of people all over the world will drastically decrease and, according to the rules of demand and supply, English will no longer guarantee any kind of advantage over other languages (Skutnabb-kangas, 2002). These facts should lead European countries to rethink their language policies to promote plurilingualism, not only through written words but through concrete actions, included resizing English dominion so that it can leave space to other languages: "English is A language, not THE language, and its importance in the world of today should not lead to the submission (and the death) of all the other languages" (Capucho, 2012, p. 14).

But on a deeper level, things are not so easy. If, on the one hand, European countries believe in the social, economic, educational, and occupational benefits that diversity and multiplicity can bring (also from a linguistic point of view), "on the other hand, the fear exists that diversity will dilute, deracinate, and alienate communities and individuals" (Piccardo, 2018, p. 3). The co-existence of these two opposite forces is still quite strong, and it also influences the idea of studying languages as isolated and separated entities, that can be labelled and categorized. Categorization is a useful resource to the human mind, because labelling gives us feelings of reassurance and safety, answering to our survival instinct that is still rooted in our reptilian brain (Balboni & Caon, 2015); therefore, everything that lies behind our power of categorization is perceived as unknown and potentially dangerous. Until the half of last century, the danger was constituted by any language that was not the mother tongue, as research in education was strongly in favour of monolingual purity and condemned bilingualism as a situation that would halve learner's intelligence: for many years, bi/plurilingualism was associated to such phenomena like schizophrenia, identity crisis, emotional issues, inner conflicts, scarce self-esteem (Cognigni, 2020). More recently, in a period in which conservative parties are gaining more and more consensus, the danger mainly lies in the "contamination" of a national language and culture by immigrant people, with the risk of losing the "true identity" of a nation. At the educational level, this attitude often translates into the idea that the linguistic repertoires that are present in a class do not constitute a precious resource, but rather a problem to manage.

It is typically human having difficulties in thinking about and accepting plurality and diversity; but at the same time "frontiers and borders also imprison us, block our curiosity, and extinguish our thirst for knowledge" (Piccardo, 2018, p. 4), which are things that also belong to our human nature and against which we cannot fight. Therefore the questions that come up are: are there other reasons why linguistic borders and frontiers are so difficult for us to leave behind? And what argumentations can be brought in to demonstrate that Europe and European citizens do need to

embrace this plurilingual approach not only to improve and evolve as a society but also to safeguard Europe's linguistic heritage?

1.1.4 Linguistic diversity in Europe and the survival of species

The concept of plurilingualism is built on a basic prerequisite, that there is a plurality of languages that can be put in communication with one another. This brings us to explore the concept of linguistic diversity (from now on LD), extensively discussed in Skutnabb-kangas (2002). LD can generally be described in two different ways. The easiest definition takes into consideration the number of languages spoken in a determined country or geographical area: for example, Nigeria reaches high levels of linguistic diversity thanks to the 400 languages and more spoken all over the territory. However, it is necessary to specify that only autochthonous languages are taken into account: new languages brought into a country by immigrants are not counted. Another way of describing LD does not take into consideration the total number of autochthonous languages but focuses instead on the percentage of people speaking a single language. Both ways are equally valid to measure LD and come useful to our purposes (Skutnabb-kangas, 2002).

How is the European situation as far as LD is concerned? Unfortunately, if compared to the other continents, Europe is the poorest: taking as valid the first definition of LD and only considering autochthonous languages, Europe hosts only 3% of the languages spoken in the world. To make some comparisons: the entire American continent hosts 15% of them (approximately 1,000), Africa hosts 30%, Asia is around 30% and Pacific islands are a little under 20%. Indeed, Europe's dimensions (geographically speaking) are definitely smaller compared to the other continents, but the problem of the reduced number of autochthonous languages in Europe becomes quite irrelevant when a more urgent issue is presented: languages (spoken ones in particular) are disappearing at a very dangerous rate. The more optimistic linguists believe that in a 100 years' time only half of the spoken languages will still be learned by children, while pessimistic researchers are of the opinion that only 10% of the spoken languages will be left by the year 2100 (Skutnabb-kangas, 2002). And there is more: the death of languages (and, in a sense, of cultures) is strictly correlated with the disappearance of biological species. If the predictions about languages mentioned above are put together with the extinction rates for species, we obtain the following eventualities: "Optimistic: 2% of biological species but 50% of languages may be dead (or moribund) in a 100 years' time. Pessimistic: 20% of biological species but 90% of languages may be dead (or moribund) in 100 years' time" (Skutnabb-kangas, 2002, p. 13). Based on this evidence, the idea of adopting a common language to understand each other does not look particularly appropriate, especially

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because it contributes to accelerating the disappearance rate of languages and, consequently, of biological species, endangering both LD and biodiversity. Uniformity does not appear to be the right answer to our needs of communication, since it comes with staticity and inflexibility. The human capacity to adapt and to evolve has always been aided by diversity, which is the key to our future on this planet, also from a linguistic point of view.

However, the development and enrichment of LD in Europe are halted by another problem, mainly situated at the political level. The issue of the "threat to the national language and culture" that, according to many people in Europe and Italy too, can derive from new immigrant people and languages, is still quite present and continues to be brought up by conservative parties, thus representing another obstacle in the road towards a more linguistically diverse society. And yet, there is a scientific explanation behind this fear of being "contaminated" by other cultures and languages. In their 2004 study, Pagel and Mace highlight a link between linguistic and cultural barriers and genetic variables, explaining that languages function as impediments to genetic exchange between different populations. Referring to Europe, 33 boundaries signal important genetic differences, 22 of which correspond to physical boundaries (e.g. the Alps, the English Channel) and related linguistic differences. The remaining 11 genetic confines do not correspond to geophysical barriers, but 9 of them do correspond to linguistic boundaries (e.g. between Hungary and Austria). The conclusion drawn from these findings is that humans "prefer to mate with people they can talk to" and, as a consequence, "cultural differences become self-reinforcing, prompting further cultural divergence" (Pagel & Mace, 2004, p. 276). In this sense, a population's language and culture become a means to "protect" themselves and their genes against potentials intruders, which today are mainly represented by immigrants.

Does this study give credit to the "fear of the immigrant" that is unfortunately dominant these days? Not really. Pagel & Mace conclude by claiming that cultures "are surprisingly robust against outside influences" (2004, p. 278) and unless Europe starts to face mass movements from other countries, there is no risk of being submerged by foreign languages and cultures.

These studies by Skuttnabb-kangas and Pagel & Mace demonstrate that not only immigrant languages and cultures are not "invading" and damaging our European heritage, but could represent a possible solution to the problem of LD in Europe (if we take as valid the second definition of LD that takes into account the percentage of people speaking a determined language, non-autochthonous languages included). Thinking about Italy and its more and more multilingual and multicultural classes, the languages brought in by the kids of immigrant people might constitute a powerful resource that could further prompt the development of the plurilingual approach. This type of improvement on the educational level cannot be left only in the hands of teachers and schools,

though: it is a change that needs strong support by politicians and the educational policy of our country, which first have to get used to the idea of "finding stability in change, not seeing stability as resistance to change" (Piccardo, 2018, p. 16) if they really want to promote plurilingualism.

1.1.5 The potentials of plurilingualism for the learner and for language education practice

After exploring some scientific perspectives that explain why plurilingualism and LD are so important for Europe, what remains is to briefly analyse the general adavantages associated to plurilingualism and the plurilingual approach. In the context of scientific research and linguistic education, the debate about the benefits related to plurilingualism is far from being over. Being a relatively new field of study, there is not a definite and exhaustive list of the advantages connected to plurilingualism; nevertheless, this paragraph intends to provide a summary of the most important advantages that plurilingualism brings, to stress the necessity to enhance and promote the plurilingual approach in our schools and, more generally speaking, in our European society.

As it was previously mentioned, today schools all over Europe are increasingly diverse in terms of languages and cultures, but because of the still predominant monolingual perspective, linguistic repertoires in a class are often disregarded, since they do not coincide with the language of schooling. This lack of recognition from part of the scholastic institution may often lead to a sort of "linguistic insecurity" and scarce self-esteem in minority languages speakers, who perceive that their language is not worthy or useful in the educational context. The plurilinguistic vision, on the contrary, recognises and values the linguistic resources that each student possesses other than the language of schooling, thus making the intrinsic value of every language emerge and individuating in them a powerful means through which other languages can be learned (Cognigni, 2020).

On a more cognitive level, promoting plurilingualism in our schools and societies also means to potentiate the learner's metalinguistic knowledge (also called *language awareness*), i.e. the ability to reflect on the way a language functions and is structured. Having to focus on the structural features of the languages to distinguish them and recognise them, the young plurilingual learner acquires the capacity to treat them as formal systems, a capacity that seems to accelerate the processes of reading and writing (in comparison to monolingual children) (Cognigni, 2020). Another potential benefit is linked to the development of selective attention, otherwise said the abilty to concentrate on a specific stimuli and to elaborate relevant information without being distracted by irrelevant notions. This type of capacity is generally associated to the so-called "field independent" cognitive style, typical of an individual who is able to identify patterns and details without being influenced by the context (Witkin et al., 1977); if taken together, selective attention

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and field independence contribute to develop a strong problem-solving capacity. In addition, it was also noticed that plurilingual learners tend to learn earlier how to answer the communicative needs of the interlocutor by switching to a different language or register, thus showing a quite well developed communicative empathy (Cognigni, 2020).

But there is more. The competences in languages that differ from the mother tongue, together with the related cultural and intercultural competences, appear to stimulate creativity and innovation. As Skutnabb-kangas explains (2002), in our information society the most important products are ideas and knowledge in general, which are mainly conveyed through words (therefore, languages). Based on this premise, "countries where there is a rich linguistic and cultural diversity, embodying diverse knowledges, have in this sense access to more varied knowledges, ideas, and cosmo-visions than countries with few languages and cultures" (p. 14); this is why the plurilingual approach should be promoted in schools, for "education that leads to high levels of plurilingualism produces not only local linguistic and cultural capital but knowledge capital that will be exchangeable to other types of capital in the information society" (p. 15). This alone should be a sufficient stimuli to encourage Europe (which, as it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, is poor on LD) to revision its language policies regarding plurilingualism and guarantee their full application, since they would not only bring advantages from the educational point of view, but would also have cospicuous effects on the economic field.

The potential of plurilingualism for language education practice is also connected to the facilitation of the mediation process and the application of an action-oriented approach in the classroom (Piccardo, 2018). As previously mentioned in the first paragraph, the plurilingual vision consists in a dynamic construction of a plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire, in which learners act as social agents that constantly modify themselves in relation to their experiences and interactions with other languages, cultures, people/agents, and contexts. At the core of this process stands an act of mediation and negotiation (Piccardo, 2020), which in this context could also be translated with the term *plurilanguaging*, i.e. "a dynamic, never-ending process to make meaning using different linguistic and semiotic resources" (Piccardo, 2018, p. 9). This mediation process is enhanced once students are allowed to use their plurilinguistic repertoire in the classroom to fulfil a linguistic task, thus facilitating "a dynamic visin of language learning that encourages freedom from barriers among and within languages through language integration, multiliteracies, and multimodalities" (Piccardo, 2018, p. 14). The most adapt methodology to put in practice the plurilingual mediation is the action-oriented approach, which "views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action"

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(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9). The action-oriented approach gives space to plurilingualism in the classroom because, thanks to purposeful and collaborative tasks, it mimics what happens in real-life situations in our increasingly diverse society. The implications of seeing learners as social agents are recognising them as fully participant in the learning process and "recognising the social nature of language learning and language use, namely the interaction between the social and the individual in the process of learning" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30).

To conclude this first subchapter, we insert a brief summary (Cognigni, 2020) of the changes that the new concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence have introduced/are introducing to the language education dimension:

a) the development of a global and multiple vision of linguistic competences and the notions of language, identity and culture;

b) the acknowoledgement of the natural disequilibrium of linguistic abilities and competences in a L2/FL, and the valorisation of partial competences;

c) a new focus on the potential links between the different elements of the learner's plurilingual repertoire;

d) the development of a dinamic view of the term "competence", something that depends on the life path of the learner and that can change and evolve;

e) the existence of links and passages between languages and cultures.

1.2 Pluralistic approaches

Are we born bi/plurilingual or do we become bi/plurilingual? What are the main features that distinguish a bi/plurilingual person from a non-bi/plurilingual? Are there any educational methods that can help an individual to build their plurilingual repertoire? All these questions will try to find a proper answer in this second subchapter, which will be dedicated to a description of the characteristics of the bi/plurilingual individual, followed by a presentation of a series of approaches that are believed to enhance the development of a plurilingual and pluricultural competence: the pluralistic approaches.

1.2.1 The bi/plurilingual profile

Having presented the main features of plurilingualism and the advantages related to the pluralistic approach, it would be appropriate now to provide a clear definition that presents the distinguishing

marks of a bi/plurilingual person. However, researchers still have not reached a consensus as far as the bi/plurilingual profile is concerned: this because, according to the different analyses of the plurilingualism phenomenon that have been done through the years, manifold classifications of b/plurilingualism have been proposed, thus making it almost impossible to determine in an unambiguous way who is bi/plurilingual and who is not. Therefore, the purpose of this paragraph is not to list a series of fixed characteristics, but rather to present the most important variables that contribute to shaping the different types of bi/plurilingualism, namely the age factor, the linguistic interdependence, the cognitive organisation of languages, the use of linguistic abilities, and the social value of languages.

According to the age in which languages are learned, Cognigni (2020) distinguishes between *early bilingualism,* generally corresponding to childhood, and *late bilingualism,* typical of those who acquire a second/foreign language after puberty. Going further into details, two types of early bi/plurilingualism can be identified:

   a) *simultaneous early bilingualism*: it manifests in a child who learns two (or more) languages at the same time from birth, a situation that occurs quite often in families where the parents are native speakers of two different languages;

   b) *successive early bilingualism*: it refers to a child who learns a L2 that differs from their family language when they start going to school, typical of children here in Italy who belong to families with a migratory background.

Cognigni (2020) points out that this distinction does not aim to discriminate against late bilinguals, for there is nothing true in claiming that only those who learned languages in an early stage of their lives can benefit from it. It is undeniable that, because of strong neuroplasticity during childhood, it is easier to obtain a full acquisition of the languages when the subject is an early bilingual, but this does not mean that late bilingualism is less valuable.

Another classification of bi/plurilingualism is made by Peal and Lambert (1962), who base the following distinction on the relationship that is established between the linguistic competences of the languages:

   a) *balanced bilingualism*: a balanced bi/plurilingual is equally proficient in both/all languages (even if it is still not clear what level of proficiency should be reached for a learner to be considered balanced). It is a quite rare condition;

   b) *dominant bilingualism*: more often one of the languages learned dominates on the other(s).

The condition of being a balanced or dominant bilingual is far from being static, though. A simultaneous early bilingual supposedly possesses a balanced proficiency in the languages they know, but when they begin their educational path the language spoken at school likely becomes the

dominant one, thus modifying the relationships between the languages. This topic was further developed by Jim Cummins (1981) and his *linguistic interdependence hypothesis*, according to which the languages known by an individual share the same basic proficiency (Common Underlying Proficiency, a.k.a Cup), which seems to facilitate the transfer processes from a language to the other.

As far as the cognitive organisation of the languages is concerned, Weinreich (1953) distinguishes between:

a) *coordinate bilingualism*: this first type can be observed in an individual who uses two languages regularly, but has learned the second one independently from the first and within a different context (it can easily be compared to the successive early bilingualism). They possess two separate conceptual systems for both languages;

b) *compound bilingualism*: this bilingual has learned both languages at the same time in the same context (related to the simultaneous early bilingualism), therefore they make reference to a single conceptual system for both languages;

c) *subordinate bilingualism*: the subject accesses the L2 through the linguistic system of the L1 (first they think in one language, then they translate in the other).

When following a plurilingual approach, the more languages a learner knows, the more complex their cognitive organisation will be.

There are also cases in which an individual is able to understand a certain language but not to speak nor write in that language. This feature is at the basis of the distinction between *active and passive bilingualism*, which can also and preferably be addressed as *productive and receptive bilingualism* (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994, as cited in Cognigni, 2020). It happens quite often that early bilinguals go through a receptive phase in one of the two languages; at the same time, many adult learners only possess a receptive proficiency in a certain language that is sufficient to satisfy their daily/professional needs. The fact that the productive proficiency is not developed does not mean that the receptive knowledge of a language is not useful on its own: on the contrary, in the following paragraphs we will see that this type of bilingualism stands at the core of the pluralistic approach known as intercomprehension, and it constitutes a precious resource to learn other languages.

The following classifications are more focused on the sociocultural factors connected to bi/plurilingualism. Based on the assumption that, in cases of successive bilingualism, the L2 modifies the mental organisation of knowledge and the status of the L1, Lambert (1974) distinguishes between:

a) *additive bilingualism*: in this first case, both languages are developed and maintained at the same time. This is explained by the fact that the L2 is the socially relevant language, thus

representing an enrichment for the learner from a linguistic, cognitive and social point of view;

b) *subtractive bilingualism*: in this second case, one of the two languages (the L1) is affected by the so-called language attrition and is gradually lost. This happens quite often to individuals with a migratory background, whose mother tongue slowly disappear to leave space to the dominant L2. This language loss is not only "fault" of the new language learnt, but rather of the social status that is given to the languages in a certain society: if the context diminishes the value of the child's L1 (something that happens quite often in Italy), the loss of this language is inevitable, with probable consequent problems related to the cognitive development.

A similar and connected distinction is proposed by Fishman (1977, as cited in Cognigni, 2020):

a) *folk bilingualism*: typical of members of a linguistic minority who need to learn the L2, a language with an elitarian status being the one spoken in the host community (it is quite spread in Italy);

b) *elite bilingualism*: a form of bilingualism related to the high social status of the L2 being learned willingly by learners, who want to learn this language to add value to their education (e.g. English).

All these types of classifications presented here focus on different features of bi/plurilingualism, but they do not exclude each other: on the contrary, they can be mixed and taken together in order to provide a proper representation of such a multifaceted phenomenon.

1.2.2 Pluralistic approaches: some definitions

After describing the plurilingual approach and the advantages it brings and after listing the different possible ways of being bi/plurilingual, the question that might come to our mind is: how does all this translate on the educational level? Are there concrete approaches that can be put into practice to allow learners to build their plurilinguistic repertoire? According to the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures – Competences and resources* (also known with the English acronym FREPA or the corresponding French acronym CARAP) the so-called pluralistic approaches are the most useful ones to develop a plurilingual education. In particular, they are believed to favour the development of a set of global competences that, through reflection and action, allow the activation of knowledge, skills and attitudes; they can be exploited in numerous situations and tasks, regardless of the language being used, since they are valid for all languages and cultures:

Figure 2

FREPA: Table of global competences developed through the implementation of pluralistic approaches

C1 Competence in managing linguistic and cultural communication in a context of otherness			C3 Competence of decentring
C1.1 Competence in resolving conflicts, overcoming obstacles, clarifying misunderstandings	C1.2 Competence in negotiation		C4 Competence in making sense of unfamiliar linguistic and/or cultural features
C1.3 Competence in mediation	C1.4 Competence of adaptability		C5 Competence of distancing
C2 Competence in the construction and broadening of a plural linguistic and cultural repertoire			C6 Competence in critical analysis of the (communicative and/or learning) situation and **activities** one is involved in
C2.1 Competence in profiting from one's own inter-cultural / inter-language experiences	C2.2 Competence in applying more systematic and controlled learning approaches in a context of otherness		C7 Competence in recognising the „other" and otherness

Note: The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Candelier, M. *et al*. (2012). *FREPA – A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures – Competences and resources*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Page reference: 20. Available at https://www.ecml.at/Resources/ECMLresources/tabid/277/ID/20/language/en-GB/Default.aspx

But what are these pluralistic approaches? How can they be described? A first definition can be found in the FREPA, where we read that

> The term "pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures" refers to didactic approaches that use teaching/learning activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages or cultures. This is to be contrasted with approaches that might be called "singular", in which the didactic approach takes account of only one language or a particular culture, and deals with it in isolation (Candelier et al., 2012, p. 6).

To better understand the deep implications of using a (or more than one) pluralistic approach, it might be useful to observe the following figure representation of the predominant model (at least here in Italy) of language education, which can be compared to a singular approach:

Figure 3

Model of language education in Italy

Legend
L1: mothertongue
L2: second language
FL^1: first foreign language
FL^2: second foreign language
T: teacher
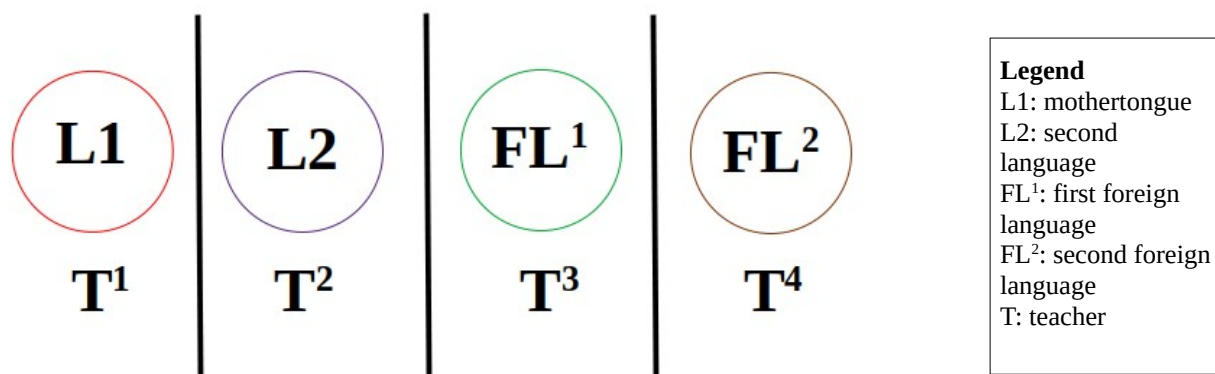
Note: Second languages (L2) are only spoken and taught in few territories of the Italian country, like Valle d'Aosta (French) and Alto Adige (German).

The barriers in this figure represented by the black lines constitute the problem that lies within this model: there is no contact between the languages taught at school and the teachers because they are still treated as separate entities. This type of model is surely useful for the learner to develop a multilingual competence, but as it was discussed previously this is not the goal of the EU, which direction points towards plurilingualism. This is why the FREPA suggests integrating this traditional model with the pluralistic approaches, which guarantee communication of languages and cultures. If

the aim is to make the learner acquire a plurilingual and pluricultural competence (which is not, as it was already mentioned, a collection of separate and distinct competences), how is it possible to fulfil this purpose by sticking to singular approaches that treat languages and cultures in isolation? Plurilingualism can only be achieved "when the classroom is a space where several languages and several cultures – and the relationships among them – are encountered, explored and related to each other. That is to say, in a context of pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures" (Candlier *et al.*, 2012, p. 8).

Coste *et al.* (2007) clarify that these approaches are "plural" and "partial" at the same time: plural because they involve the learning of more than one language/culture at the same time, partial because they do not deal with the same competences for each language, nor do they aim to reach the same proficiency.

According to Gajo (2014, as cited in Cognigni, 2020), despite making the learner reach different educational goals, the pluralistic approaches share some common features: the aim of integrating the linguistic contact and the didactic practices, the promotion of plurilingualism as a goal and as a means, and the broad vision of languages as subjects and as means to teach other subjects.

Related to the specificity of each pluralistic approach and the direction towards which they can point, Gajo proposes a categorisation of these approaches distinguishing between *teaching plurilingualism* and *plurilingual teaching*. The former tries to encourage a positive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity, while the latter aims to develop a pluralistic repertoire through the implementation of specific resources and the practice of language contact. In the next paragraphs, we will provide a description of the main features of each pluralistic approach, namely: the intercultural approach, the *éveil aux langues* approach, the integrated didactic approaches, the intercomprehension approach.

1.2.3 The intercultural approach

We will deal with this approach quite briefly, for it is the most well known and well developed of the ones cited. Over the last thirty years, it has influenced deeply the teaching of languages, in particular with a focus on the cultural and intercultural aspects. This brief introduction to the general principles of the intercultural approach will be based on the work of Balboni and Caon (2015).

The basis of this approach lies in the first place in the distinction of two terms that, as it was previously mentioned, stress two different types of relationships between cultures:

a) *multicultural*: it describes a multiplicity of cultures that are grouped together but not necessarily connected to each other. It can be connected to a reality in which groups of people of different cultures live together, just like in New York City;

b) *intercultural*: it underlines a bond, a relationship between languages and cultures, that influence one another.

Interculturality can be defined as an attitude, a personal choice that is born from the recognition of the beauty that lies within diversity. Therefore, being intercultural does not mean to point to homogeneity, but to strive for fluid interaction and influence between cultures.

The path towards interculturality is far from being easy, though. The human being is not used to this type of attitude, and it is quite difficult for us to acquire this mindset because of some mechanisms that are deeply rooted in our minds and that are difficult to erase: stereotypes (positive/negative generalisations of a social group, which becomes fixed and hyper-simplified), prejudices (a judgment made before experience) and an ethnocentric vision (the belief that one's own culture and lifestyle is the most valuable, and the consequent evaluation of other cultures based on the parameters of one's culture). It is commonly known that they should be avoided, but these mechanisms are difficult for us to abandon because they satisfy our needs of safety and cognitive economy: they guide us (though erroneously) in understanding our world, and at the same time they function as labels that hyper-simplify reality by putting together thousands of variables.

As if it was not enough, another problem that stands in the way is constituted by the implicit cultural frame that is shared between the members of the same culture: once two cultures start to communicate without making explicit the values connected to their cultural frames, the risk is to offend the other by doing or saying something that might clash with their values, thus ruining the relationship.

The intercultural approach tries to solve these problems by making the individual get used to critically analyse their stereotypes, prejudices, and ethnocentric visions, and by showing that, through the use of the so-called relational abilities, one can act properly when communicating with a member of another culture, adopting an intercultural perspective. These are:

a) *observation*: it is constituted by the ability to observe ourselves from an external position to become aware of the relativity of our vision of the reality (*decentramento*), and by the ability to be emotionally detached when analysing a certain situation (*straniamento*);

b) *judgment suspension*: it asks us to avoid the passage "I see – I judge" and it takes some training to work properly because it tries to fight the human urge to classify everything;

c) *being able to relativise*: to become aware that the way we look at reality is relative and that everyone's vision is valuable (it tries to fight ethnocentrism);

d) *active listening*: it implies the comprehension of the feelings and needs of the other, and it translates into giving dignity to the experience of our interlocutor;

e) *emotional understanding*: to acquire this ability means to recognise one's diversity and, at the same time, to recognise the diversity of other people (*exotopia*); in addition, it requires an effort of empathy;

f) *negotiation of meanings*: if an individual really wants to adopt an intercultural attitude, they have to learn to clarify the implicit aspects of their culture and ask their interlocutor to do the same, with the aim of solving the problem of our partial vision of reality.

These abilities can be considered as life skills that allow us to adopt a versatile and positive behaviour through which we can face the challenges of our everyday life, not only when communicating with a person belonging to a different culture.

1.2.4 The *éveil aux langues* approach

This approach can be considered as an example of the above-mentioned category that goes under the name of teaching plurilingualism; it was one of the first pluralistic approaches that were used in the school environment, especially in France and French-speaking countries in Europe. The FREPA/CARAP defines it as it follows:

> […] awakening to language is used to describe approaches in which some of the learning activities are concerned with languages which the school generally does not intend to teach. […] The approach concerns the language of education and any other language which is in the process of being learnt. But it is not limited to these "learnt" languages, and integrates all sorts of other linguistic varieties – from their homes, from the environment and from all over the world, without exclusion of any kind (Candlier *et al.*, 2012, p. 7).

The éveil aux langues approach (from now on EAL or awakening to languages) puts the children in connection with various languages, preferably not the traditional ones that are taught at school: the main goal is not to make them learn new languages but to awaken learners to the wonder of languages and develop a reflection about the nature of language(s) starting from an observation of linguistic diversity. Since it can involve a great number of languages, the FREPA/CARAP itself admits that it might appear as a rather "extreme" approach. But the point is not to teach a language explicitly: in fact, the awakening to languages "is not taught by the teacher or by the coursebook; it is developed by the learner. […] [It] is an internal, gradual, realization of the realities of language

use" (Bolitho *et al.,* 2003, p. 252). Or, to say it in other words, "The awakening to languages […] takes us away from the area of teaching/learning a particular language […] and leads us firmly into the area of general language education" (Candelier et al., 2004, p. 19).

The EAL movement has its roots in the work of Eric Hawkins, developed in the 1980s in the United Kingdom. It was originally called "Language Awareness", and it was born from the idea that knowing a language(s) is a key to overcome illiteracy, parochialism (narrow-mindedness), ethnocentrism and prejudice, all of these being themes discussed in "The Bullock Report" of 1975 (Hawkins, 1999). The goal was approximately the same of the EAL: to create a "third space" between foreign language teaching and L1 teaching, in which to light fires of curiosity in children towards language(s) as a phenomenon. Unfortunately, this new approach was not particularly successful in the United Kingdom; nevertheless, it paved the way for the development of the EAL in the 1990s in France. It took shape because of a debate regarding the teaching of English as a foreign language at primary school level: according to many, it was a limiting choice that precluded children the possibility to come in contact with any other language. Nowadays, this innovative concept of language education is widespread in European countries such as France, Germany, Austria, and French-speaking Switzerland.

As we said, the main purpose of this approach is to make learners become aware of linguistic and cultural diversity by including at the same time the minority languages that are present in the classroom. In this way, not only do learners develop a first form of metalinguistic knowledge, they are also given the possibility to cultivate a positive attitude towards the languages/cultures represented by the members of the class. This translates into the valorisation and approval of every language and the speakers of those languages, thus encouraging their inclusion (Cognigni, 2020). EAL projects do not wish to relegate the valorisation of plurilingualism to linguistic disciplines only: on the contrary, they wish to provide teachers and learners with instruments and means that lead to an "awakening to languages" and, at the same time, to the development of competences that can be generally acquired through other disciplines (Mattar & Blondin, 2003, as cited in Cognigni, 2020). A European project of this type was promoted by the CELV of Graz, called CONBAT+ (*Content Based Teaching + Plurilingual/cultural Awareness*) (2008-2011).

Other important projects that tried to bring EAL into the classroom were mainly developed in francophone countries. In Switzerland, this approach is widespread thanks to the method known as EOLE (*Éducation et Overture aux Langues*); at the beginning of the 2000s, the EAL was at the centre of the projects EVLANG (*Éveil aux Langues à l'école primaire,* 1997-2001) and JALING (*Janua Linguarum,* 2000-2004).

As far as Italy is concerned, EAL is still not widespread (with the exception of Valle d'Aosta). There is no doubt that the implementation of a similar approach would bring benefits to the pupils of our country, as some experimental projects showed[2], but a preparation of the teachers to guide "the awakening" is essential: "Trainee teachers need to be able to analyse language, to apply different strategies for thinking about language […] in order to be able to plan lessons, to predict learners' difficulties, to answer their questions, and to write and evaluate materials" (Bolitho *et al.*, 2003, p. 255).

1.2.5 Integrated language teaching

Integrated language teaching is an approach of recent creation (beginning of the 2000s) that found an application in many European contexts. It is generally included under the umbrella term *integrated didactic approaches,* alongside other approaches and methodologies that work similarly (like LAC – Language Across the Curriculum, and CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning; a brief introduction will be provided in the next sections). The FREPA/CARAP explains that the integrated language teaching

> is directed towards helping learners to establish links between a limited number of languages, those which are taught within the school curriculum […]. The goal is to use the first language (or the language of education) as a springboard to make it easier to acquire a first foreign language, then to use these two languages as the basis for learning a second foreign language (Candelier *et al.*, 2012, p.6)

At the basis of a similar purpose stands a reflection about the languages considered, that learners have to compare and differentiate (with the help of the teacher) from different points of view, like the process of acquisition (Coste *et al.*, 2009). In this sense, we can establish a link between this approach and the éveil aux langues approach.

According to the view of Wokusch (2008), integrated language teaching can be considered a holistic approach that "summarizes" the other pluralistic approaches and is organised around six basic principles:

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2   For further information about these projects see Cognigni, E. (2020). *Il plurilinguismo come risorsa. Prospettive teoriche, politiche educative e pratiche didattiche*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS.

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a) *diversified and coordinated curriculum*: it implies the elaboration and sharing of specific competences for each language, and the coordination of the teachers as far as the teaching methods are concerned;

b) *development of functional competences for all the languages being taught*: it points towards the use of language in real contexts and for significant tasks;

c) *coherence of didactic modalities*: the teachers should agree on a common methodology to teach and assess specific aspects of each language;

d) *awakening to languages and linguistic/cultural diversity*: it includes the principles and the aims of the EAL approach;

e) *valorisation of transfer*: after focusing on the general mechanisms of functioning of languages, learners are led to the realisation that the cognitive abilities developed through the study of their L1 or other FL can be transferred to acquire other languages;

f) *development of efficient communication and learning strategies*.

Coste et al. (2009) resize this list and affirms that integrated language teaching is based on two principles that are fundamental for both the cognitive and didactic dimensions:

a) *the anticipatory principle*: it regards the order of language acquisition (L1 before L2, L2 before FL) which, on the practical level, translates into the realisation from part of the teacher that they are paving the way to the learning of other languages through the development of knowledge, competences and strategies;

b) *the retroactive principle*: it operates in the opposite direction, for it supposes that the acquisition of a new language entails a reorganisation of previous knowledge, something that the teacher should be aware of and consider during their lessons.

These features should allow learners to develop a "heuristic method" to understand what can be transferred from a language to the other and what is specific to each of them; at the same time, this is only possible if the teachers cooperate to help learners elaborate a strategic competence to stimulate the transfer that is valid for all languages.

It is clear that this approach is particularly suited for adolescent and adult learners that know at least one foreign language, but this does not mean that it can be used in other contexts with other learners. In Switzerland, the integrated language didactics is presented as the principal approach to developing a plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the primary school, after an initial introduction to the topic thanks to the EAL approach.

Among the projects that developed from this approach, one of the most prominent is the T*ertiary language learning – German after English* (2000-2003) promoted by the CELV of Graz, which promoted the acquisition of German as FL through the transfer of knowledge and competences from

a similar language, English in this case. Similar projects were also created in Italy for the teaching of German as Fʟ in high school (Goethe Institut); other than that, the integrated language didactics has not been given many opportunities in the Italian Country.

1.2.5.1 Lᴀᴄ – Language Across the Curriculum

The Lᴀᴄ is an approach to bi/plurilingual education that belongs to the broader category of integrated didactic approaches. It was introduced as a possible solution to the increasingly alarming situation of illiteracy and lack of competence in functional literacy depicted in the Bullock Report of 1975 (United Kingdom). The acronym itself reveals that, according to the proposal that was made, the responsibility for the promotion and development of competence in the national language could not only be on the shoulders of English language teachers. In a broader sense, the Lᴀᴄ approach is based on the fact that

> language education does not only take place in specific subjects explicitly defined and reserved for it, [...]. Language learning and education also take place in each and every subject in school, in each and every academic/mental activity, across the whole curriculum (Vollmer, 2006, p. 5).

Because language education needs to be an integral part of every subject, the goals of Lᴀᴄ are supporting language development in each child, in all domains, in each activity and to provide learners with feedback (Vollmer, 2006).
Despite the evident utility of this approach, it is rarely well-performed and, when it comes to teaching, most schools still endorse traditional methodologies.

1.2.5.2 Cʟɪʟ – Content and Language Integrated Learning

The Cʟɪʟ methodology made its first appearance in Europe in the early 1990s, the acronym coined by Finnish, English, and French colleagues. The preoccupation of the time concerned the levels of competence in foreign languages, which were too low if compared to the new needs of Europe. A suggestion came from Eᴜ schools' bilingual education, where various languages were used as a medium of instruction. Therefore, the proposal that was made was to introduce a similar modality in every school system; later, the acronym Cʟɪʟ was used as the term to refer to this idea.

Content and Language Integrated Learning requires that "foreign language development occur through subject-matter learning and that content be learnt through the foreign language" (Coonan, 2010, p. 9). Thanks to this dual learning, where language is learned through content and content is learned through language, the learner is also able to develop a type of competence that Cummins defines CALP – *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*, to be distinguished from BICS – *Basic interpersonal communicative skills*: "BICS refers to conversational fluency in a language while CALP refers to students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school" (Cummins, 2008, p. 72). CALP is the language proficiency that is developed through CLIL and it allows the learner to understand/produce age-related, cognitive-demanding academic texts and discourses.

CLIL methodology strongly impacted the Italian school system and, with the reform of 2010, it became compulsory in high school, for it is believed to promote a better level of language competency in the foreign language(s). However, the practical realisation of CLIL projects still meets some problems, namely the scarce linguistic competence of teachers and the almost total absence of oral production in the classroom.

1.2.6 The intercomprehension approach

Although many classifications are proposed and used to indicate this approach, the term "intercomprehension" probably represents the most suitable option because of the presence of the Latin prefix *inter-* (see ch. 1.2.3) that indicates the type of relationship that is established between languages. The FREPA/CARAP tells us that through the *intercomprehension between related languages* approach

> the learner works on two or more languages of the same linguistic family (Romance, Germanic, Slavic languages, etc.) in parallel – one of these languages being the learner's mother tongue, the language of education, or another language learnt previously. In this approach there is a systematic focus on receptive skills […]. Of course, this does not exclude some added benefits for productive skills. (Candelier *et al.,* 2012, p. 7)

How does the learner work on these languages? By focusing on the languages that are linguistically related to their mother tongue/language used at school/other FL, which are not studied to obtain a "native speaker" proficiency, but to develop partial competences that allow them to communicate using their language and not a lingua franca (Capucho, 2012). Doyé (2005) explains that

[f]rom the performance aspect it can be described as an activity of people with different first languages who communicate in such a way as to use their own language and understand that of the others. From the competence aspect it can be conceived as the capacity to understand other languages without having studied them (p. 7).

The intercomprehension approach (from now on IC) is guided by some specific principles and characterised by some main features, which are described in Cognigni (2020):

a) *proximity principle*: the IC makes the learners work with languages that they have never studied before by exploiting a so-called "bridge language", a language that belongs to the same linguistic family of the target languages and that generally (but not necessarily) coincides with the mother tongue of the learners;

b) *pimultaneity principle*: typical of all pluralistic approaches, through the IC learners focus on more than one language at the same time;

c) *interlinguistic comparison*: in IC the various linguistic systems are taken together to be analysed and to detect differences and similarities;

d) *immersion principle*: the learner "dives into" the target languages, and explicit teaching of these languages is not necessary, for the learner can exploit the proximity principle, their linguistic repertoire, and other strategies and knowledge to comprehend these languages;

e) *authenticity principle*: the materials that are provided to learners do not go through a process of simplification or adaptation, but are used in their original version (authentic material);

f) *approximation in comprehension*: a substantial strategy in IC, the learner is never forced to be precise when approaching a new language. This promotes a curious and open attitude towards new languages and cultures;

g) *different development of linguistic abilities*: IC favours receptive abilities (reading and listening), but this does not mean that productive abilities are excluded when adopting this approach.

In recent years, thanks to the development of technologies, new researches have been conducted on the potentialities that the interactive side of IC can bring, especially through written communication mediated by the computer. Using chats, learners can approach the target language in its oral form with the help of elements that are typical of short messages but get closer to the oral dimension: emojis to express emotions, capital letters to emphasize to a sentence, to mention some of them (Cognigni, 2020). In addition, the interlocutors also have the possibility to improve the communication by adapting and adjusting their production through strategies of simplification, in

order to support the reader (or the listener, in the case of virtual meetings) and facilitate comprehension. To give an example: when interacting with an English speaker, instead of the word "capire", an Italian speaker will use the word "comprendere", which is similar to the corresponding English word "comprehend".

To conclude this section dedicated to the pluralistic approaches, it is important to make some clarifications as far as their use is concerned. First of all, these approaches and methods do not have the intention to substitute the traditional model of language education (see ch. 1.2.2), but only to integrate it, enrich it and improve it, especially by breaking the barriers that impede the contact between (linguistic and non-linguistic) disciplines and by shifting the goal towards a plurilingual competence:

> Plurilingual and intercultural education needs to be conceived as a global language education, across all languages of the school and in all disciplinary domains, which provides a basis for an identity open to linguistic and cultural plurality and diversity, insofar as languages are the expression of different cultures and of differences within the same culture. All disciplines contribute to this language education through the contents which they carry and the ways in which they are taught (Cavalli *et al.*, 2009, p. 8).

Moreover, because they represent an important change in linguistic education, they cannot be included in the curriculum all of a sudden, but through a slow introduction that prepares the learners to embrace the new approach. It is also essential to remember that, despite pointing towards the same aim (plurilingualism), the approaches present differences that make them more suitable for a specific situation than another: this is why it is fundamental to consider carefully all the variables (target group, context, languages involved, age of learners, etc.) before making a definite choice. Last, but not least, adequate preparation of the teachers is necessary to go through a similar path, something that unfortunately is often missing and impedes the realisation of similar projects (this topic will be examined in depth in ch. 2.2).

1.3 The promotion of plurilingualism in Europe: documents, recommendations, frameworks

Over the last 60 years, the European institutions have put a great effort into spreading the knowledge and practice of both plurilingual education and education for plurilingualism, of which we report a brief definition here:

Plurilingual education will refer to all activities, curricular or extra-curricular of whatever nature, which seek to enhance and develop language competence and speakers' individual linguistic repertoires, from the earliest schooldays and throughout life. *Education for plurilingualism* will refer to plurilingual education (for example, teaching national, foreign, regional languages), in which the purpose is to develop plurilingualism as a competence. It will be noted that plurilingual education may also be achieved through activities designed principally to raise awareness of linguistic diversity, but which do not aim to teach such languages, and therefore do not constitute language teaching in the strict sense (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 18).

This extract is taken from one of the numerous documents, recommendations, frameworks, instruments that were specifically designed to fulfil this purpose, of which a general overview will be provided in this subchapter. The main texts will be presented and described, taking as the watershed that divides the publication of these documents in a "before" and "after" the beginning of the new century, which coincides with the creation of the CEFR.

1.3.1 The multilingual turn

Over the last two decades, the interest in plurilingualism and the didactic potentialities of the plurilingual approach has grown exponentially, thus determining a change of perspective in language sciences. This new paradigm has been defined with the name of *multilingual turn*, from two books published in the same year by Conteh and Meier (2014) and May (2014); as it was explained in the previous subchapters, this shift is mainly determined by the passage from a vision of linguistic knowledge and resources in the classroom as a problem to manage to the valorisation of linguistic repertoires, which represent an important opportunity in linguistic education.
The features of this multilingual turn intertwine with other types of "turns" in other fields of research, like the critical applied linguistics field, whose main proponent Pennycook highlights the influence that the educational and social dimensions have on each other, by suggesting that "classrooms do not merely reflect the outside world but they are also social and cultural domains in their own right. Indeed, what happens in classrooms or schools may also influence the outside world to a certain extent" (Conteh & Meier, 2014, p. 7). This type of implication seems to suggest that the birth of a more plurilingual and pluricultural society can happen in educational institutions, where the adults of the future should be given the possibility to develop (with proper help) their

plurilingual repertoire and their own personal "voice", that will allow them to express their identity and to act as social agents (as explained in the CEFR); moreover, "embracing multilingualism in education will not only affect individuals and classrooms, but it can have wider societal implications, such as linking communities with each other, and linking schools, families and communities" (Conteh & Meier, 2014, p. 6).

The same concept of linguistic repertoire is being reconsidered and re-elaborated by critical applied linguists, who are now focusing their attention on its dynamic and hybrid dimension and conceive it as a sort of "lingua franca multilingualism", where "languages are so deeply intertwined and fused into each other that the level of fluidity renders it difficult to determine any boundaries that may indicate that there are different languages involved" (Makoni & Pennycook, 2012, p. 447, as cited in May, 2014, p. 1).

The multilingual turn has deeply marked the European panorama over the last twenty years, but its roots can be found way back in time, precisely in the period after WWII, when new studies on linguistic education were conducted. The main protagonists that have contributed (and still contribute) the most to the promotion of this new plurilingual approach in the field of language teaching/learning are the documents and recommendations produced by the European Union and the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe (from now on CoE). In the next sections, we will go through the most important documents that were promulgated over the years (starting from the 1950s) by these institutions that encourage a plurilingual culture and education. The texts in question invite member states "to implement sets of measures to promote the acquisition of language skills by encouraging the use of foreign languages for the teaching of certain subjects, to facilitate lifelong language learning, and make linguistic diversification the priority in language education policies" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 35).

1.3.2 Early projects: from the 1950s to the new millennium

The journey towards plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity begins in the postwar period, when an international official paper makes an explicit reference to the issue of language for the first time: the *Universal Declaration of the Human Rights* (1948). The horrors of the war and the millions of deaths all over the world led nations to realise that human rights are not always universally respected; therefore, after the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the need to identify and protect the rights and necessities of humankind result in the creation of this document, where language is recognised as one of the fundamental rights of every human being, alongside the right to receive an adequate, free education: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and

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freedoms set out in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (United Nations, p. 2) and "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory" (p. 7). The need to make sure that these two fundamental rights are guaranteed to everyone pave the way for a series of conferences, conventions and related reports and recommendations produced by the Language Policy Division of the COE (at the time called Modern Languages Section).

One of the first documents produced by the COE that moves from this resolution is the *European Cultural Convention* (1954), which manages in only three pages to convey the message that the study of languages, history and cultures is the fundamental prerequisite for the development of the European society and the preservation of its cultural heritage (Colaiuda, 2019). In order to do so, the Convention invites the members that decide to participate to

> encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its territory; and endeavour to promote the study of its language or languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to the nationals of those Parties to pursue such studies in its territory (Council of Europe, 1954, p. 1).

The key role to pursue the pacific co-existence of people is given to linguistic knowledge, which has to be accompanied by respect for and acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity (Colaiuda, 2019). This sets the tone for the development of the vision of language teaching in the following decades.

As Colaiuda extensively explains (2019), the documents produced by the COE throughout the 1950s show that the concept of "knowing a language" is still deeply linked to an elitarian, traditional vision of linguistic education; it is only during the 1960s, marked from the passage from the Grammar Translation method to the Audio-oral method, that the Modern Languages Section starts to pay attention to the ideas of multilingualism and plurilingualism, to improve the formation of language teachers and to overcome the fragmentation of language teaching. The 1970s are characterised by policies that point towards the cultural and linguistic integration of migrant adults in a lifelong perspective; it is also the period in which English is recognised as the international lingua franca and as the main foreign language to teach at school.

In the following decade, and in particular with the *Recommendation R (82)18 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning modern languages* (1982), the COE enters a new age of

reforms to revolutionise language teaching. The introduction of the recommendation recognises the ability to know/speak languages as a precious instrument to stress the value of diversity and to overcome prejudices and stereotypes:

> […] the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding; […] it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co–operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination (Council of Europe, 1982, p. 1).

Against the overwhelming dominance of the English language in the new globalised world, this recommendation tries to underline that languages are all on the same level, and they can all contribute to a quality language education (Colaiuda, 2019).

The general measures to be implemented that this paper lists constitute a development of previous indications, with further details and clarifications added: among them, to give European students the possibility to learn "at least one European language other than the national language […] from the age of ten or the point at which they enter secondary education" (p. 2) and to allow migrants and their families "to develop their mother tongues both as educational and cultural instruments and in order to maintain and improve their links with their culture of origin" (p. 3). An important role is also recognised to teachers, who need further training "to teach languages effectively for communicative purposes" (p. 3) (do they receive it, though?).

The 1990s represent the decade that lays down the premises for the elaboration of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* – CEFR. The European Union contributes to the linguistic education panorama with the publication of the *White Paper on Education and Training. Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society* (1995). In a period in which Europe faces the major problem of long term unemployment, especially among young people, the White Paper treats "the importance of education and training to Europe in the current context of technological and economic change; and the guidelines for action in the pursuit of objectives to build up high-quality education and training" (p. 4). Although claiming that education alone cannot completely solve the issue of employment, the document recognises that proficiency in more than one language spoken in Europe has become an essential prerequisite for people to "benefit from the occupational and personal opportunities open to them in the border-free Single Market" (p. 44); as a consequence,

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European citizens must be given the possibility "to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue" (p. 44) and if possible starting at the pre-school level. Once again, new and innovative language teaching methods are encouraged.

It is important to remember that the year 1994 sees the birth of a fundamental institution in the European panorama: the European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML), established in Graz, Austria. According to the COE, the mission of this institution "is to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and to support its member states in the implementation of effective language education policies, bearing in mind the complementarity between Strasbourg and Graz" (COE website). From this moment, the ECML is given the responsibility to implement the policies and instruments designed by the Modern Language Section in Strasbourg and to promote innovative approaches to language education.

As far as the protection of regional/minority languages is concerned, in 1992 the CoE releases the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, which can be considered the first tool created to fulfil this purpose. After pointing out that "the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them" (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 1), the Charter proposes a series of measures that foster "the teaching and study of regional or minority languages at all appropriate stages" (p. 3). This document does not include a pre-filled list of these languages, since it declares it is up to national authorities to individuate them (Colaiuda, 2019); still, it states clearly that the category of regional/minority languages "does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants" (p. 2). The purposes of this Charter are reiterated a few years later through the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995), where the Member States of the COE decide to "undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage" (Council of Europe, 1995, p. 2).

The end of the century sees the evolution of the topic of language as a human right in a dedicated document, the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* (1998), created "to correct linguistic imbalances with a view to ensuring the respect and full development of all languages and establishing the principles for a just and equitable linguistic peace throughout the world" (International PEN Club, p. 22). Among the rights here listed to which everyone is entitled are

the right to be recognized as a member of a language community; the right to the use of one's own language both in private and in public; the right to the use of one's own name; the right to interrelate and associate with other members of one's language community of origin; the right to maintain and develop one's own culture; […] the right for their own language and culture to be taught; the right of access to cultural services; the right to an equitable presence of their language and culture in the communications media; the right to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations (p. 24).

When compared to other documents, it is possible to notice that the Declaration does not make any distinction between "official / non-official / regional / local, majority / minority, or modern / archaic languages" (p. 12); by doing so, it wants to stress the equality of linguistic rights and the fact that "ALL languages are patrimony of mankind and […] that this patrimony is not a property but a legacy and must not be squandered" (p. 13). Because of this, the Declaration "considers discrimination against language communities to be inadmissible, whether it be based on their degree of political sovereignty […] or on any other criterion" (p. 25) (is this guideline really applied in everyday life?).

The same year, the COE publishes the *Recommendation R (98)6 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning modern languages* (1998), which reprises the concepts introduced in the Recommendation of 1982 with some interesting additions. In order to encourage the spreading of plurilingualism, the document suggests to "ensure that, from the very start of schooling, or as early as possible, every pupil is made aware of Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity" and to encourage "the use of foreign languages in the teaching of non-linguistic subjects (for example history, geography, mathematics) and create favourable conditions for such teaching" (p. 34). These suggestions are put into practice in language education through the pluralistic approaches, namely the éveil aux langues and CLIL methodology. In addition, the Recommendation puts an emphasis on the fact that pupils should "have systematic continuity of language learning from one educational cycle to another" (p. 35), meaning that they should be given the chance to keep on learning the same languages even when they grow up and pass from primary school to lower/upper secondary school (something that unfortunately does not happen in Italy). Something similar is also presented in a previous document, the *Council Resolution of 31 March 1995 on improving and diversifying language learning and teaching within the education systems of the European Union* (Council of the European Union, 1995). In addition to the promotion of innovative methods in schools and universities to teach languages, it is also suggested "to encourage contacts with native speakers of the language being studied: (a) through the opportunities for virtual mobility offered by the new

technologies […] (b) through physical mobility" (p. 2). Interestingly, a note specifies that "it would be desirable that teachers of subjects others than languages should benefit from appropriate language training, including in higher education" (p. 4), establishing a link with the Language Across the Curriculum approach and the idea that every teacher is responsible for language education.

The Innsbruck Conference called *Linguistic diversity for democratic citizenship in Europe* (1999) can be considered the watershed that ideally divides this first period of educational initiatives promoted by the CoE and the European Union and a new phase, which coincides with the beginning of the new millennium and that is dedicated to the implementation of linguistic policies, guided by the ethic and the principles of the past (Colaiuda, 2019).

1.3.3 The 2000s: recent recommendations

The passage from the 20th to the 21st century is marked by two crucial innovations. These years witness the transformation of the Modern Languages Section into the Language Policy Division "because there had been a shift from concerns relating to ways of teaching to activities focusing more on the structural organisation of language teaching (in other words, the design of language education)" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 19). Moreover, as an occasion to celebrate the institution of the European Year of Languages 2001, the Council of Europe publishes the first official edition of the most important document as far as language education is concerned: the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), an instrument that has been fundamental to revolutionise European linguistic curricula and that stands at the basis of many other tools and frameworks developed in the following years (to which the following section will be dedicated).

The year 2002 opens with the conference *Languages, Diversity, Citizenship: Policies for Plurilingualism in Europe* (2002), which purpose is to start a process of democratisation of linguistic education in order to make it accessible to everyone through the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education. The conference develops from the realisation that "respect for linguistic and cultural diversity and diversification of language learning" are not the same thing, and that the latter is unfortunately overlooked; the issues that are related to diversification and that could allow progress in this area are the determination of "the importance and the role of English teaching and learning", the "new" languages that could be inserted in the curriculum (among these, regional/minority/immigrant languages), and the creation of "an explicit language policy which clearly determines the education's responsibility for promoting plurilingualism" (Council of Europe,

2004, p. 13). A very strong statement is also present in the summary of group discussions, where we can read that

> […] at the present state of discussion of a European language education policy we must emphasise that it is a 'vision' (a utopian idea: all languages are equal; no language must be suppressed or discriminated against; every European citizen should master 3 languages; etc.) which we hope will become reality some day in the (hopefully, near) future (in a generation?) (p. 24).

The new European society, founded on the value of plurilingualism and the promotion of linguistic diversity, is still an embryo, something that is fully realised on paper but still needs to develop in the real world. And since hope in a future change is linked to young generations,

> Schools have a key role to play here. That is not to say that the education system alone can satisfy the huge variety of demands, but, if we accept that plurlingualism is now in a way part of human and civil rights, it is for education systems not just to guarantee diversification of the languages offer, but also to ensure that all young people acquire (or retain) an initial plurilingual competence, that is to say knowledge and mastery, to differing degrees, of a number of languages (p. 23).

These remarks are followed by a series of suggestions regarding concrete actions to promote plurilingualism and diversification of language learning. Among the others (which are taken by previous documents), new additions include the creation of "curricula which favour partial competences" and the "need for a different concept of 'error' and an acceptance of different levels of competence" (p. 33).

Diversity is the *fil rouge* that links the concepts and ideas expressed in another document, *A new framework strategy for multilingualism* (European Commission, 2005), where "unity in diversity" is defined as the foundation on which the European Union is built, in contrast with the American society:

> It is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a 'melting pot' in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding (p. 2).

It is only through diversity and plurilingualism (here addressed as multilingualism) that European citizens stand a chance in the increasingly competitive global market: this is why the Commission "urges Member States to take additional measures to promote widespread individual multilingualism and to foster a society that respects all citizens' linguistic identities" (p. 14). Such measures also involve the educational systems, in particular early education (kindergarten and primary school), where children can start developing key attitudes towards different languages and cultures and can lay the foundations for later language learning. However, it is also added that "the advantages […] only accrue where teachers are trained specifically to teach languages to very young children, where class sizes are small enough, where appropriate training materials are available, and where enough curriculum time is devoted to languages" (p. 6) (do classes today really allow that?).

A further step forward is made by the CoE with the intergovernmental conference *Languages of schooling: towards a Framework of reference for Europe* (2006), which tries to lay the foundations for the creation of a framework of reference for languages of schooling, defined as "languages both as a school subject and as a medium of teaching and learning across the curriculum" (Council of Europe, p. 8). The necessity of a similar framework comes from the awareness that these languages are fundamental to "access to knowledge, to democratic life and to full participation therein as a responsible citizen", in particular to those children "from low-income or poorly educated families where nothing is done to develop an interest in reading and books, who make little use of the language (or languages) of schooling in its (or their) written or even spoken forms" (p. 9). The languages of school education are therefore added to the general discussion regarding linguistic education because they constitute "a key factor in inclusion or exclusion in education processes, and therefore participation in society" (p. 12). According to the participants, a similar project can easily marry the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity in schools, and at the same time can help disadvantaged children: "Research has shown that if migrant children's mother tongue is kept up for a certain period, that can result in the acquisition of better skills in the language of schooling than among children who have not received the same support" (p. 9) (are these children really given this opportunity, though?). Similarly to other cases, the conference does not have the intention to create a prescriptive instrument, but rather a descriptive one, that does not propose a common solution but a series of basic guidelines that European countries can follow and adapt according to their national educational systems and cultures.

The following years see the abandonment of the idea of creating a similar framework for the languages of schooling, criticised for being a standardising instrument. This project is replaced with the intention of creating a more flexible and dynamic tool that can exploit the communicative potentialities of the net (Colaiuda, 2019). The creation of a similar tool is proposed during the intergovernmental conference *Languages of schooling and the right to plurilingual and intercultural education* (2009), where it is described "as an electronic resource rather than a paper product in order to exist as a dynamic focus for dialogue and sharing" (Council of Europe, p. 10); it is later given the name of *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education* (a proper description will be provided in the next section).

Multilingual competence is presented as one of the key competences that every European citizen should possess in the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning*. Key competences "are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes […] which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion, sustainable lifestyle, successful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active citizenship" (Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 7). It is only through "quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning" (p. 1) that each individual can acquire this competence (and the other listed) that are needed to keep up with the ongoing changes of the European society. And according to researchers, it is through early education that children acquire this lifelong learning capacity that will allow them to reach high levels of competence, be successful at school, and live in a state of well-being, as we can read in the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care System*. This is why this Recommendation, among the other things, suggests offering "opportunities for early language exposure and learning through playful activities" and consider "tailored multilingual early childhood programmes, which also take into account specific needs of bi/multilingual children" (Council of the European Union, 2019a p. 9).

In the following section of the same document, *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages*, specifically dedicated to the acquisition of the multilingual competence during early childhood/primary/secondary education, the Council presents some suggestions that partially reprise previous recommendations but adding some interesting details. As far as teachers are concerned, it is proposed to include "preparation for linguistic diversity in the classroom in initial education and continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders" (Council of the European Union, 2019b p. 18) (are Italian teachers given this opportunity?). In order to support the development

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of language awareness in schools, state members should start "valuing linguistic diversity of learners and using it as a learning resource including involving parents, other carers and the wider local community in language education" and "considering opportunities to assess and validate language competences that are not part of the curriculum, but result from informal learning (for example in the case of learners of migrant, refugee or bilingual backgrounds)" (p. 18). These suggestions arise from the idea that the whole linguistic repertoire of the pupil is valuable, and that children can be involved in the process of language teaching through a peer-tutoring work: "Pupils can help each other in learning, explain their language(s) to others and compare languages" (p. 20). These concepts belong to a relatively new approach to linguistic diversity and promotion of plurilingualism, called *translanguaging*, to which the entire third chapter will be dedicated.

1.3.4 Instruments, frameworks and tools to promote plurilingualism

The COE and the EU have not tried to spread the knowledge about plurilingualism and the necessity of this approach to safeguard linguistic diversity only through the publication of recommendations, studies, reports of conferences; through the years, especially during the last two decades, a series of instruments have been developed with the aim of providing more practical support to member states that want to elaborate policies for plurilingualism. This section will contribute by illustrating a general overview of the main tools created so far.

The best-known instrument designed by the COE – the "forefather", the first of its genre that paved the way for the elaboration of many other instruments – is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – Learning teaching, assessment*, also known as CEFR (2001), defined as "a reference framework, […] designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the development of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 18). In the 2001 edition, we can read that the stated aims of the CEFR are: "promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries; provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications; assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts" (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 5-6). As we previously discussed, this tool represents a revolutionary change in the field of language education: not only because it promotes the learning and teaching of languages as a means to reach success and access opportunities in various domains (professional, educational, social), but especially because it

explores a new vision of the main actor of the language learning process, the learner. The goal that this tool promotes is no longer to acquire a "native speaker" proficiency, but to direct language learning "towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 29), id est to use an action-oriented approach to turn the learner into a "social agent". Today, this instrument is spread and used worldwide thanks to the presence of the language proficiency levels, which represent an evolution of the concept of the *Threshold Level* (1975). The six ascending levels are paired with positive descriptors of competences that precise what each learner is able to do and what types of tasks can be fulfilled when each level is reached. Although it is clearly stated that this is not a prescriptive tool, but rather an instrument that encourages reflection on language education, the use of the CEFR was recommended to member states of the EU as soon as it was published and in the following years, as we can read in a Recommendation of 2008: the invite is to "create and/or maintain conditions favourable to the use of the Cefr as a tool for coherent, transparent and effective plurlingual education in such a way as to promote democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue" (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 2). The same document also promotes the use of another instrument based directly on the CEFR, called the European Language Portfolio (ELP).

The ELP, designed by the Language Policy Division of the COE, is a personal document created "to support the development of learner autonomy, plurilingualism and intercultural awareness and competence; to allow users to record their language learning achievements and their experience of learning and using languages" (COE website). The main goal of this tool is to give a real value to the whole linguistic repertoire of the individual, who is asked to record and reflect on their cultural and linguistic achievements and is therefore able to literally "see" their progress throughout the years, thus increasing their satisfaction. It is important to mention that every type of competence can be inserted in the ELP, whether it was acquired at school or not (in a lifelong learning perspective). Different versions of the ELP circulate today, adapted to fit the necessities of individuals of different ages; nevertheless, all versions share the same general design, since every ELP is divided into three parts. The Language Passport represents a sot of "photograph" of the individual's linguistic repertoire and proficiency in the different languages in a specific moment of their life; as it is usually done with a normal passport, this section is supposed to be updated at regular intervals, so that the individual can keep track of the progress made in language learning (which could include the acquisition of new language certifications, for example), always making reference to the Self-assessment Grid that is present in the CEFR. The descriptors of the Grid are taken as a starting point to promote further self-reflection and self-

assessment in the Language Biography, where the individual is asked to describe properly their linguistic, cultural and learning experiences, to state what they can do in each language, to reflect about possible future goals to reach. The Dossier is a collection of selected materials that document and illustrate the progress and achievements of the learners described in the Language Passport and Language Biography.

In the past years, the CoE gave member states the possibility to use an instrument of self-evaluation through which they could analyse and review their language education policies, the *Language Education Policy Profile*. Those member states who wished to receive support and assistance in this sense would subscribe to this initiative on purpose, which aimed at assessing language education as a whole (Council of Europe, 2014). The development of such Profile would include three main steps: "A descriptive Report prepared by authorities […]; Visits and exchanges during a week between the Council of Europe expert group and the main actors in language policy; An analytical and forward-looking report […]" (CoE website). The report would include a detailed description of the situation of language policies, in particular focusing on the promotion of plurilingualism, the teaching/learning of languages of schooling/foreign languages/minority languages, with the addition of a final summary containing proposals and suggestions for future action (Council of Europe, 2014). Unfortunately, this offer of assistance ended in 2017; among the 18 Profiles that were completed, we find those of Lombardia and Valle D'Aosta (Italy as a country did not submit a request to complete a Profile).

The topic of languages of schooling is extensively explored in the publication *Un cadre européen de référence pour les langues de l'éducation?* (Coste *et al*., 2007), which tries to analyse the relations between all these languages (paying particular attention to the concepts of plurilingualism and the support to unprivileged learners) with the final goal of creating a European framework of reference for languages of schooling.

Figure 4

Languages of schooling

Note: The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Council of Europe. *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*. Available at https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/platform#:~:text=The%20%22Platform%20of%20resources%20and,language%20as%20a%20subject%20and

The graphic here inserted is taken from the *Platform of resources and references for plurlingual and intercultural education*, "an open and dynamic resource providing a system of definitions, points of reference, descriptions and descriptors, studies and good practices" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 30). As it was previously mentioned, the need for this tool was expressed during the intergovernmental conference *Languages of schooling and the right to plurilingual and intercultural education* (2009), in order to support member states with the implementation of language policies regarding the learning of languages of schooling. Member states are allowed to use this policy instrument according to their necessities, sure that here they can find other useful policy tools that can guide their choices (Colaiuda, 2019).

Among the instruments that we can find in this Platform, there are two fundamental guides: *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (Council of Europe, 2007) and the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (Beacco *et al.*, 2016).

The former was created by the CoE as an answer to the practical needs of member states as far as language teaching and learning are concerned, and it is organised in the form of "an analytical tool which can serve as a reference for formulating or reorganising language teaching in Member States […] and, through it, an examination of European language policies" (Council of Europe, 2007, p.

10). Since the whole document rotates around the idea that "policies should be based on plurilingualism as a value and a competence" (p. 10), the Guide tries to promote this aim through a series of frameworks for "identifying language education policies; relating these to current changes in Europe and the proposals of the Council of Europe; making decision-makers […] aware of social issues involved in language policies" (p. 11). The final goal of this Guide is to give readers the means and tools to answer the following question: "*how can language education policies geared towards plurilingualism really be introduced?*" (p. 12). It is important to mention, though, that the document does not offer a definite solution nor tries to give one because it is not prescriptive (like the CEFR). The *Guide* is divided into three parts: the first section deals with the "analyses of current language education policies in Europe", the second presents "information required for the formulation of language education policies", and the final part includes a series of suggestions for the "implementation of language education policies" (CoE Portal).

The latter is based on both the CEFR and the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* and was born "to facilitate improved implementation of the values and principles of plurilingual and intercultural education in the teaching of all languages – foreign, regional or minority, classical, and language(s) of schooling" (Beacco *et al.*, 2016, p. 9). The proposals of curriculum organisation strive for convergence in language teaching and cross-cutting activities, since plurilingual competence can only be developed when different disciplines are interlinked (Council of Europe, 2014). The three chapters of this Guide are dedicated to the exploration of different topics: the first "provides a general picture of the issues and principles involved in designing and/or improving curricula" and presents a series of approaches that can help to fulfil the purpose of plurilingual and intercultural education, the second "discusses how the specific content and aims of plurlingual and intercultural education can be identified and integrated within the curriculum", and the third "addresses how curriculum scenarios can be used to project the spacing-out in time of this content and these objectives" (CoE Portal).

As we saw, the plurilingual and intercultural competence can be developed through the implementation of the so-called pluralistic approaches in the classroom, to which the document *A framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* (Candelier *et al.*, 2012) is dedicated. The FREPA/CARAP focuses on the advantages related to the use of these approaches and presents a series of attitudes, knowledge and skills that can be developed through their utilisation. It does not intend to substitute previous works nor is it (once again) a prescriptive tool, but tries to complement existing tools by giving a proper representation to such approaches and underlining their value; the final aim is to become a useful instrument "for the development of curricula which link and can propose progression in the acquisition of different areas of knowledge,

skills and attitudes to which pluralistic approaches afford (exclusively / more easily) access" (Candelier et. Al, 2012, p. 9).

The linguistic needs of adult migrants and the necessities of member states in the development of specific policies are addressed in a Guide called *Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants. Guide to policy development and implementation* (2014). The document illustrates a series of resources that the CoE has developed in this field and "it discusses the different forms of linguistic integration while taking account of the diversity of migrant populations, proposes guidelines for the design of learning programmes while suggesting adaptations to existing instruments, and also considers aspects relating to skills assessment" (Beacco et al., 2014, p. 8). A CoE website developed with the help of a group of experts has been dedicated to this field of studies, with the aim of providing "assistance to member states in developing coherent and effective policies", encouraging "good practice and high quality in the provision of language course and in assessment of language proficiency", and enabling "member states to reflect on policy and practice in this area" (CoE portal).

The set of documents, recommendations, instruments and frameworks presented in this subchapter aim at showing the development of policies regarding linguistic education and plurilingualism through the years at a European level. But what about Italy? How and when did the concept of language education make its appearance in the Italian panorama? When was the word "plurilingualism" first mentioned in an official document? What types of recommendations exist that foster the use of the plurilingual approach in Italy? The next subchapter will try to answer to all these questions.

1.4 Linguistic diversity and promotion of plurilingualism in Italy

"Every country has, as it were, its own multilingualism composed of 'traditional' languages which form part of its cultural heritage. These include the national language(s) and its varieties, minority languages, regional languages or dialects" (Cavalli et al., 2009, p. 4). This statement perfectly reflects the condition of Italy, a country which has always been characterised by a multitude of languages spoken all over the territory: standard Italian, regional and popular varieties, dialects (which vary from city to city, sometimes from town to town), and minority languages (the Italian law recognises and safeguards 12 minority languages). It is undeniable that linguistic diversity is an inherent trait of the Italian peninsula, and that plurilingualism has always belonged to the linguistic history of our country (Cognigni, 2020). At the same time, it is important to remember that an

incredible number of migrants have arrived in Italy since the 1990s, bringing with them their native languages that have further enriched the Italian linguistic diversity (when compared to other countries, there is not a specific group of immigrants of the same nationality that prevails over the others). Throughout the subchapter, we will see how, 50 years ago, Italy constituted a sort of role model to Europe in the elaboration of an *educazione linguistica democratica* that strived towards a plurilingual and democratic approach to language education, and how it has tried to incorporate this "neoplurilingualism" represented by the languages of immigrants in more recent policies.

1.4.1 Early measures in language education and foreign language teaching

In a country that was only born 50 years earlier and still did not have a solid linguistic identity, the philosopher Giuseppe Lombardo Radice represents the key figure in the field of language education at the beginning of the 20th century. It is him who mentions the concept of *educazione linguistica* for the first time in his work *Lezioni di didattica e ricordi di esperienza magistrale* (1912). His reflections on this concept and all the related ideas are quite ahead of his time, proposing innovations that will be theorised years later. Among these we signal:

a) it is unthinkable to accept that grammar is the starting point of linguistic acquisition and learning;

b) learning a language entails the spontaneous creation of rules, arising from the comparison of one's own language and that of others (a concept developed by Piaget and Vygotskij some decades later);

c) mistakes are not a sin, but the result of a lacking competence (the label of "interlanguage" will be attributed to this idea);

d) the role of the school is to support the learner in the spontaneous creation of linguistic rules (concept of LAD by Chomsky and of LASS by Bruner) (Lombardo Radice, 1912, as cited in Balboni, 2009).

This new wave of innovation is abruptly interrupted in the years of Fascism, which language policy is organised around three main actions: to give Italy an adequate and "noble" language, to instruct Italian people in the daily use of Italian language, and to erase all types of "barbarian" words that mar the Italian language. This leads, among other things, to the elimination of foreign language teaching at school (1940) and to a series of decrees that obstruct the study of English language outside school.

With the end of World War II, Italian people embrace a new form of government, the Republic, which comes with the promulgation of the Italian Constitution, entered into force on the first of

January 1948. Apart from the third article, which recognises the equality of all citizens in front of the law, no matter their sex, race, religion, language, etc., other two articles particularly important to the issue of language education are inserted: "Art. 6. La Repubblica tutela con apposite norme le minoranze linguistiche." and "Art. 34. La scuola è aperta a tutti. L'istruzione inferiore, impartita per almeno otto anni, è obbligatoria e gratuita. […]" (Senato della Repubblica Italiana, 1948, pp. 8, 20). Even if appropriate measures for the safeguard of minority languages will be taken only at the end of the century, the Constitution finally declares that it is a duty to attend school and pupils have the right to do it for free. Therefore, as a consequence, learners gain once again the possibility to learn a foreign language. English, German, Spanish make their entrance in the Italian school, and in 1959 the document *Piano di sviluppo della scuola dal 1959 al 1969* establishes that every pupil has the right to be taught a foreign language for 8 years and asks the Parliament to find new ways to recruit and instruct new foreign language teachers (Balboni, 2009).

1.4.2 The 1960s and 1970s: the Italian revolution in language teaching and learning

These two decades represent a turning point in the field of *educazione linguistica*, and this change is mainly represented by the publication of a historic document, *Dieci Tesi per l'Educazione Linguistica e Democratica* by GISCEL (1975), which anticipates the policies of the COE of approximately 30 years, thus collocating Italy in a progressive position in the European panorama. In these years, the concept of *educazione linguistica* is associated to two different meanings:

    a) *educazione linguistica* as the field that generally regards the teaching/learning of the mother tongue/national language, Languages as L2, foreign languages (it will be one of the protagonists of the new programmes for "scuola media" of 1979);

    b) *educazione linguistica* as the field that specifically regards the teaching of the Italian language, of which the GISCEL group discuss in their *Dieci Tesi* (Balboni, 2009).

This document lays the premises for the creation of a democratic school based on the principles and values presented in the Italian Constitution, like recognising the equality of the citizens, respecting ang giving value to every linguistic variety, erasing every form of discrimination, promoting equal opportunities for everyone (Colaiuda, 2019); in order to do so, it proposes a radical change of *educazione linguistica* through the elaboration of ten precepts that strive towards a democratization of this field. Starting from the assumption that "verbal language is of major importance for communicative, cognitive and conceptual purposes and that linguistic skills are multiple and complex (Precept I and III)" (Costanzo, 2003, p. 9), and that the development of linguistic skills is deeply connected with the whole maturation of the child in all their aspects

(social/emotional/intellectual/biological) and throughout their whole life (lifelong learning perspective) (Precept II), the document specifies that *educazione linguistica* can be effective and democratic at the same time only if it is able to put into practice the linguistic principles presented in the Italian Constitution, i.e. to recognise that all citizens are equal with no distinction of language and to make sure that this equality is promoted (Precept IV) (GISCEL, 1975). It continues by claiming that traditional language education has proven to be ineffective and quite limited because of its features, mainly focused on orthography, grammar, written language (Precepts V, VI, VII). It is from these observations that ten principles for a democratic *educazione linguistica* are presented (Precept VIII), among which we find: the idea of identifying "pupils' personal, family, cultural and linguistic background and environment, not in order to tie them to their background and environment, […] but, on the contrary, to enrich their linguistic heritage by adding to it and expanding it […]" (Costanzo, 2003, p. 20); the will to develop receptive and productive skills both in their oral and wirtten dimension; the importance of giving the opportunity to practice every linguistic variety. In order to pursue similar objectives, it is clear that a change in teaching methods is required (Precept IX); it is also true that teachers alone cannot face a similar transformation, but do need an education in this sense (Precept X) (GISCEL, 1975). At a first glance, it is possible to notice that the document does not make any reference to the role of foreign language(s) in language education, but only focuses on the teaching of Italian. Although it may appear quite limiting, it is important to remember that these precepts are specifically created to inspire a revolution in the way the Italian language is taught, considering that in 1975 many Italian citizens still have some difficulties in using the national language properly. This does not mean that it does not find any application in the field of FL teaching in the following years.

The actualisation of these precepts (at least on a theoretical level) can be found a few years later in the new *Programmi, orari di insegnamento e prove di esame per la scuola media statale* (1979), where the term *educazione linguistica* is officially mentioned for the first time:

> L'insegnamento dell'italiano si inserisce nel più vasto quadro dell'educazione linguistica la quale riguarda, sia pure in diversa misura, tutte le discipline e le attività, e, in particolare, tende a far acquisire all'alunno, come suo diritto fondamentale, l'uso del linguaggio in tutta la varietà delle sue funzioni e forme nonché lo sviluppo delle capacità critiche nei confronti della realtà. […] La lingua straniera ha il compito di contribuire, in armonia con le altre discipline, e in modo particolare con la lingua italiana, alla conquista delle capacità espressive e comunicative degli alunni, anche mediante l'allargamento degli orizzonti culturali, sociali e

umani, reso possibile dal contatto che la conoscenza della lingua straniera consente con realtà storiche e socio-culturali diverse da quella italiana (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 1979, pp. 7-8).

Making reference to a previous law (article 2 of law n. 348/1977), these new programmes aim to strengthen language education through the teaching and learning of both the Italian language and foreign languages. An important role in this sense is also attributed to dialects, minority languages and new languages brought by people with a migratory background: these shall not be overlooked but used instead as a further way to promote *educazione linguistica* (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 1979).

1.4.3 Plurilingualism in Italy in recent educational policies

Generally speaking, the Italian documents and programmes of the last century were developed to encourage a change in the field of language education that was mainly focused on the teaching and learning of the national language. With the beginning of the 21st century, following the innovations and suggestions of the COE, Italy dedicates new energies to the promotion of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity in the school environment, with a particular emphasis on the integration of children with a migratory background and the valorisation of their family language.
One of the first important documents in this sense is *La via Italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* (MPI, 2007), which tries to create an Italian model of integration by listing the strengths and weaknesses of previous actions and giving adequate visibility to interesting projects. The introduction, written by Minister Fioroni, underlines that, when adopting an intercultural perspective, it is not sufficient to only think about integration strategies: "Insegnare in una prospettiva interculturale vuol dire piuttosto assumere la diversità come paradigma dell'identità stessa della scuola, occasione privilegiata di apertura a tutte le differenze" (MPI, 2007, p. 4). It is therefore necessary that diversity becomes an inherent trait of the Italian school in order to genuinely embrace the plurilingual approach. The document describes the phenomenon of plurilingualism as both a richness of the single learner (*plurilinguismo individuale*) and of the entire school (*plurilinguismo di sistema*), thus stressing the fact that it represents an opportunity for every child. At the individual level, plurlingualism shall be enhanced through the valorisation and maintenance of the family language of the child with a migratory background; at the school level, a particular relevance is given to to the possibility to include the teaching and learning of "unconventional" foreign languages, like those spoken by immigrant communities of a specific territory. In addition, teachers are invited to "valorizzare il plurilinguismo dando visibilità

alle altre lingue e ai vari alfabeti, scoprendo i 'prestiti linguistici' tra le lingue ecc." (MPI, 2007, p. 13).

The plurilingual approach finds a proper representation in the document *Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo d'istruzione* (MIUR, 2012a), which fixes the learning goals for the development of the pupils' competences in every subject, taking as a reference the key competences for lifelong learning defined by the European Parliament (see 1.3.3), among which we find the multilingual competence. In agreement with the precepts of the *Dieci Tesi* and the will to strive for a democratic and open to everyone *educazione linguistica*, the stated goal of this document presented in the section "Per una nuova cittadinanza" is to give value to the uniqueness and singularity of every pupil's cultural identity by acknowledging their diversity and by supporting their interaction and full integration. This translates into the necessity to give priority to both the learning of the Italian language and the valorisation of the various linguistic repertoires, giving this responsibility to all the teachers (language across the curriculum) (MIUR, 2012a). The concept of plurilingual and intercultural education is mentioned alongside the cultural and social literacy as a basic need for all children:

> All'alfabetizzazione culturale e sociale concorre in via prioritaria l'educazione plurilingue e interculturale. La lingua materna, la lingua di scolarizzazione e le lingue europee, in quanto lingue dell'educazione, contribuiscono infatti a promuovere i diritti del soggetto al pieno sviluppo della propria identità nel contatto con l'alterità linguistica e culturale. L'educazione plurilingue e interculturale rappresenta una risorsa funzionale alla valorizzazione delle diversità e al successo scolastico di tutti e di ognuno ed è presupposto per l'inclusione sociale e per la partecipazione democratica (MIUR, 2012a, p. 27).

Plurilingual and intercultural education can exploit the rich linguistic heritage of the Italian country, including not only the national language and the foreign languages, but also dialects, minority languages, regional varieties, written and spoken Italian. If the plurilingual approach is introduced in the school, pupils are given the possibilty to become aware of the existence of different cultures and different languages, which shape the way we think and express (intercultural approach and *éveil aux langues*). Clearly, a similar purpose needs some planning and cooperation between teachers of all disciplines, and a stable continuity with the passage from a grade to the next (MIUR, 2012). According to the document, the Italian educational system allows the pupil to acquire a plurilingual and pluricultural competence through the learning of the mother tongue, the language used at school, the English language and a second foreign language: "La consapevolezza della

cittadinanza europea attraverso il contatto con due lingue comunitarie, lo sviluppo di un repertorio diversificato di risorse linguistiche e culturali per interagire con gli altri e la capacità di imparare le lingue concorrono all'educazione plurlingue e interculturale, […]" (MIUR, 2012a, p. 39) (is it what really happens in Italian schools?). The method to achieve such aim includes the linguistic reflection and comparison among languages, leading the pupil to acquire a practical competence that allows them to "do with the language" (action-oriented approach).

The same concepts are inserted in a follow-up document, *Indicazioni Nazionali e Nuovi Scenari* (MIUR, 2018), where plural approaches are mentioned (but not described) as the means through which teachers can face the new challenges in the multilingual classes. It is possible to find an interesting reference to article 7 of Law 107/2015, which leads to the suggestion of gradually introducing the CLIL methodology in elementary and middle school (MIUR, 2018). As much convenient as this proposal may seem, it has turned out to be another way to strengthen the dominance of English over the other languages, thus failing to pave the way towards plurilingualism and linguistic diversification (for further information about CLIL methodology in Italy, see ch. 2.2). On the basis of the *Indicazioni* (2012a) and the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*, MIUR publishes the guidelines *Linee Guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* (2014a), dedicating an entire paragraph to plurilingualism. According to the document, the first decade of the new century was characterised by an increased awareness of the new necessities of the more and more multilingual classes: "l'importanza di conoscere la situazione linguistica degli alunni; la visibilità che deve essere data alle lingue d'origine degli alunni negli spazi della scuola […]; la valorizzazione, quando è possibile, della diversità linguistica, […]" (MIUR, 2014a, p. 19). What follows is a list of widespread actions (are they?) in Italian schools that can enhance a plurilingual and intercultural education: plurilingual messages/communications/welcome posters; plurilingual questionnaires to verify the knowledge and abilities of the recently arrived pupil; the bilingual reading of fairy tales from all over the world; the introduction to different alphabets and language borrowings; bilingual glossaries to facilitate the newcomer in comprehension activities; the teaching of non-European languages (e.g. Russian, Arabic, Chinese) that are used in a certain school by a certain number of children (these courses are usually held as after-school courses and are not compulsory) (MIUR, 2014a). Among the other things, the document highlights the need to adequately prepare the teachers to adopt an intercultural and plurilingual approach, praising the course "Pedagogia interculturale" that aspiring teachers of primary education have to attend during their academic preparation, and lamenting the absence of something similar for aspiring professors.

To support the topic of integration of foreign pupils, the following year a Recommendation is published, called *Diversi da chi? Raccomandazioni per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'intercultura* (MIUR, 2015), which tries to put into practice the content of the reform "Buona Scuola" regarding this issue. In particular, it stresses the necessity to give emphasis to interesting, local projects and spread them at a national level, alongside a widespread preparation of teachers and headmasters: "occorre dunque passare dal 'brusio' delle buone pratiche a una voce forte e condivisa, sviluppando una formazione capillare e non sporadica dei dirigenti scolastici e degli insegnanti, […]" (MIUR, 2015, p. 1). Under the influence of the *Dieci Tesi*, the Recommendation introduces ten proposals to improve the current situation in terms of integration; the seventh objective is dedicated to the valorisation of linguistic diversity in the classroom:

> *Valorizzare la diversità linguistica*. L' integrazione scolastica dei bambini e dei ragazzi con origini migratorie ha seguito in questi anni modalità prevalentemente di tipo "compensativo", sottolineando soprattutto le carenze e i vuoti e riconoscendo molto poco i saperi acquisiti e le competenze di ciascuno, ad esempio, nella lingua materna. La diversità linguistica rappresenta infatti un'opportunità di arricchimento per tutti, sia per i parlanti plurilingue, che per gli autoctoni, i quali possono precocemente sperimentare la varietà dei codici e crescere più aperti al mondo e alle sue lingue (MIUR, 2015, p. 4).

The solutions proposed include the organisation of optional courses for the learning of family languages, the experimental teaching of non-European languages to all pupils, the valorisation of the linguistic repertoire of every learner (it is not specified how), the education of teachers on the topics of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity (MIUR, 2015).

Cognigni (2020) notices that this paragraph presents a strange categorisation: it claims that linguistic diversity represents a rich opportunity for both the plurilingual speaker (a foreigner) and the native learner, thus leading to the misconception that plurilingualism is something typical only of the pupil with a migratory background (and forgetting about the possible linguistic repertoire made of dialects/regional varieties/minority languages of a native child). Unfortunately, there are still some uncertainties about the nature of plurilingualism and the advantages that linguistic diversity brings with it. A further example can be found in the document *Strumenti d'intervento per alunni con bisogni educativi speciali e organizzazione territoriale per l'inclusione scolastica* (MIUR, 2012b), where the authors include the category of pupils with a linguistic disadvantage in the broader group of children with Special Educational Needs. Firpo and Sanfelici (2016, as cited in Cognigni, 2020) specify that defining the partial knowledge of Italian L2 as a "disadvantage"

implies not giving a proper value to the linguistic repertoire of the pupil with a migratory background.

Like other European countries, Italy has tried to keep up with the policies of the CoE regarding the promotion of the plurilingual approach, and the publication of the above-mentioned documents demonstrates it. But after reading all these recommendations, suggestions, good intentions, the questions that automatically rises are: how are these indications put into practice? Is there a continuity between theory and practice? How do European countries in general, and Italy in particular, respond to the directions given by the European institutions? Has the "utopian idea" of a plurilingual society become reality? Or are there some gaps between what is declared in the documents and what is actually done in the classroom? The second chapter will extensively analyse these issues, showing that the goal has not been fully reached yet.

Chapter 2. The gaps between documents and plurilingual practices

With this second chapter, the focus moves to the topic of language policies in Europe and Italy, with a particular emphasis on the gaps between theory and practice, between what the COE and European Commission documents and recommendations suggest and what is (or is not) done to carry out those proposals.

The first subchapter will be dedicated to the exploration of the general European level language policies and will try to give an answer to many questions: what are the most learned languages in Europe? How many foreign languages does the average European citizen speak? And what age do children generally start learning a foreign language? Is there a real interest in promoting the plurilingual ideology? How are European institutions coping with the difficulty of making the recommendations valid for as many countries as possible? Are there languages that are considered more important than others?

The second subchapter follows the same path, but it downsizes the scope of investigation: it focuses on Italy and the national gaps. What is the most studied foreign language in Italy? How much time is dedicated to the study of foreign languages? What pluralistic approaches are implemented in Italy? What roles are the home languages spoken by students given in the classroom? Are teachers adequately prepared to give value to cultural and linguistic diversity?

The third subchapter tries to delve into the topic of plurilingualism in Italian schools even further: it presents the results of an interview to a group of primary school teachers, which main intent was to invite the protagonists of school to reflect on the concepts of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity in relation to their job. What do they know and think about these themes? Were they specifically trained to promote linguistic and cultural diversity in their classes? Do they do something to give value to every linguistic and cultural identity?

2.1 Policies for plurilingualism and practices: gaps in Europe

Throughout the last decades, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and other institutions have published a series of documents, recommendations, tools and instruments to further support the spreading of theories and practices related to plurilingualism and to promote the development of new language policies at a national level. But what exactly is a language policy?

> Language policy is a systematic, rational, theory-based effort at the societal level to modify
> the linguistic environment with a view to increasing aggregate welfare. It is typically

conducted by official bodies or their surrogates and aimed at part or all of the population living under their jurisdiction (Grin, 2003, as cited in Saccardo, 2016, p. 21).

This subchapter focuses on the analysis of recent language policies that generally regard the entire European panorama, trying to make a comparison between them and the previously discussed documents (see Chapter 1.3). The comparison shows that the general recommendations of the COE aimed at spreading the practice of plurilingualism all over Europe do not often translate into language policies and only remain on paper. This means that there is a consistent gap between what we read on official documents and what European countries do (or do not do) to put into practice these recommendations. The topics of discussion are manifold, therefore a small selection will be presented here: from what and how many languages are studied to early language education, from the single language ideology to the difficulty of creating a unitarian system of guidelines for all European countries, with a final reflection on the (alleged) equality of languages in our society.

2.1.1 Number of languages learned and language diversification in schools: an uneven distribution

As we can read in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*, "the project of plurilingual education is to adapt language teaching to the needs of European societies and to speakers' aspirations. This is made possible by diversifying the languages taught […]" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 67). The promotion of plurilingualism and the valorisation of linguistic varieties in European societies can be realised only if educational systems start to give learners the possibility to learn a greater variety of languages, where the term "variety" refers both to the number of compulsory languages for each ISCED level[3] and to the range of different languages that the school curriculum offers. Currently speaking, the number of languages learned per pupil and language diversification in schools all over Europe constitute one of the obstacles on the way towards plurilingualism.

According to the Eurydice Italia report *Cifre chiave dell'insegnamento delle lingue a scuola in Europa* (2017), the number of languages spoken in Europe goes beyond the 24 official languages by a great deal, since it also includes regional languages, minority languages, dialects, regional varieties, etc. Nevertheless, only a few of these are studied as foreign languages in schools (Eurydice Italia, 2017). Predictably, the most studied foreign language in Europe is English, which

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3   For further information about ISCED levels, visit Eurostat website, International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED)

is present in the curricula of primary and secondary education of almost every European nation. As far as primary education is concerned, with the exception of Belgium and Luxembourg (multilingual countries), in 2015 "English was by far the most popular language, studied by 17.5 million pupils (83.5% of the primary school population)", followed by French (0.8 million, 4.8%), German (0.7 million, 3.9%), Spanish (0.1 million, 0.6%), Russian (54 thousand, 0.3%), and Italian (33 thousand, 0.2%) (Eurostat, 2017). A similar situation is depicted in the Eurostat table (2021a) that refers to the year 2019 and shows the percentage of pupils by language studied in each country: things have not changed that much in 4 years, for the most studied languages at school remain the same, to the detriment of languages that are spoken by few people and are not considered "as important" as those mentioned above (e.g. Bulgarian, Polish, Maltese) or other languages that entered the European panorama quite recently, like for example the languages brought in by immigrants (e.g. Arabic, Chinese).

As far as the number of languages studied by each learner is concerned, the situation seems to be improving for general upper secondary pupils in the EU, since 60% of them studied two or more foreign languages in 2018, with peaks of 99% in Luxembourg (2018 data), France, Romania, Czechia and Finland in 2019, but also poor results in countries such as Ireland (2018 data), Portugal and Greece in 2019, which registered a maximum percentage of 15% (Eurostat, 2021b, p. 18). The percentages steeply diminish when we consider primary school pupils: in 2015 only "1 million (around 5%) […] were studying two foreign languages or more", compared to the higher percentage of pupils (19 million, 84%) learning at least one foreign language (Eurostat, 2017). 4 years later, only little variations are registered, with an average number of 0.9 foreign languages learned by primary education pupils, 1.6 for lower secondary education students, 1.4 for upper secondary education students (Eurostat, 2021c).

When analysing these data attentively, and comparing them to the directions that are present in many CoE documents (chapters 1.3.2 and 1.3.3), it is possible to notice a gap between theory and practice. The purpose of teaching young EU citizens at least two foreign languages other than their mother tongue, which is presented in the *White Paper on Education and Training* (1995), collides with today's situation, in which almost 5 out of 6 children in Europe are still learning only one foreign language, alongside 1 out of 3 students in upper secondary education. In addition, the data about the most studied languages in Europe make us realise that "the principle of the diversification of languages in schools and society has already been accepted by many governments, although its practical expression is uneven, particularly with respect to the implementation of this diversification" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 31). When combining the poor numbers of languages learned by each EU student with the non-application of the ideal of language diversification, we

obtain a result that is light years away from the goals described in the documents previously analysed. How are European students supposed to gain the multilingual competence described in the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning* if they are not given the means to achieve a similar result? Further measures need to be implemented in this sense if Europe wants to get closer to the still "utopian idea" of a plurilingual society.

2.1.2 Early language education: an underdevelopd area

Following the section where it is suggested that European children should be given the possibility to learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue, the *White Paper on Education and Training* (1995) adds an interesting note: "In order to make for proficiency in three Community languages, it is desirable for foreign language learning to start at pre-school level" (European Commission, 1995, p. 44). A similar suggestion can also be found in the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems* (chapter 1.3.3). A proper definition of pre-primary education or preschool education is provided by the UNESCO – International Bureau of Education website:

> Education typically designed for children from 3 years of age to the start of primary school. The educational properties of pre-primary education are characterized by interaction with peers and educators, through which children improve their use of language and social skills, and start to develop logical and reasoning skills. Children are also introduced to alphabetical and mathematical concepts, and encouraged to explore their surrounding world and environment […].

Since plurilingualism is considered to be a precious resource to build the new European society, early language education is, among the others, a fundamental element that guarantees educational success and prepares young Europeans to face the challenges of everyday life in our complex and globalised society (Colaiuda, 2019). But when it comes to evaluating the progress of Europe in this field, data show that the situation is far from being rosy, and another gap emerges.

In most European countries (year of reference: 2015/16), children start to study a foreign language as a compulsory subject when they are between 6 and 8 years old, id est during the first year(s) of primary school (Eurydice Italia, 2017). To be more precise, the report *Languages in education and training: Final country comparative analysis* individuates the average age at 7.7 years old (European Commission, 2014). Some positive exceptions are represented by Belgium (German

community) and 4 autonomous communities in Spain, where children start studying a second/foreign language at the age of 3, and Poland, where foreign language learning became part of non-compulsory preschool education in 2017 (Eurydice Italia, 2017). It is true that the age at which a child starts to learn a compulsory foreign language has been lowering in Europe throughout the last twenty years, but the minimum age does not seem to cover the years of pre-primary education in the majority of European countries.

The truth is that early language education does not seem to be part of the priorities of European nations when it comes to listing objectives to cover during ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care). Reading the central steering documents published in the year 2012/13, we can notice that "Out of all the ECEC learning objectives/activities […], early foreign and/or second language learning is the least frequently mentioned in steering documents. Nevertheless, it is specified in 18 countries, usually in relation to older children" (European Commission, 2014, p. 120). The fact that this objective receives more attention in documents dedicated to pupils of primary education does not cover the evidence that only a few European countries dedicate their energies and resources to implement early language education at the preschool level, as the following table shows.

Figure 5

Learning objectives and/or activities for Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, as recommended in central steering documents, 2012/13

Source: Eurydice.

Note: The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, (2014). Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe (2014 Edition). Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

According to the 2019 edition of the same report, the situation has not improved at all in the last years. The guidelines that focus on children's learning and development cite several areas that deserve some attention and should be at the centre of daily activities in ECEC, but "Of the learning areas investigated […], early foreign language learning and digital education are the two least frequently mentioned in top-level educational guidelines, and are more often targeted at older children" (European Commission, 2019, p. 99). Once again, the document reiterates the same concept: there seems to be no space for early language education for children under 6, since only 3 guidelines out of 43 (under age 3) and 14 out of 43 (age 3 and over) mention this area of development.

Both editions of the report *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe* (2014 and 2019) dedicate a paragraph to an interesting aspect related to early language education: the measures that support minorities and migrants in learning their mother tongue. The former briefly introduces this topic and provides a concise description of the countries that, by adopting these measures, "give these children an opportunity to keep their identity and grow up in a bilingual environment" (European Commission, 2014, p. 144), namely Slovenia, Poland, and Switzerland. The latter examines in depth the theme of home language teaching in ECEC, id est the "measures to improve children's skills in their home language where it is not the main language used in the ECEC and school context" (European Commission, 2019, p. 115). The main objectives of home language teaching are "to help children improve their skills in the language of instruction. […] to promote migrant children's home language skills and cultural identity. […] to foster plurilingualism among all learners" (European Commission, 2019, p. 117). On the one hand, language support for regional and/or minority languages is present (although in different ways) in several European countries, such as Czechia, Croatia, Estonia, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Montenegro, Northern Ireland and Wales. On the other hand, only a few countries provide this type of support for children with a migratory background: three nations (Spain, Switzerland, Portugal) have a direct agreement with the countries of origin/immigrant communities, while Belgium (French Community), Slovenia, Luxembourg, Sweden, Finland and Norway offer home language teaching in Ecec for every child. The three Nordic countries and Slovenia are the only ones that support both approaches to home language teaching.

The scarce number of countries that include these measures in their educational guidelines makes us understand that Europe is barely interested in the topic of early language education, thus not giving the chance to children to develop a plurilingual repertoire from an early age and denying children from migrant backgrounds to maintain and nurture their plurilingual repertoire.

2.1.3 The promotion of plurilingualism versus the ideology of the single language

In the opening speech of the international conference *Languages, Diversity, Citizenship: Policies for Plurilingualism in Europe* (2002), Lluis Maria de Pluig strongly stresses the fact that language policies have increasingly become a political matter of fundamental importance:

> Language is a cultural asset and a means of communication, but language also has a political dimension: languages cannot blossom if they do not benefit from political protection or decisions by policy-makers. The teaching of languages is no longer a mere 'technical' or pedagogical issue. It is increasingly a political issue because it touches on linguistic rights, participation in democratic life, democratic citizenship in Europe, social cohesion, identity and economic life. […] Language education policies are of prime importance because language issues also reflect the conflict between the development of plurilingualism and market forces that lean towards the use of a single language (Council of Europe, 2002, p. 10).

With this statement, de Pluig perfectly captures the still existing divergence between the Council of Europe and its policies, aiming at promoting plurilingualism and cultural diversity in member States, and the interests of the global market, oriented towards the promotion of the ideology of the "single language" (Colaiuda, 2019).

The existence of a global language, or lingua franca, is a phenomenon that dates back to the 1950s, when English replaced French as the language of political communication because of the economic and political influence of the United States (Crystal, 1997). Since the "ascent" of English started, a new linguistic ideology (part of liberal economic ideology) has developed, one that underlines the need for a language common to everyone in order to reduce the costs of multilingualism:

> Linguistic ideology based on a principle of economy is often placed at the service of the economy. The costs of the diversity of human linguistic varieties are then invoked: the cost of learning and translation, the difficulty of mutual comprehension. It is also the source of national policies for which the use of a common, homogeneous language ensures the fluidity

of the national market, particularly the labour market, and maximum efficiency to the state. Economy of languages is used to justify efforts to thwart linguistic diversification. […] (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 28).

As we know, this common language happens to be English, and despite the efforts of the COE in Europe and other institutions all over the world, the overwhelming dominance of this language hinders the expansion of the ideology of plurilingualism. We have seen in the previous sections that almost all pupils learn English as a compulsory foreign language in western Europe, and in the places where it is implemented, "The early learning of languages has benefited English almost exclusively" (Truchot, 2002, p. 8). But education is not the only area in which English prevails: it is the "official" language of textbooks and books used in universities, of scientific research, symposia and congresses. In this way, other languages that do not manage to keep up and to "act as a transmitter of scientific results become devalued. The devaluation process extends even to users of those languages" (p. 11).

What could be the future perspectives if the ideology of the single language (English today, could be another language in the future) keeps on evolving and progressing? "Perhaps the presence of a global language will make people lazy about learning other languages, or reduce their opportunities to do so. Perhaps a global language will hasten the disappearance of minority languages, or […] make all other languages unnecessary" (Crystal, 1997, p. 15). Regardless of what will happen in the next decades, it is now that Europe must act to prevent the further dissemination of this ideology, starting from modifying the social perceptions that see English as the most valuable language to master for the reasons mentioned above (communication, scientific research, education, employment) (Council of Europe, 2007). This is not something easy to do, though, especially when it comes to investing resources in an educational project: "Skills and the benefit to the economy are key drivers for education. Governments want a return on their investment in education, in particular in an era of tight public spending" (European Commission, 2011, p. 4). Today linguistic competences are seen as an instrument that can improve the chances of mobility and employment in the global market (Mezzadri, 2016), therefore if English already fulfils these necessities, what would be the point of promoting plurilingualism?

Unfortunately, the gap between the promotion of plurilingualism and the dominant ideology of the single language is also reinforced by the same promoters of the valorisation of linguistic diversity, the EU institutions, which almost always use English for both oral and written communication during conferences and meetings (Truchot, 2002). Today many official documents are indeed translated into other languages, but is we exclude some rare exceptions (e.g. Official Journal of the

European Union, The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages) only main languages are used, such as Italian, French, German, Russian.

This type of gap could be reduced if EU institutions made a further effort to really involve a wider variety of languages during conferences and in their documents, even if it is necessary to consider that "Half the budget of an international organization can easily get swallowed up in translation costs" (Crystal, 1997, p. 12). But most importantly, it should be up to each state to reflect about their linguistic future and the place their language(s) occupy in the world, thinking whether linguistic homogeneity is the only possible solution (to the very much probable detriment of non-global languages and/or minor languages) or whether something concrete can be done to give value to the linguistic heritage of a nation.

2.1.4 The dichotomy between European policies and local heterogeneity

Considering the documents, projects and frameworks above mentioned and presented (chapter 1.3), the overall goal of the CoE "is to achieve greater unity between its members and […] this aim can be pursued in particular by the adoption of common action in the cultural field" (Council of Europe, 1982, p. 1), without forgetting that "The European Union is founded on 'unity in diversity': diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs – and of languages" (European Commission, 2005, p. 2). The condition of the European continent puts the European institutions in front of a quite demanding challenge: they shall ensure that all European countries follow a unitarian guideline that aims at promoting plurilingualism and language diversity, but at the same time they shall avoid the risk that these measures become a means of homogenization that may endanger the uniqueness of every country. This is the reason that lies behind the decision to insert the same sentence in almost every instrument/framework designed by the CoE: a sentence that reminds the reader that the tools shall be considered as descriptive instruments and not as prescriptive ones, for their aim is not to impose but to inform and suggest. The "clause" that represents a consistent restriction to the CoE's actions, which are limited to strong recommendations and suggestions, is the gap that exists between the European policies and the heterogeneity that characterises the educational system at a local level. The difficulty lies in the process of diffusion of these policies, which need to consider the general tendencies at a European/international level (*supra* level), but also the national/regional/local needs (*macro* level) and the requirements of every single school (*meso* level). In addition, other levels that deserve attention in this sense are the class, its composition and its particular needs (*micro*), and the learner with all their necessities (*nano*) (Colaiuda, 2019). It is now clear why the CoE cannot impose specific measures to promote plurilingualism and language

diversity: the number of European countries, with all their languages spoken (national, regional, minority, etc.), different numbers of learners, different socio-political situations, an immense diversity of educational contexts, makes it impossible to create frameworks of reference that are valid for everyone in every case. A similar dilemma was faced during the conference *Languages of Schooling: towards a framework of reference for Europe* (2006), during which possible issues for a similar tool were discussed; among these, "The potential breadth of the audience provides a challenge because there is the danger that in attempting to reach all audiences it runs the risk of not being sufficiently focused" (Council of Europe, 2006, p. 31).

The solution that the CoE offers to try to solve this problem is to devise a series of descriptive instruments (illustrated in chapter 1.3.4) that are provided to European nations as tools that can guide their decisions in the field of language education:

> The implementation of a language education policy shared by Europeans is possible if the political decision is taken to make national education systems essentially, but not exclusively, responsible for doing so. […] Just as it is the state's role to provide education in the values of democracy, so it is the state's responsibility to promote knowledge of the territory's languages, European languages, languages spoken in Europe or elsewhere, and to implement a form of plurilingual education, through languages, capable of strengthening or creating the feeling of belonging to the same democratic space (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 39)

If each European country adapts these general suggestions according to their necessities, the principle of "unity in diversity" can be achieved. However, it is important to notice that, by doing so, European institutions cannot control how language policies are rearranged in every country and how/if new ideologies such as the plurilingual approach are spread at a regional/local level. This is a type of gap that will probably be never bridged to the full.

2.1.5 The (in)equality of languages and their social value

The principle of "unity in diversity" that guides many CoE documents and recommendations is based on the idea that, in order to achieve the development of a common European identity characterised by plurilingualism, nations and institutions need to respect and recognise the same value to all languages. This conception is in turn shaped on the guidelines and principles listed in *The Universal Declaration Of Linguistic Rights* (1998); this aforementioned document "is based on the principle that the rights of all language communities are equal and independent of the legal or

political status of their languages as official, regional or minority languages" and it "considers discrimination against language communities to be inadmissible, whether it be based on their degree of political sovereignty, their situation defined in social, economic or other terms, the extent to which their languages have been codified, updated or modernized, [...]" (International PEN Club, p. 25). As much praiseworthy and fair as these principles are, when it comes to reality we unfortunately observe another gap between theory and practice that interferes with the goals of plurilingualism: "in a particular society and in different societies, languages are considered not to have the same value. Such judgments [...] are in fact a function of their status in a society or the status of the people who speak them" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 26). The ideology of the inequality of languages is still widespread and entrenched in the mind of many European citizens and it is related to the social representations of languages that were born in different societies because of social, economic, historical, religious, etc. reasons.

As we previously saw with the English language, the "economic power" of a certain language can deeply affect the opinions of people about it, both positively and negatively speaking. In the case of English, because of the political and economic dominion of the United States over the last 50 years, this language is perceived as a fundamental tool to enter the global market and to communicate. At the same time, "this combination of functions may lead to the view that the appropriation of other linguistic varieties is superfluous [...], because knowledge of English is in itself sufficient to satisfy communication needs and to model social aspirations" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 30); in other words, the attribution of so much value to English consequently leads to the de-evaluation of other languages that are not as powerful from a political/economic point of view. A similar concept is expressed by Hans-Jürgen Krumm (2003, as cited in Glaser, 2005), who explains that languages are attributed a different status ("good" and "bad") according to the people who speak them and their geographical provenance: "Typically, the 'good' immigrants come from wealthy countries and perform high-status jobs, whereas the 'bad' immigrants are those who come to live in the country mainly for economic or political reasons" (Glaser, 2005, p. 203). A similar perception can negatively affect all those who are considered to belong to the latter group and can also result in the denial of one's linguistic and cultural legacy: "Some immigrant children say they speak only one linguistic variety, the national language of the host country, because they have absorbed the dominant representation according to which their parents' language is not considered a 'real' language where they now live" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 26).

This problem is not something exclusive of foreign/immigrant languages, though. The social value that is attributed to different linguistic varieties that are spoken in the same country is another issue that influences the representation of languages, once again positively or negatively. We can find a

perfect example in the way Italy and the instruction system has tried to eradicate dialects to pursue the ideal of a single national language. The unification of the Italian peninsula under a single reign in 1861 brought with it the so-called *questione linguistica*, which translated into the necessity to teach a single language variety (the regional Italian spoken in Florence) to further prompt the birth of a national identity. Starting with the Law Casati (1860) and the following ones, dialects are completely neglected, as if they never existed: on a quantitative level, the goal is to spread the Italian language to the detriment of dialects and other minority languages, while on a qualitative level dialects are deprived of their value and they are only referenced as a source of error and not as the mother tongue of the majority of the "new" Italian citizens (Balboni, 2009). Nowadays the situation has not improved that much: leaving aside some exceptions, dialects are generally excluded from the education environment and are still widely considered as the mark of a poor/rural social condition, in constrast with the use of the Italian language which has become a synonym of literacy and acculturation.

After examining the general European gaps between theory and practice, we move on to analyse in detail the Italian situation with all its peculiarities, trying to focus on what is still to be done to bridge over the void between the documents and reality.

2.2 The obstacles to plurilingual education in Italy

After describing the general gaps that hinder the development of language policies concerning plurilingualism all over Europe, we now focus on the specific case of Italy. With the publication of the document *Dieci tesi per l'educazione linguistica e democratica* (1975) and the introduction of the concept of *educazione linguistica*, Italy preceded the documents and recommendations of the CoE of almost 30 years, becoming a beacon in the European panorama. Unfortunately, throughout the following decades, Italy lost this position and went instead through a slow decline as far as language policies are concerned (Colaiuda, 2019). Just like the previous one, this subchapter will be dedicated to analysing the Italian situation and the aspects that constitute a problem to the implementation of the plurilingual approach, namely: the role of the English language and how foreign languages are generally studied with the passage from an ISCED level to another; practical matters such as class sizes and hours per week dedicated to the study of languages; the (non) use of pluralistic approaches; the role that home languages occupy in the school; the initial education and professional development of teachers.

2.2.1 The predominance of English and language teaching discontinuity

As it was previously discussed (chapters 1.1.3 and 2.1.1), it is undeniable that English has acquired a privileged position in the school environment to the detriment of other languages, and it is possible to summarise in three main points the reasons that lie behind the importance of English:

a) […] it is the first foreign language studied in the early stages of schooling; in this it corresponds to the wishes of parents, to a necessity (true or assumed) of study and work and to representations (usefulness, distinction etc) strongly rooted in society;

b) English is increasingly considered and dealt with by the school as a kind of basic unavoidable skill (which maintains its status) comparable for example to new technologies;

c) English can, finally, be considered by school as largely sufficient in itself, as a common "lingua franca" which facilitates the least costly response to the problems of the organisation of the teaching foreign languages (Cavalli et al., 2009, p. 12).

Such phenomenon is also present in Italy, where we witness the dominion of the English language at all levels and in particular in primary school, where pupils study it as the only compulsory foreign language from the first year, as established by the Riforma Moratti of 2004 (Balboni, 2009). The decision of Italy to provide the teaching of a foreign language since the age of 6 is for sure commendable and paves the way towards early language learning in preschool, and the fact that 98.6% of pupils at the primary level attended foreign language classes in 2015 (Eurostat, 2017) is a reassuring signal that indicates that Italy pays attention to the issue of language education and tries to guarantee the right to this type of education to almost every child. But once we analyse the details, it is impossible not to notice that the Italian school is characterised by a widespread bilingualism (L1 + English) that inevitably leads to promote one language, English in this case, and neglect other languages, which are not offered to pupils during their educational path (Jamet, 2016). With the exception of some regions that border with other countries and where other languages are spoken alongside Italian (e.g. Trentino-Alto Adige), the rest of the Italian pupils are only offered the chance to learn one foreign language, which not only consolidates the "power" of English at a national level but also demonstrates that Italy is still far away from reaching the goal of teaching at least two foreign languages other than the mother tongue to young European citizens, as many documents previously cited recommend.

The situation seems to improve a little with the passage from primary school to the so-called "middle school" (lower secondary education, ISCED 2), where students have the chance to learn a second foreign language in addition to English. In particular, article 9 of the law n. 59/2004 of the Riforma Moratti established the compulsory teaching of a foreign language other than English, which usually is Spanish, French, or German; the total amount of hours dedicated to the teaching of the second foreign language is two hours per week, while three hours per week are dedicated to English (MPI, 2004). Even if the time available for studying both languages is quite scarce (for more details, see chapter 2.2.2), the introduction of another foreign language sheds a positive light on the Italian school, that in this way gets closer to the "mothertongue + 2 FL" goal. But if this represents a step ahead in the field of language education/plurilingual education, the following passage from middle school to high school (ISCED 3) constitutes an involution, since students are rarely allowed to continue studying the second foreign language they started learning during middle school: in this sense, Italy is unfortunately characterised by a didactic discontinuity in the passage from lower to upper secondary education (Colaiuda, 2019). Taking a closer look at the possible educational paths that Italian students can undertake when they turn 14, among the 28 *indirizzi* that can be chosen only 6 of them guarantee the possibility to keep studying a second foreign language (and only 3 out of 6 offer the possibility to learn a third language, usually starting from the third year).[4] Translated into data, almost 80% of the Italian students are deprived of the opportunity to keep on studying the second foreign language they took up during middle school; this type of issue does not concern English, which is kept as the compulsory first foreign language in all types of high schools.

Despite the national documents that try to promote the plurilingual approach and the valorisation of language diversity, it is clear that the predominance of English in Italian schools (as in many other countries) leaves almost no space for any other languages: in this way, pupils can only aspire to grow up as barely bilinguals. The chance to learn a second foreign language is given to them during the three years of lower secondary education, but this opportunity ends up nowhere since the majority of high schools do not offer this type of teaching in their curricula. It is true that plurilingual and intercultural competence also benefits from partial knowledge of a language, but in this case this discontinuity represents a missed occasion to further enrich the linguistic repertoire of young Italian adolescents, who have to resort to private courses or after-school laboratories if they wish to continue studying the second foreign language. These are only the first gaps that represent a consistent obstacle on the road towards plurilingualism in Italy.

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4   For further information about the organisation of the Italian upper secondary education (ISCED 3) please visit the dedicated MIUR webpage. Available at https://miur.gov.it/web/guest/scuola-secondaria-di-secondo-grado

2.2.2 Practical matters: time, class sizes, specific teacher training

The aforementioned documents and recommendations present a new kind of ideal European citizen, who receives a plurilingual education and is given the possibility to expand their linguistic repertoire throughout their entire life and from a very young age. As far as early language learning is concerned, the document *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* (European Commission, 2005) inserts an interesting note that refers to a previous document, *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006*:

> The advantages of the early learning of languages - which include better skills in one's mother tongue - only accrue where teachers are trained specifically to teach languages to very young children, where class sizes are small enough for language learning to be effective, where appropriate training materials are available, and where enough curriculum time is devoted to languages. Initiatives to make language learning available to an ever-younger group of pupils must be supported by appropriate resources, including resources for teacher training (European Commission, 2003, p. 7).

If the right conditions do not manifest or are not available, the experience of language learning does not result as effective as expected, and this is true not only for young learners but also for students of all ages. And as far as Italian schools are concerned, two of the matters cited (curriculum time, teacher training) constitute a further impediment to the progress of plurilingualism.

The extract above does not specify what "small enough" means concerning class sizes and does not give any parameters to evaluate whether a class is or is not small enough, therefore we cannot say if the number of pupils/students in Italian classrooms fits the definition. But we can suppose that it refers to the fact that learning a language can really be effective if the number of pupils/students in the classroom is small enough to guarantee a full interaction between themselves and between them and the teacher, who in turn can dedicate their attention and their energy to the development of everyone's linguistic skills. Once again, there is not a precise number to which we can refer, but we may infer that the younger the pupils are, the smaller the classes should be. The MIUR gives very specific instructions about the way classes at various levels should be organised in terms of numbers[5], but it is impossible to say whether these parameters allow creating classes that are compatible with the concept of "small enough".

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5   For further information, please visit MIUR webpage "Formazioni classi". Available at
     https://www.miur.gov.it/formazione-classi

Moving to the amount of curriculum time devoted to languages, the first thought that probably comes to our minds is that the younger the learners are, the more neurologically advantaged they are when it comes to language learning, and therefore a consistent number of hours of their school week should be devoted to language education. But if we take a look at the data, things look a little bit different:

Figure 6

Italy, Hours devoted to FL teaching per year
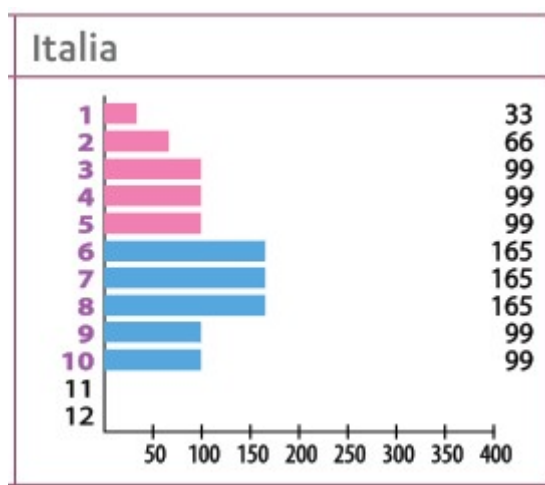
Note: The graphic presents the minimum amount of recommended hours (per year) to devote to the study of compulsory foreign languages up to the second year of high school. The graphic refers to the year 2015/2016. The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Eurydice Italia (2017). *Cifre chiave dell'insegnamento delle lingue a scuola in Europa*. Firenze: INDIRE. Translated from the original Commissione europea/EACEA/Eurydice (2017). *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe – 2017 Edition*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Doi: 10.2797/839825

Like many other European countries, in Italy the amount of hours devoted to the teaching of foreign languages is smaller during the first two years of primary school, with a variation that spans from 30 to 60 hours per year (Eurydice Italia, 2017). The number slightly increases the following years, reaching a peak of 165 hours during middle school (ISCED level 2), due to the fact that over these three years students are taught two compulsory languages. However, it is important to point out that the distribution of these hours is not even, since the first foreign language (English) is studied for three hours per week, while the time devoted to the second foreign language is of two hours per

week (according to the law n. 89, 20th March 2009). Unfortunately, with the passage from lower to upper secondary education, the number of hours substantially decreases, since the majority of high schools only provide the teaching of one compulsory foreign language, which is English.

Italian younger pupils still have few chances in terms of hours to enter the world of language education and to benefit from the teaching of a foreign language: this is quite limiting, especially when we think that children do not often have the possibility to be exposed to English or any other language other than Italian outside school. This situation represents a further step back with respect to the evolution of early language education in the Italian school system, particularly during the preschool and the first years of primary school, a period during which the advantages of introducing a foreign language are remarkable: the neurobiological predisposition of the learner, more time available to expose children to the input and to elicit linguistic production, the possibility to associate the linguistic input to the child's routine (Favaro, 2016). But these advantages are destined to remain unexploited if there is little or no time devoted to languages and if teachers are not specifically trained to teach to young pupils.

Even if one of the next sections will specifically treat this topic concerning to teachers of all levels (chapter 2.2.5), teacher training is briefly introduced here in relation to early language education. It is addressed as one of the crucial conditions that determine the success of preschool language experiences. As far as Italian preschools are concerned, teaching a foreign language is not mandatory, and the occasions in which children can experiment with English are related to the presence of linguistic experts hired by the school. As much valuable as their role is, these experts are native speakers or people with a degree in foreign languages who generally do not possess basic didactic competences that are needed to teach to young children; in addition, their presence in the classroom is quite sporadic, limited to one/two times a week, an amount of time that is not sufficient to create the aforementioned association of the linguistic input to the routine (Favaro, 2016). If the goal is to enhance the development of the linguistic competence of children, the "ideal" teacher should possess some specific competences:

a) pedagogical competences;
b) specific competences to help children approach languages (knowledge of principles of linguistic acquisition, didactic methodologies to teach a foreign language to preschool children);
c) high-level linguistic competences to offer a good linguistic model (in particular with reference to oral abilities) (Favaro, 2016).

Up to now, no substantial changes have been introduced in Italian preschools and early language learning remains a distant goal to reach.

2.2.3 Pluralistic approaches in Italy: the experience with CLIL

As we previously saw, the CARAP/FREPA presents the pluralistic approaches as a feasible proposal to develop the plurilingual and pluricultural teaching of languages, since they are based on didactic activities that involve many linguistic and cultural varieties and they consider languages in a non-isolated way (Bonvino, 2020). But are these approaches used in Italian schools? Or is their presence only limited to official documents? In this case, it is important to distinguish between the two aspects that constitute the plurilingual and intercultural competence. The issue of cultural diversity and the need to put different cultures in communication has received more and more attention in the last decades all over Europe, and has become one of the fixed elements that are present in academic courses for aspiring preschool and primary teachers. This is why the intercultural approach is generally well-known among teachers, and consequently, topics related to interculturality are increasingly present in the classroom (primary education in particular). Interculturality is slowly starting to enter classes and being noticed, even if it has to be said that we are still far away from reaching the goal of a truly intercultural school (Sani, 2020). But if some steps ahead have been taken concerning this aspect, the same cannot be said about the plurilingual competence: the pluralistic approaches that are specifically designed to promote the development of plurilingualism are still not very well known and not widespread in Italian schools, remaining related to sporadic experiences and projects (Cognigni, 2020).

Being an approach of French origin, the *éveil aux langues* approach is particularly flourishing in the region of Valle D'Aosta, both because of the presence of bilingual curricula in schools and because of the adoption of a special version of the *Indicazioni nazionali*, where it is recognised as the proper approach to give value and to consolidate the plurilingual competence of these students. The EAL is mainly used in preschools through ludic projects that involve such languages as Italian, French, English, German, and Franco-Provençal. As far as the other regions are concerned, it remains quite unknown, just like the intercomprehension approach (Cognigni, 2020).

The only approach which is widely known and used throughout the whole country is the so-called integrated language teaching in the form of CLIL methodology. In this sense, Italy represents an exceptional case in the European panorama, because the use of the "Content and Language Integrated Approach" in a certain phase of upper secondary education has become mandatory. It is 2010 when the Riforma Gelmini introduces this innovative change in the Italian school:

> In Italy, CLIL provision has become mandatory in the last year of upper secondary for all
> general education and technical vocational tracks. […] all students in the last year of

upper secondary education will be obliged to learn one non-language subject through a foreign language. Those on the 'language' pathway must do so from the age of 16 (grade 11). At the age of 17 (grade 12), students are taught a second non-language subject through the medium of a second foreign language from the three they are already learning (European Commission, 2014, p. 13).

This decision seems to suggest that Italy strives to spread the concept of plurilingualism by taking the suggestions of the Council of Europe and adapting the instruments provided to the necessities of the Italian students. But once again, if we observe this situation more closely, we can notice that this effort is only partial and that there are some flaws in the plan that cannot remain unnoticed. When reading the documents regarding this reform[6], it is possible to see that (with the exception of students attending the so-called *licei linguistici*) during the last year of high school students are taught a non-linguistic subject through a foreign language. No specific FL is mentioned, but if we think about the foreign languages that students have the chance to study at high school (see chapter 2.2.1), it is obvious that the choice falls upon the (almost) only foreign language studied by everyone: English. Bonvino (2020) reflects on the fact that CLIL methodology can truly be beneficial when it gives value to the relationships between languages and when these are used to build and expand one's own plurilingual repertoire. Unfortunately, this is not the case of the employment of CLIL in Italian schools, where we often witness the use of only one transmissive language (English) and plurilingual repertoires are left aside: according to the 2014 MIUR report, the majority of CLIL projects in third-year classes of *Licei linguistici* employed English language (70%), followed by French (21%), Spanish (4%) and German (4%) (MIUR, 2014b). In addition, the use of this methodology is not mandatory in all types of high school: in the case of *istituti professionali*, it is up to each school to decide whether a CLIL project can be developed, provided the availability of trained teachers and the will of parents to introduce such methodology.
It is also impossible not to notice that this reform ignores a large portion of students, namely those of preschool, primary school and middle school: the government does not offer a similar proposal for them, thus leaving the chance to introduce them to pluralistic approaches up to the initiatives of teachers. On a more positive note, it is important to point out that more and more textbooks of almost every discipline include CLIL units (*unità di apprendimento*) that can be used with younger students to give them the possibility to experiment with the integrated language teaching approach

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6   For further and more precise information, please consult the following documents: Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 15 marzo 2010, n. 89, articles 6 and 10. Available at https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2010/06/15/010G0111/sg. Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 15 marzo 2010, n. 88, article 8. Available at https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/gunewsletter/dettaglio.jsp?service=1&datagu=2010-06-15&task=dettaglio&numgu=137&redaz=010G0110&tmstp=1276687571279

(this was verified through personal work experience in primary schools in the province of Vicenza). Admittedly, this possibility only exists in the case in which these textbooks are chosen by the school and if the teacher decides to exploit these special units. All in all, the use of CLIL methodology with younger students is still related to sporadic projects.

The proper organisation of a CLIL project also depends on another fundamental variable: teacher training. At the beginning of the decade, when CLIL started to be gradually inserted in the school curriculum, the subject teacher was greatly supported by the foreign language teacher in the development of the modules. Today, the profile of a CLIL trained teacher must be quite rich, and this is why possessing these competences represents one of the most difficult challenges to achieve:

a) the teacher should possess a linguistic competence in the foreign language that corresponds to the C1 level of the CEFR (MIUR website);

b) in addition, they should possess methodologic and didactic competences to be acquired through a specific academic course (MIUR website);

c) the teacher who is in charge of the CLIL module is a subject teacher trained in the language, which means that the language teacher is excluded from this experience (they can only cooperate) (Balboni, 2015);

d) the teacher should be able to create a path that has "consistency with future teaching […] in order that subject teaching in another language is not an isolated episode" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 87).

2.2.4 The role of the home language in the Italian school

The classes of our Italian schools are increasingly more multicultural and multilingual, especially thanks to the presence of students with a migratory background. Even if the growth is slowly stabilising, the year 2019/2020 registered the presence of 19 thousand students without Italian citizenship, who correspond to 10.3% of the whole population of students in Italy (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2021). The presence of these students is directly related to an issue that is particularly relevant to the topic of plurilingualism and the promotion of one's linguistic repertoire, id est the role of the family language inside the classroom:

> […] when the language of schooling is not the pupils' first language, it has to be decided what place is to be given to the first language. This is a political question since it is the conception of national cohesion and the creation of group identity that are at stake (Council of Europe, 2006, p. 15).

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Such statement stresses the fact that many children speak a different language when they are at home, which is something that cannot be ignored by schools and governments.

But what are the benefits of keeping the home language for foreign students? In the case of children who were born abroad and have recently moved to Italy, the first language may represent a precious resource during the process of acquisition of the language spoken at school: if the linguistic and communicative competences of the L1 are potentiated, they help improve the learning of the new language (Colaiuda, 2019), guaranteeing the advantages that are typical of additive bilingualism (see chapter 1.2.1). In the case of Italy, this situation does not happen very often, since the majority of students with a migratory background were born in Italy from foreign parents (one of them or both) and therefore have learned Italian as their mother tongue. Despite the great chance of growing up as bilinguals, in many of these families children are not taught their home language because of the fear of their parents that this could negatively affect the learning of the main language of schooling (Italian), something that Cummins (2011) strongly denies:

> Parents sometimes feel that their children will benefit from eliminating the "language barrier" before they go to school and this attitude has sometimes been encouraged by teachers in the school. Unfortunately, when parents attempt to use the school language in the home, they often expose their children to poor models of this language (because they may not be totally fluent), reduce the quality of communication with their children, and deprive their children of the opportunity to develop proficiency in the home language. At a very concrete level, this frequently results in children and grandparents being unable to communicate with each other. The PISA data show clearly that there is no independent relationship between language spoken at home and students' reading achievement (Cummins, 2011, as cited in Colaiuda, 2019, p. 117).

Not only does the home language constitute a great advantage from a cognitive point of view for the student, it also has a central role in the process of integration and maintenance of one's cultural identity: it is the means through which generations can pass down norms, rules, values and traditions (Pozzi, 2014). So, in order to give these children the chance to fully develop their plurilingual and cultural identity, the valorisation of the languages they speak should occupy an important place not only within their families but also within the school. This does not mean that schools are obliged to teach all the home languages; it means that teachers should respect the plurality of languages that are present in the classroom, give value to them, teach all children to

become aware of the existence of these languages and cultures, while guaranteeing an adequate development of the Italian language, as the *Indicazioni nazionali* report (Luatti, 2015).

What type of attitude do Italian schools adopt when it comes to the valorisation of the home language of the students? To what extent does the Italian government recognise the multilinguistic dimension of Italian society and promote the learning of all languages, home languages included? According to the Eurydice Italia document *Integrazione degli studenti provenienti da contesti migratori nelle scuole d'Europa: politiche e misure nazionali* (2019), the main aims of teaching the home language at school are the following:

a) to facilitate the teaching and learning of the main language (i.e. the language of schooling);

b) to help preserve and learn the language/culture of children with a migratory background;

c) to promote bilingualism and plurilingualism among all learners.

The official documents of Italy mainly focus on the second goal, stressing the importance of the development of intercultural competences and of the multicultural identity, which both facilitate the integration at school (Eurydice Italia, 2019). But how do these theoretical purposes apply to everyday life at school?

Truth is that in Italy (and in many other European countries) studying the home language at school rarely represents a right, despite the presence of many recommendations about the necessity to offer this type of teaching at school (Eurydice Italia, 2019): we individuate here another gap between theory and practice, where words on documents do not correspond to reality. As an example, a specific section of the MIUR website invites us to visit the FAMI webpage (*Fondo Asilo, Migrazione e Integrazione 2014-2020*), where we can read the descriptions of projects in collaboration with the Italian government specifically created for students with a migratory background and unaccompanied foreign minors[7]. Unfortunately, when reading the brief descriptions of these plans it appears that none of them dedicates attention to the topic of plurilingualism and valorisation of the home language in Italian schools. An interesting exception is represented by the project LSCPI *Lingue di scolarizzazione e curricolo plurilingue e interculturale*, which was launched in January 2012 to introduce the plurilingual and intercultural curriculum in the school through specific activities for children of the primary school and students of the first and second year of middle school, all focused on the exploration of the plurality of languages and cultures in the classroom and their valorisation[8]. Like many other cases, this project had a short life and was interrupted in 2015, thus confirming the fact that initiatives to promote the inclusion and teaching of home languages in

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7   For further information, please visit the FAMI webpage "Altre iniziative FAMI". Available at
     https://minoristranieri.istruzione.it/altre-iniziative-fami

8   For further information, please visit the webpage dedicated to the LSCPI project. Available at
     https://www.istruzione.it/archivio/web/istruzione/lscpi.1.html

schools are still sporadic and limited in time, especially in the case of primary education. The occasions during which home languages are valorised are often relegated to extra-curricular time:

a) teaching of home languages organised by communities of immigrants and held in their headquarters;

b) courses that offer the extra-curricular teaching of home languages at school;

c) optional courses offered to students of upper secondary education during extra-curricular time;

d) activities related to the international mother language day (21st February);

e) symbolic visibility of languages (e.g. plurilingual signs) (Favaro, 2019).

The risk of maintaining this type of neglectful attitude towards the home languages of many students is not only to miss the chance to exploit the benefits of additive bilingualism but also to give rise to a phenomenon of subtractive bilingualism, due to the denial of the social value of the child's home language inside the school context, with serious consequences for both the cultural identity and the scholastic (in)success of the child (Cummins, 2011, as cited in Colaiuda, 2019).

2.2.5 Initial education and professional development of teachers: does plurilingualism fit in?

The role of teachers in the wider frame of the valorisation of plurilingualism at school is of absolute importance, for teachers represent the joining link between language policymakers and those who shall benefit from these changes in the field of language education: children. It is true that languages permeate every aspect of life, but the way children are introduced to the exploration and knowledge of the world of languages at school can deeply shape the way they think of languages and, in a way, their future as European citizens. This is why teachers need to and have the right to be trained to possess a new linguistic awareness and know what plurilingualism means and how it can be promoted in the new multilingual and multicultural classes. The aforementioned Council Recommendation (2019) invites member states to

> Support teachers, trainers, inspectors and school leaders in the development of language awareness by: (a) investing, where appropriate, in the initial and continuing education of language teachers to enhance their competences and to attract and retain staff in order to maintain a broad language offer in primary education and secondary education and training; […] (c) including preparation for linguistic diversity in the classroom in initial education and continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders (Council of the European Union, 2019, p. 20).

But what characteristics make a teacher "ready" to teach in a multilingual and multicultural class, where "valorisation of diversity" are the keywords to constantly bear in mind? The article *La formazione degli insegnanti per una educazione plurilingue e interculturale* (2012) presents these fundamental features, which are here summarised. Even if it focuses on the profiles of the teacher of Italian language and foreign language, the document specifies that this type of training should be accessible to all teachers, regardless of the discipline they teach, since every teacher is a language teacher: the development of linguistic competences in the languages of schooling is a common responsibility. Having said so, if the initial education and professional development of the teacher should include the acquisition of plurilingual and intercultural knowledge, it is no longer sufficient to possess a basic, academic knowledge of the Italian/foreign language. The profile of the "new" teacher of Italian language/foreign language should include:

a) the constant development of pedagogical and didactic knowledge (teaching methods, new technologies, etc.);

b) the capacity to analyse the needs of pupils, their interests, their means of communication, their initial linguistic/communicative competences;

c) the capacity to observe, recognise, analyse and exploit the linguistic and cultural diversity represented by their pupils;

d) the ability to plan activities and design specific materials to satisfy the linguistic needs of their children;

e) the ability to create connections between the teaching of the languages of schooling and the teaching of other disciplines;

f) the capacity to reflect on their own language; and so on (Lugarini, 2012).

This type of profile corresponds to a teacher that learns while teaching, that teaches to learn, and that turns their school and their classes into a learning community (Lugarini, 2012). It is clear, though, that a similar profile can come to life only if adequate initial preparation is given to the aspiring teacher. In particular, experience is believed to be essential during training to fully comprehend what they are going to do with their pupils, according to the *Guide for the development and implementation of plurilingual and curricula for intercultural education* (2016). The examples given of significant experiences during training are:

a) foreign language training experiences based on the principles of plurilingual/integrated teaching;

b) experiences of synergetic training in subjects generally taught in a compartmentalised fashion, […];

c) […] experience of plurilingual practices making simultaneous use of several languages during the same lesson […];

d) experience of learning an unknown language, or complex linguistic production tasks in a language that is not well mastered;

e) experience of creating a plurilingual curriculum scenario for pupils at the educational level being targeted […] (p. 74).

Unfortunately, "Current (initial and in-service) teacher training practices often do not correspond at all, or only partially, to the plurilingual and intercultural approach. Generally they remain enclosed in monolingual traditions; only very rarely are the boundaries between disciplines […] overstepped" (p. 73). This is valid for many countries in Europe, Italy included, where we witness a lack of professional development (initial and in-service) of all teachers, who are still not completely used to working in a multilingual and multicultural school (Lugarini, 2012). As far as Italian school is concerned, it is possible to notice a lack of linguistic competence of teachers of English language in the primary school, mainly due to the fact that they are not linguistic experts who earned a degree in languages but they are teachers of other disciplines that are asked to attend English courses during their initial education. Admittedly, the competences acquired through these courses are not sufficient and they result in a lack of communicative and didactic ability in the foreign language; this situation hinders pupils in the first place, especially if we think that primary school coincides with the most productive period for the acquisition of another language (Santipolo, 2016). The inadequacy of initial training also arises when it comes to the integration of pupils with a migratory background, which represents a major challenge in 28 European countries. Only Portugal and Slovenia underline the specific competences that teachers need to possess to satisfy all the needs of these children, while other countries (Italy included) only make some references to the necessity to be acquainted with the intercultural dimension of the class (Eurydice Italia, 2019).

A proper initial and in-service training is not only needed to give adequate preparation to teachers, it would also represent an occasion to broaden one's perspective regarding language education, which may be a little conservative in some cases: "The implementation of a plurilingual and intercultural education with its cross-cutting approach can encounter resistance from numerous players, in particular teachers, including future professionals. That resistance may stem from subjective perceptions or theories about languages and their acquisition […]" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 72).

But what do Italian teachers really know about plurilingualism and valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom? Do they really lack initial and in-service training to implement pluralistic approaches or do they possess some background knowledge? What do they think, what is their attitude towards plurilingualism? These questions will try to find an answer in the following subchapter.

2.3 Plurilingualism in the classroom: interview to primary school teachers

The study that will be here presented was born out of the necessity to have a dialogue with the main protagonists (alongside students) of the scholastic environment, i.e. teachers. Who better than them can provide a general outlook of the current situation in schools as far as the spreading of plurilingualism is concerned? Through an interview, teachers were asked to talk about their job in relation to these themes, and what resulted was a precious insight into the school world that can offer some interesting food for thought regarding plurilingualism in Italy, what has been done in these years and what still needs to be done.

After introducing the research purpose and the research questions, the research methodology will be presented, focusing on the research approach, participants, sources of data, and data analysis. The results of the interview will be presented and discussed in the same section, followed by a brief paragraph dedicated to some final thoughts and reflections.

2.3.1 Research purpose and research questions

Plurilingualism and the valorisation of the linguistic repertoire of the individual are two important elements that are slowly trying to make their way through the European society with the goal of turning the future European citizens into individuals provided with improved linguistic awareness and the capacity to better exploit their plurilingual and intercultural competences. The best way to bring in these two aspects in our life is school, and the main actors who can guarantee the application of language policies and the linguistic development of children are teachers. Regardless of the Isced level, all teachers represent the means through which the purposes of the CoE, the European Commission and other institutions can be achieved: in particular, it is primary school teachers who have the possibility to introduce children to the world of languages, the way they work, how they relate to each other, and how each of them is equally valuable and constitutes a priceless resource to the individual, especially in our Italian classes where the number of different cultures and languages (Italian as national language, regional or minority languages, dialects,

English as a Lingua Franca, foreign languages studied at school, migration languages) is growing at an unprecedented pace. At the same time, though, teachers need to face this challenge with adequate preparation: they need to know what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they should do it. But are they really prepared to deal with plurilingualism in the classroom and to give value to every single language?

The purpose of the study that will be here presented rises from the necessity to better understand the perspective of the teacher when it comes to these topics, focusing in particular on what teachers know about them and how they act towards languages and cultures. The wish to conduct this investigation was born out of an episode to which the writer of this dissertation assisted during a day at work in a primary school. During class, two kids of Algerian origin were trying to communicate with each other without being understood by the rest of the classmates, therefore they resorted to Arabic, the home language that they perfectly master. When the teacher heard them, they scolded them for not paying attention to the lesson, and added: "This is an Italian school and we speak Italian here, so please use Arabic outside of here!". This statement rang a bell and led to the elaboration of this study, which purpose is to give a voice to Italian teachers (in this case primary school teachers) and to let them express what they know and what they think of plurilingualism and language diversity at school. The opinions and beliefs of teachers constitute a precious help to the advancement of the plurilingual project in Italian schools and to get a general idea of the current situation: what has already been done, what is being done at the moment and what still needs to be developed. Even if this is a small scale project that involved only a few participants (see *Participants*), it could represent the base of a larger investigation that may collect the opinions of a more consistent number of teachers, thus allowing for a proper generalisation at a regional/national level. If properly developed, this study may turn into a useful instrument at language policymakers' disposal to channel future decisions in the right direction, in order to give the plurilingual approach the possibility to be developed according to the necessities and wishes of each Italian region. Since teachers are the main protagonists of this linguistic change alongside students, it seems reasonable to directly ask them what they know and think of this new approach and what practical suggestions they have to implement it in their schools. If their voices are given a chance to be listened to, a dialogue with policymakers would have the possibility to develop in order to prompt a plurilingual change in the Italian school, with educational implications that would surely benefit pupils. It is only through the help of the teacher, who fulfils the function of guide, of facilitator and mediator, and of the one in charge of collecting and organising resources (Lugarini, 2012), that children can enter the world of languages and can be introduced to plurilingualism and language diversity; the linguistic "uniqueness in diversity" of each region, city, school, class must be preserved and

valorised, and proper policies can only be developed if the contribution of teachers is considered during their elaboration.

The aforementioned personal episode and the research purpose contributed to the formulation of three main research questions that guided the entire study:

a) *what types of knowledge do primary school teachers possess related to the themes of the promotion of plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity in the classroom?* These topics have been present in European documents and recommendations for over 30 years now, but this does not necessarily mean that they are widely known among the population. What pieces of information of these supra-national documents reach the audience (in this case, teachers)? Are they familiar with the concepts of plurilingualism, linguistic and cultural diversity, valorisation of the plurilingual repertoire, pluralistic approaches? A solid, basic knowledge of these topics is fundamental for their appropriate application during everyday classes.

b) *what instruments and pieces of information are teachers provided with during their initial and in-service training to implement pluralistic approaches and other good practices to give value to plurilingualism?* Knowledge comes from adequate preparation, and teachers need to be provided with specific tools to launch plurilingual projects in their classes. Are Italian universities equipped with academic courses that inform future teachers on the concepts related to plurilingualism and the way they should be introduced in the school? Are there courses that offer more experienced teachers the possibility to catch up and to get acquainted with these themes? And how is this knowledge (if possessed) translated into practice? Are there occasions to give value to linguistic and cultural diversity in the Italian classroom or are there still some problems that hinder these projects?

c) *what is the general attitude of teachers towards plurilingualism and the idea of adopting the paradigm "unity in diversity" as a fundamental principle of the Italian school?* The beliefs and opinions of teachers allow us to better understand if plurilingualism is perceived as a priority at school or if there are some uncertainties related to its usefulness. Are teachers willing to let some space to the valorisation of language diversity at school or are there still some difficulties that hinder a full realisation of plurilingual goals?

For each research question, a hypothetical answer was formulated. Research hypotheses are "statements that formulate specific predictions about the outcomes and the empirical results will either confirm or refuse these"; the generation of research hypotheses is optional, but if they are present "they are very welcome because they are fully in line with the principles of the 'scientific method'" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 73):

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a) knowledge-wise, teachers are not entirely familiar with these concepts: they might have heard of them, but their knowledge is limited to basic notions. They probably have never come across the documents published by the CoE, the European Commission and other institutions, and they are probably not informed about the existence of pluralistic approaches (except for CLIL methodology – Integrated language teaching).

b) teacher training is not sufficiently updated when it comes to the notions of plurilingualism. Younger teachers probably did not attend academic courses that deal with these themes because they do not exist, or maybe only a few of them introduce these topics but without going into detail. More experienced teachers have never gotten the possibility to attend in-service training courses that provide them with these notions and offer them practical solutions to apply their knowledge to everyday practical matters. When it comes to practices, almost every teacher experiences moments of comparison between languages and cultures in the classroom, but these are occasional, sporadic, there is not a plan behind.

c) teachers have mixed feelings towards plurilingualism. On the one hand, they recognise its potentialities and believe that linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom is a real treasure for everyone; on the other hand, they have some doubts about the full integration of a plurilingual approach in the curriculum, maybe because of a lack of time, or a lack of adequate preparation, or other reasons.

2.3.2 Research methodology

This section will be dedicated to the description of the research approach and design, participants, sources of data (instruments and procedures), data analysis.

Research approach and design

After the elaboration of the research purpose and the formulation of the research questions and related hypotheses, it was necessary to pair them with the most appropriate general type of research, and the choice fell on the descriptive study. Descriptive research is defined as "a type of research that is used to describe the characteristics of a population. It collects data that are used to answer a wide range of what, when, and how questions pertaining to a particular population or group" (Research Connections Website). Because the aforementioned research questions try to investigate the opinions, beliefs and knowledge of a specific population (primary school teachers), it felt like the most natural choice to opt for a descriptive study, which allows for a very attentive and complete description of a phenomenon and constitutes the starting point for further developments of

the research topic (Banzato & Coin, 2019a). The subsequent step was to choose between the quantitative or qualitative research paradigm; it required some time and accurate reflections, which eventually led to the choice of the qualitative research. A quantitative study would seem the best option to many because "quantitative inquiry is systematic, rigorous, focused, and tightly controlled, involving precise measurement and producing reliable and replicable data that is generalizable to other contexts" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 34); but at the same time "quantitative methods […] average out responses across the whole observed group of participants, and by working with concepts of averages it is impossible to do justice to the subjective variety of an individual life" (p. 35). This type of paradigm would surely allow for the collection of answers from primary school teachers (maybe through a questionnaire), but it would limit the free expression of thoughts, which are in this case essential to obtain a complete initial understanding of the phenomenon. Words, not numbers, were needed for the evolution of this study, and the words of teachers would be properly valorised through the qualitative paradigm: "Qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 38). Its exploratory nature and its "aim to broaden the repertoire of possible interpretations of human experience" (p. 40) made the qualitative research the best option to suit the research purpose and research questions mentioned before.

As far as the qualitative research method is concerned, this study could easily belong to the ethnographic research conducted through interviews. Being a descriptive type of research, it tries to document and portray the daily experiences of people related to a specific topic by observing them and by interviewing them (Banzato & Coin, 2019a). Because of the current sanitary emergency due to Covid19, it was particularly difficult (if not almost impossible) to obtain permission to observe primary school teachers during classes in different schools; as a consequence, the alternative selected was to interview teachers (see *Instruments and procedure*) and to ask them to describe their opinions and behaviours in the classroom related to the topics of plurilingualism, language diversity, and valorisation of the plurilingual repertoire of pupils.

Participants

The target population of this study would be primary school teachers of all Italian regions, but this ideal target is of course impossible to study, therefore the population that was accessible included primary school teachers working in the province of Vicenza (Veneto). The sample from which data were collected coincided with 10 teachers working in different primary schools. Even if it might appear as a very limited sample, the number of participants seemed to fit the dimension of the dissertation; in addition, a small-scale study with a similar sample was the most appropriate choice

to produce adequate results within a limited amount of time at disposal. The number also matched the qualitative paradigm of the research and the interview modality, which is "time consuming and labour-intensive" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 42).

As far as the sampling method is concerned, it was decided to opt for a non-probability sampling method:

> In a non-probability sample, individuals are selected based on non-random criteria, and not every individual has a chance of being included. […] Non-probability sampling techniques are often used in exploratory and qualitative research. […] the aim is not to test a hypothesis about a broad population, but to develop an initial understanding of a small or under-researched population (McCombes, 2019).

In particular, this research excluded the so-called *insegnanti di sostegno* from the sample, because their main role is to give support to disabled pupils during classes, which often leads them to leave the classroom to go to dedicated spaces in the school. Therefore, only primary teachers teaching a curriculum discipline were considered during the sampling.

The specific sampling method that was used is purposive sampling, which

> involves the researcher using their expertise to select a sample that is most useful to the purpose of the research. It is often used in qualitative research, where the researcher wants to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than make statistical inferences, or where the population is very small and specific (McCombes, 2019).

The recruitment process was conducted face-to-face or through telephone: 3 of the participants teach in the same schools where the writer of this dissertation works, while the others were contacted because they were acquainted with the writer and they were asked to participate in this research project.

The initial questions asked during the interview allow us to outline the general profile of each participant. The teachers involved in the study currently teach in primary schools in the province of Vicenza, even if two of them worked in other provinces in the past years (Padova and Verona). They are all women of different ages and therefore have been in service for a different amount of time: to be more specific, four of them have been teaching for more than 24 years, two of them have entered the school environment 5 years ago, and the remaining four started teaching only recently (between a year and a half ago and 4 months ago). This difference of years of service (and of age) of the

participants was specifically wanted by the writer to make some comparisons between the teachers and to verify if the age factor can determine some interesting differences in terms of knowledge of the topic of plurilingualism and attitude towards it. Another factor that is worth attention is the initial education or academic path of the participants: the six teachers with less than 5 years of service all attended the same academic course, *Scienze della Formazione Primaria,* which is the only academic path that qualifies people to teach in primary schools in Italy today. The more experienced teachers that started teaching before the beginning of the new century were not obliged to attend university: they were enabled to teach through the attainment of the *diploma di scuola magistrale,* which could be obtained by attending a specific type of high school (one of them obtained her diploma as an external candidate after some years spent at the university). This different initial training was also considered as a possible source of comparison between participants. Each participant teaches more than one discipline at school in one or more classes: Italian language, Maths, Science, History, Geography, Music, Art, P.E., Civic Education. 6 out of 10 teachers are also responsible for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language.

Sources of data: instruments and procedures

As previously stated, the instrument that was chosen to collect data for this study is the interview, which main functions are: to offer a detailed description of a specific phenomenon, to provide data that will be used to elaborate final hypotheses, and to make use of the final data as a starting point for further (quantitative) research (Gaskell, 2000, as cited in Banzato & Coin, 2019b). A questionnaire would serve the same functions, but the data obtained would be of quantitative nature, thus not fitting the qualitative paradigm of the research. The interview seemed to be the most appropriate instrument to have a dialogue with the participants and to let them express their opinions and thoughts freely, giving depth to their answers and exploring areas that otherwise would not be treated in a questionnaire, which has to be created *a priori* and cannot be modified or adapted to the interviewee. In addition, the way the instrument was created allowed the interviewee to ask for clarifications and explanations if needed, something that is quite difficult to do when using a questionnaire.

The instrument was elaborated as a one-to-one interview to conduct in a single session. Format-wise, it was a semi-structured interview: "Although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner" and "Usually, the interviewer will ask the same questions of all of the participants, although not necessarily in the same order or wording, […]" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). According to this format, a set of 15 open questions covering a set of themes related to

plurilingualism were elaborated, but the interviewer dedicated some time of the interview to ask other questions that arose spontaneously after something particularly interesting that the interviewee said. The number of questions was thought to have the possibility to cover some specific topics with enough depth but without making the interview too long, in order not to bore the interviewee: the average duration of each interview was of 45/50 minutes. Before starting with the interview, participants were informed of the reasons why they were participating in the project and what collected data were needed for; the introduction also dealt with the issue of privacy, guaranteeing anonymity to the participants according to the GDPR[9]. The first few questions were created to set the tone: "If the interviewees feel that they can do themselves justice when answering these initial questions, this will make them feel competent, help them to relax and consequently encourage them to open up" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 137). The first four questions asked the participants to talk about how long they have been teaching, their initial formation, their role as teachers, their classes and their pupils. Each of the remaining content questions belonged to a different category and tried to explore the area connected to each research questions: what teachers know of plurilingualism, what instruments and information are teachers provided with during their initial and in-service training, what they do (or do not do) to in their classes to to give value to linguistic and cultural diversity and what they truly think of this new approach (see Appendix).

The interviews were conducted by the writer of this dissertation between the 16th October and the 2nd December 2021 and it was decided to organise them via virtual meeting. The reasons that lie behind this choice are mainly related to the current sanitary emergency due to Covid19: interviewing the participants face to face in a physical location would force both the interviewer and the interviewee to keep their masks on, thus causing a visual and auditive barrier that risked to hinder the communication between the two. Moreover, masks usually deaden sounds, making it difficult for the audio recorder to capture the voice in a crystal clear way. As a consequence, it seemed more appropriate to opt for a more safe way to conduct these interviews and the choice fell upon virtual meetings. Even if some would argue that this option impedes a real contact between the interviewer and the interviewee and that there may be some technical problems due to Internet connection that interrupt the interview (something that happened a couple times), this solution gave the possibility to guarantee safety to participants, a particularly delicate issue in this period that deserved special care, and the collection of data was not negatively affected by this modality.

The platform that was used to organise the virtual meetings was GMeet: participants would receive the invitation to participate via email and would connect to the meeting at the established day and

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9   For further information about the General Data Protection Regulation, please visit the EUR – Lex website. Available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.119.01.0001.01.ITA&toc=OJ:L:2016:119:TOC

time using their personal computer. The interviewer decided to use two different instruments to collect the data, in order to prevent the loss of data in case one of the instruments would break during the interview session. It was decided to record the screen of the virtual meeting using the application OBS Studio in order to capture both the video and the audio; in addition, an external microphone was used as a backup instrument (it was placed close to the personal computer to capture both voices of the interviewer and interviewee).

Data analysis

Once each interview session was over, the following step was to transcribe the audio to carry on with the analysis process. The audio was taken from the external microphone recording, and the instrument used to transcribe the data is Google Docs. This online instrument is equipped with a voice typing function that enables "the researcher to 'dictate' texts to the computer, directly into the word processor" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 249). The approximate amount of time needed to transcribe each interview was of 2 hours: this transcription modality allowed the writer to spare a great amount of time, even if some time was also dedicated to the correction of misspelling mistakes.

Once the interviews were transcribed, each participant was assigned a numeric code that enabled the writer to preserve the privacy of each interviewee and at the same time insert some quotations in the *Discussion* section without revealing the identity of the speaker.

The analysis of data was preceded by a pre-coding session, during which the transcripts were re-read several times and a series of reflections and personal thoughts were noted down in virtual post-its near each relevant sentence.

Following the pre-coding was the coding session, which was organised in two different stages. First, it was decided to categorise pieces of information according to four main categories: knowledge of the topic (what do teachers know about plurilingualism and pluralistic approaches? Have they ever heard or read about them?); initial education and professional development (were they introduced to these themes when they were training to become teachers? Are there *corsi di aggiornamento* that allow them to explore these topics?); beliefs, opinions, attitude (what do they think of plurilingualism? Do they think it might be useful and feasible in Italia schools?); practices (is linguistic and cultural diversity promoted in Italian schools? And what about their schools? What do they do to give value to diversity in their classes?). Each group was assigned a colour, and relevant information was highlighted according to the group it was believed to belong to.

Figure 7

Coding session: screenshot of notes

> **risposta**: Sì cioè nel senso bisogna che sia una cosa condivisa all'interno del team cioè che anche l'altra insegnante con cui lavoro sia d'accordo che sia però una cosa cioè ha senso se non è una cosa occasionale. una cosa ok che quest'anno con tutte le parole le traduciamo in italiano inglese e pakistano cioè tutte le parole nuove che impariamo che ci sia un intervento di questo tipo pervasivo su tantissime cose.
> **Eleonora domanda**: Siccome prima mi hai detto comunque che da un lato ritieni anche che la diversità linguistica e culturale sia anche una risorsa all'interno di una classe Ti chiedo se per caso all'interno della tua classe tu hai la possibilità di sfruttare questa le potenzialità che la tua classe offre a livello di diversità linguistica e culturale se si In che modo magari. non so Magari se ci sono delle occasioni di confronto anche con i bambini sulle diversità stesse.
> **risposta**: Allora fino adesso non mi è mai successo però sicuramente se sicuramente nel senso che anche solamente a livello di per esempio soprattutto che sono così piccoli e ancora tanto importante il tempo non so le feste tutte le cose routinarie no perché loro devono ancora interiorizzarle. e quindi sicuramente anche solo con queste cose qua a livello di confronto sicuramente vien fuori che c'è una diversità. non saprei a livello di disciplina cioè sicuramente però in questo momento non riesco a immaginarmelo.
> **Eleonora domanda**: Va bene allora siamo alle Ultime due domande. allora ritorniamo da dove hai iniziato cioè all' università e volevo sapere se appunto durante l'università Ti sono stati proposti dei corsi delle conferenze che riguardavano Appunto questo argomento sulla promozione della diversità linguistica in classe Che cos'è e anche eventualmente come promuoverla.
> **risposta**: Ok Quindi vuoi sapere i corsi che ho fatto in merito a questo punto sì noi abbiamo fatto al primo anno pedagogia interculturale che è stato Tra l'altro uno dei corsi più belli che ho fatto in 5 anni perché lui era fantastico agostinetto magari lo conosci anche punto veramente bravo bravo bravo. poi abbiamo fatto appunto quando in realtà abbiamo fatto

Note: For each category a different colour was used: green for knowledge of the topic, pink for initial education and professional development, orange for practices, blue for beliefs, opinions and attitude.

The second stage of the coding session included the collection of every highlighted sentence, which were grouped on a separate worksheet according to the category they belonged to; for each category, the answers to the same question were compared and analysed, and notes were taken down to be later used for the *Discussion* section.

2.3.3 Results and discussion

The sections of *Results* (what can be seen from the data collected) and *Discussion* (what these results may imply) are usually kept separate, but in this case it seemed more practical to unite them and present them under the same subchapter. Each aforementioned category will be described one at a time, and for each category all the answers given by teachers to the same question will be presented and discussed.

Knowledge of the topic

The questions related to this category were born to give an answer to the first research question, the one regarding the knowledge possessed by primary school teachers about these topics. How much of the documents and recommendations of the CoE has reached them (even through national documents)? Is the knowledge of plurilingualism widespread or are there still some doubts about it, and therefore some clarifications need to be provided? To test the waters, teachers were asked whether they had ever heard of the concept of plurilingualism and if they wanted to try to give a personal definition to explain what it is. The answers provided resulted to be a little imprecise:

> […] Come plurilinguismo adesso quello che a me verrebbe da dire, la compresenza in un medesimo contesto di lingue diverse (*Interviewee 11610*).
>
> Ci sono stati dei bambini purilingui nella mia esperienza di insegnante, sono quei bambini che nascono all'interno di una famiglia con genitori magari di due Paesi diversi, e tutti e due i genitori cercano… parlano col proprio figlio nella propria lingua, quindi il bambino fin da subito fin da neonato è abituato a sentire due lingue diverse e le capisce tutte e due […] (*Interviewee 62810*).
>
> Beh l'ho sentito nominare quando si parla per esempio di bambini o di adulti che essendo vissuti in posti e Paesi diversi, o avendo genitori di lingua diversa, parlano più lingue perchè entrambe le lingue avendole per esempio conosciute da bambini sono la lingua madre, è indifferente parlare una lingua o l'altra (*Interviewee 100212*).

9 out of 10 teachers have provided definitions that were suitable for plurilingualism according to their opinion, but that actually match two different concepts: the one of multilingualism and the one of bilingualism. Only one teacher was able to explain what plurilingualism is and means properly because she took the initiative to find out more about it to improve her teaching methods and adapt them to her new first-year multilingual and multicultural class. The fact that almost all teachers mistake the concept of plurilingualism for the ones of multilingualism and bilingualism leads to thinking that the knowledge of all these ideas is still vague, undefined, not clear. Is it because these topics are not properly dealt with during the initial and in-service training? Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the concept of plurilingualism is not well-known among the majority of teachers; as a consequence, it is probable that they do not even know what advantages are related to plurilingualism and that they have never read the European documents and recommendations that present it, included those that depict pluralistic approaches. The major implication of this would be that they do not have the possibility to transform this (missing) knowledge into practice.

To further deepen the theme, interviewees were also asked if they had ever had the occasion to read any COE documents regarding plurilingualism and the valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom. Generally speaking, these teachers are acquainted with national documents regarding Italian primary school and linguistic competences to acquire through the foreign language taught (English), but they are less familiar with European documents. 5 of them had never heard of them, 4 of them mentioned the CEFR and the eight European key competences, and only the teacher that knew what plurilingualism was admitted that it was through the CoE documents and recommendations that she could study these concepts in depth.

According to these results, two different reflections can be elaborated. First: it is possible to see that these teachers know the Italian documents but not the European ones. What does this mean? It probably means that the gap between the European/international level (*supra*) and the national level (*macro*) does exist (see chapter 2.1.4), thus leading to an interruption of communication and passage of relevant documents. Is it because the European institutions have not yet found an effective way to convince European countries (Italy in this case) of the benefits related to plurilingualism and to explain how theory can easily be translated into practice? Or is it because the Italian government has so far lacked a strong will to insert these pieces of information into national documents to be passed down to lower levels?

Second: the knowledge of these topics appears to be related to personal interest and to the initiative of the single person to explore this area: only one teacher explicitly said that she read European documents because she wanted to know more about it. Does this mean that teachers generally lack the will to delve into this topic? Or are they genuinely unaware of its existence, maybe because they never studied it during the years of initial education or by attending in-service courses?

Pluralistic approaches were also briefly mentioned to participants, who were asked to think if they knew some of them or if they had ever heard of them:

> Beh sicuramente approccio interculturale, sì ne ho sentito parlare però più che legato alle lingue, all'aspetto linguistico e alle competenze linguistiche, in generale inteso come un valorizzare le culture, no… e favorire comunque un approccio inclusivo a scuola […] (*Interviewee 41910*).
>
> La CLIL, e quello la facciamo anche come UDA spesso, però sempre con l'Inglese, non con altre lingue. […] Noi abbiamo nella programmazione… mettiamo anche delle UDA, delle unità di apprendimento. Siccome sono sempre interdisciplinari cerchiamo noi di fare dei collegamenti e allora spesso ci avvaliamo della CLIL per fare queste UDA, con la lingua Inglese però (*Interviewee 62810*).

The most recurring one is the Content and Language Integrated Learning methodology, belonging to the Integrated Language Teaching approach (10 out of 10 participants mentioned it). This result is probably connected to the fact that the CLIL methodology is widespread in Italy thanks to the Riforma Gelmini (see Chapter 2.2.3), but as we know primary schools are not obliged to implement this type of methodology, therefore the decision to organise lessons using CLIL is only up to the will of the teacher. Still, a couple of interviewees report that their schools started to adopt textbooks that include CLIL units explaining specific topics through the use of a foreign language: "Sono quattro anni che nella nostra scuola vengono proposti testi adozionali che lo prevedano" (*Interviewee 31810*). Predictably, the few teachers who experimented with CLIL in their classes used English as the language to convey disciplinary content; only one teacher declared that, a few years ago, a colleague of hers used Spanish to explain a Geography topic. These declarations confirm that primary schools (at least in the province of Vicenza) are not used to the implementation of pluralistic approaches, and when teachers try to involve pupils in projects related to foreign languages they use CLIL methodology with English language, which does nothing but strengthen the dominant position of this language and leave to other languages few chances to be promoted at the same time.

The second most known pluralistic approach is the intercultural approach: 5 out of 10 teachers (the most young ones) attended academic courses that introduced this topic, even if they never had the occasion to consciously apply it during their classes: "[…] direi l'approccio interculturale, non perchè io lo abbia fatto, ma nel senso così perchè abbiamo parlato di intercultura [all'università], e quindi posso immaginare di cosa si tratti […]" (*Interviewee 21810*). As we can read in the previous quotation, these teachers clarified that the academic course was mainly dedicated to the concept of *intercultura* and focused on the communication between cultures and their valorisation; language-wise, no instructions on how to promote linguistic diversity were given. This might mean that, from an academic point of view, many steps ahead were made to dedicate attention to the cultural factor, but there is still work to be done with the linguistic dimension (see *Initial education and professional development*).

A participant reported that she had the possibility to learn something about the *éveil aux langues* approach thanks to a French colleague who used it during her classes. Perhaps one possible solution that could help to spread the knowledge and usage of pluralistic approaches in Italian primary schools would be an implementation of international communication between teachers, who could share their positive experiences and illustrate the benefits related to them.

Initial education and professional development

From what we could understand through the previous questions, these teachers have very limited knowledge of what plurilingualism is, they are familiar with only two types of pluralistic approaches and they seldom had the occasion to read European documents and recommendations dealing with these topics (with some exceptions). But why is it so? Could the answer lie in the way these teachers were trained during their initial preparation? And now, are there any *corsi di aggiornamento* (Italian teachers are obliged to attend courses every year to keep up-to-date) that give them the chance to explore these themes?

When asked about their initial education and whether they ever studied the issues of plurilingualism and the valorisation of languages and cultures in the classroom, two very different sets of answers were given:

> Assolutamente Eleonora, ti dirò di più: non c'era neanche la casistica. Non si incontravano alunni che nel tempo provenissero da altre scuole. […] A quel tempo non c'era neanche l'occasione per cimentarsi con queste cose a quel tempo, sono passati 40 anni (*Interviewee 31810*).
>
> Beh abbiamo fatto il corso di Italiano L2. Al di là di quello abbiamo fatto un corso dell'insegnamento dell'ingese come seconda lingua, che però è stato finalizzato per lo più a fornirci delle strategie e delle metodologie insomma per l'insegnamento dell'inglese. Ah, abbiamo fatto un corso di interculturalità dove però non ci siamo calati nello specifico dell'ambiente scolastico, ma più in generale (*Interviewee 41910*).

The answers can be divided into two different categories based on the amount of time spent by these teachers in the school. The more experienced teachers (4 out of 10) stressed the age factor, claiming that during the years of their training (between the 80s and the end of the 90s) this type of topic was not considered, especially because classes were mainly monolingual and children were almost all of Italian origins. As we can see from the table, the number of students with non-Italian citizenship was quite limited until the beginning of the new century, when it rapidly started to grow:

Figure 8

Students with non-Italian citizenship: from 1983 to 2020

Grafico 1 –   Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana (*valori assoluti*) - AA.SS. 1983/1984 - 2019/2020
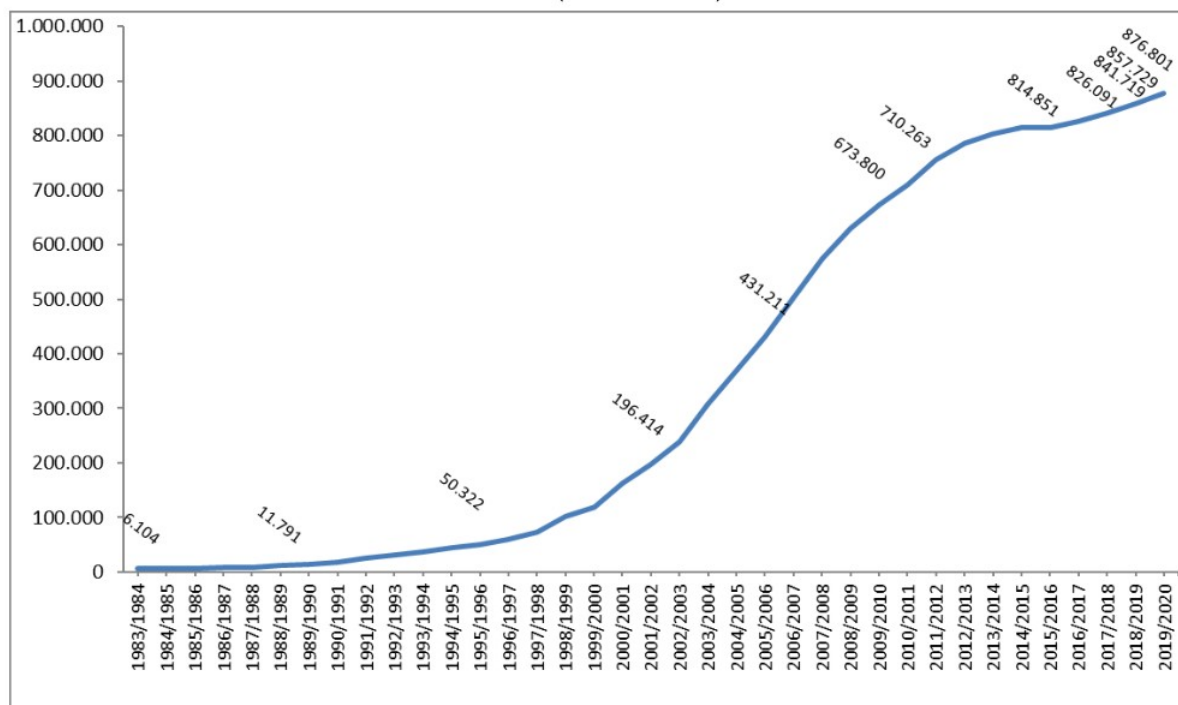
Note: The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ufficio Statistica e studi (2021). Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. A.S. 2019/2020. Available at https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Alunni+con+cittadinanza+non+italiana+2019-2020.pdf/f764ef1c-f5d1-6832-3883-7ebd8e22f7f0?version=1.1&t=1633004501156

On the other hand, the less experienced teachers have received a completely different education. Until the end of the 90s, aspiring teachers only had to obtain the *diploma di scuola magistrale* after attending 5 years of a specific type of high school; today, people who want to become primary school teachers necessarily have to attend a 5-year academic course called *Scienze della formazione primaria*, which is the only existing course that prepares new teachers here in Italy. When answering the question, 6 out of 10 participants have listed the same courses that they attended during these 5 years that they thought had something to do with the themes of plurlingualism and linguistic diversity:

a) intercultural education: the course aims at providing basic notions of intercultural education and giving the chance to develop an intercultural competence to be exploited at school with pupils;

b) didactics of Italian as a second language: it focuses on the teaching of the national language to pupils who speak another language as their mother tongue;

c) teaching English as a foreign language: attendees study how to teach this language to kids, focusing on possible difficulties and training by creating activities to use in the classroom[10].

From the description of these courses and from what the interviewees said, it is possible to notice that the courses do not specifically deal with plurilingualism. Aspiring teachers are taught how to promote the integration of foreign pupils by teaching them the Italian language, but not how to give value to their home languages at the same time; the only language they are trained to teach is English, which continues to dominate and does not leave space to any other language; they focus on intercultural competence but still do not deal with linguistic richness in the classroom and how this could be exploited to benefit all pupils.

And what about in-service training? Are teachers given the possibility to explore plurilingualism through some *corsi di aggiornamento*?

Sai che non mi pare? Cioè, ti dico no, perchè a scuola si sta ancora tanto puntando più che altro sulla diversità intesa come disabilità. Però sulla diversità culturale ancora pochetto (*Interviewee 21810*).

Ci sono in maniera, come dire, minoritaria. Perchè adesso Eleonora va per la maggiore flipped classroom, classe capovolta, nuove tecnologie… Va molto l'inclusione, l'inclusione in sè, non solo dell'alunno… della disabilità molto, queste sono le tematiche (*Interviewee 31810*).

Finora non mi è capitato di farli. Me ne sono arrivate [di proposte] legate a queste cose qui, legate alla formazione per stendere il PEI… anche per la digitalizzazione, quindi internet, apparecchi tecnologici, eccetera. A livello di lingua no, a me non è ancora capitato di incontrarli (*Interviewee 80811*).

In-service training is focusing on different issues, but plurilingualism does not seem to be one of these: only one teacher is sure that she will be able to participate in a course dedicated to

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10 For further information about these courses, please visit the webpages dedicated to these courses (Università degli Studi di Padova). Pedagogia interculturale: https://didattica.unipd.it/off/2021/CU/SU/IA1870/000ZZ/SFN1030737/N0. Italiano come L2 per bambini stranieri: https://didattica.unipd.it/off/2019/CU/SU/IA1870/000ZZ/SUP7078782/N0. Didattica della lingua inglese: https://didattica.unipd.it/off/2017/CU/SU/IA1870/000ZZ/SUP7078915/N0.

plurilingualism starting from February 2022. All teachers confirm that the majority of the courses deal with the following topics:

    a)   new technologies, use of internet, digitalisation;

    b)   promotion and integration of diversity intended as disability;

    c)   teaching Italian as L2 to foreign pupils;

    d)   implementation of CLIL methodology in the classroom.

It is easy to imagine that these courses try to respond to the needs born out of the current situation in Italy. Today, the ability to exploit electronic devices and new technologies at school is required more than ever, due to the current sanitary emergency that has forced all types of students and teachers to spend several months studying from home, to avoid any kind of contact that could put the health of teachers and students at risk. Instruments like virtual meeting platforms (e.g. Gmeet, Zoom), virtual whiteboards, didactic games websites started to be used in March 2020 to try to keep school activities alive and to give pupils the chance to live a sort of ordinary school day even from their houses. The sanitary crisis is far from being over, which means that the use of DAD (*Didattica A Distanza*) could still be considered in the upcoming months. The direct consequence of this is that teachers need to be prepared to use these new technological devices as best as they can, and in order to do this, they need to be trained, especially if we think that 1 out of 2 Italian teachers is 50 years old or even older (Corlazzoli, 2019), which means they are not digital natives and therefore need accurate preparation to work with these instruments.

The word "diversity" rang a bell in a few participants, who associated it with the concept of disability claiming that many courses today are planned to give teachers a basic but solid knowledge about how to better include students with any kind of disability and to make their lessons and activities more inclusive. This reveals something more about the direction Italian schools are taking: today, diversity is intended as something that differs from a physical or cognitive point of view, and many courses try to provide teachers with the instruments to give importance to this diversity in the classroom and to underline the precious value of this diversity. What is left to understand is: in what ways does diversity intended as disability differ from linguistic and cultural diversity? Why is the former given more importance than the latter? What is needed to turn linguistic and cultural diversity into something that is perceived as equally in need to be promoted and valued in the classroom?

As far as CLIL is concerned, more than one participant pointed out that these courses are mainly thought for teachers who are responsible for the teaching of English language in primary schools: still, the fact that these are cited means that this methodology is spreading, bringing with it the inevitable rise of the English language, which continues to be the sole foreign language that

receives attention in primary schools (with some exceptions), reducing the possibility to introduce other languages that are worthy of attention to the same extent.

Last but not least are the courses that focus on the teaching of Italian as L2. The Italian language is one of the principal means that will allow young generations to become Italian citizens, and it is the school's responsibility to provide them with the instruments to achieve this result. But what role does the home language/other language spoken by children occupy in the school?

> La scuola ti chiede ovviamente di raggiungere degli obiettivi che naturalmente sono, come dire, coerenti con il nostro paradigma culturale e anche con quello che è il nostro stile di vita nella società in cui viviamo. E quindi io credo che bisogna sempre cercare una mediazione, nel senso che quei bambini saranno futuri cittadini italiani! Quindi tu gli devi comunque fornire degli strumenti per poter vivere e lavorare nel nostro paese [...]. Ecco però da qui negare totalmente quelle che sono le origini io lo trovo sbagliato, anzi è un arricchimento (*Interviewee 41910*).

Why are these Italian as L2 courses not matched with courses that teach how to give space to other languages spoken by these children in the classroom? Why do these kids have to give up a part of their linguistic identity in order to become Italian citizens? The fact that courses regarding plurilingualism are almost absent in the Italian panorama gives the feeling that this issue is not perceived as a priority nor a necessity. But what if these courses existed and were easily accessible? Would teachers participate to be trained in this sense if they were given the possibility? In short, what do these teachers really think of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity? The next set of questions allowed to investigate the opinions and beliefs of the participants.

Beliefs, opinions and attitude

The following questions were asked to explore the inner thoughts of the participants, to grasp the essence of their opinions regarding this issue. The easiest question to start with was to ask them what linguistic and cultural diversity at school meant to them. The most recurring positive word associated with this concept was *ricchezza*, which could be translated as "precious resource":

> La differenza [è] una ricchezza! Ci stiamo rendendo conto sempre di più, anche con l'aumento delle persone di diversa origine in Italia, che il mondo non è tutto qui: non è solo questo, non è solo l'Italia, c'è tantissima parte del mondo con cui ci stiamo scontrando e incontrando e che ci può insegnare tanto (*Interviewee 91811*).

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This example summarizes what the other participants said about linguistic and cultural diversity, but other suggestions were also given: an opportunity to learn something new about the world of languages, a fundamental resource that a foreign kid can exploit when learning the Italian language as L2, a chance to allow children to keep their home language whilst enriching their linguistic and cultural identity, a precious instrument from which all the kids in the classroom can benefit. At the same time, teachers also reflected on the possible downsizes of linguistic and cultural diversity, especially focusing on the language factor:

[Se il] bambino non ha un linguaggio ben sviluppato, non parla l'italiano, […] purtroppo è vero che i bambini giocano anche senza parlare però la lingua è un po' un limite nel momento in cui non c'è la comprensione, non c'è linguaggio (*Interviewee 80811*).

[…] Se magari all'inizio la diversità linguistica può essere un primo ostacolo, poi però diventa una ricchezza. Mi riferisco a quando un bambino arriva in Italia e magari fa un po' di confusione tra le due lingue (*Interviewee 70511*).

Linguistic diversity can become an obstacle when it impedes communication between pupils and with the teachers, and this can be the case of a kid that arrives in Italy and enters the school system without knowing a word of Italian. However, it has to be said that this type of situation is occurring less and less often, and the reason behind it lies in the fact that today the majority of children whose parents come from another country and speak another language are born in Italy, and therefore are also Italian native speakers. The comparison between the two tables shows that most of the children who do not have Italian citizenship were born here, while only a small percentage was born abroad.

Figure 9

Students without Italian citizenship: born in Italy and born abroad

Tavola 7 – Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana *nati in Italia* per ordine di scuola (*valori assoluti e percentuali*) – AA.SS. 2015/2016 – 2019/2020

Anni scolastici	Totale	Infanzia	Primaria	Secondaria I grado	Secondaria II grado
			nati in Italia		
2015/2016	478.522	141.864	213.003	80.845	42.810
2016/2017	502.963	140.671	221.643	89.129	51.520
2017/2018	531.467	139.350	231.412	98.636	62.069
2018/2019	553.176	137.596	235.877	107.312	72.391
2019/2020	573.845	136.217	237.135	116.932	83.561
var % 2019/20 su 2018/19	3,7 -	1,0	0,5	9,0	15,4

Tavola 8 – Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana *entrati per la prima volta* nel sistema scolastico italiano per ordine di scuola (*valori assoluti e percentuali*) – AA.SS. 2015/2016 – 2019/2020

Anni scolastici	Totale	Primaria	Secondaria I grado	Secondaria II grado
	entrati per la prima volta nel sistema scolastico italiano			
2015/2016	34.048	16.075	8.290	9.683
2016/2017	23.654	9.303	7.600	6.751
2017/2018	21.554	5.986	8.224	7.344
2018/2019	22.984	5.933	8.773	8.278
2019/2020	22.701	4.826	9.578	8.297
var % 2019/20 su 2018/19	-1,2	-18,7	9,2	0,2

Note: The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ufficio Statistica e studi (2021). Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. A.S. 2019/2020. Available at https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Alunni+con+cittadinanza+non+italiana+2019-2020.pdf/f764ef1c-f5d1-6832-3883-7ebd8e22f7f0?version=1.1&t=1633004501156

Anyway, teachers claim that this is a difficulty that is only present during the first months after the arrival, and once the linguistic barrier is overcome, diversity turns into a resource. But who exactly overcomes the barrier? Is it a sort of halfway meeting process or do efforts come from only one direction? As we could previously read and from what teachers revealed, the chance to overcome this barrier is in the hands of the pupil, who has to learn the Italian language. According to a teacher,

the help of the family in the process of integration determines whether diversity will become a resource or an obstacle to manage:

> […] Se un bambino parla una lingua diversa perchè ha famiglia di diverse origini, ma la famiglia sostiene comunque l'apprendimento dell'italiano, allora la seconda lingua può essere una ricchezza. Quando invece la famiglia disincentiva l'imparare l'italiano, lì diventa un ostacolo, perchè il bambino non è più in grado neanche di giocare con i suoi compagni, perchè se non si capisce fa fatica poi anche proprio per quanto riguarda l'apprendimento in generale (*Interviewee 21810*).

It is undeniable that the family has a fundamental part in this, but what exactly is the role of the school and teachers in this case? Is the learning of the Italian language combined with a valorisation of the home language in the classroom or does it lead to a sort of subtractive bilingualism (see Chapter 1.2.1)? Could it be that a linguistic hierarchy still exists in the mind of teachers, according to which some languages are more important and valuable than others?

In order to understand this, the following answer was asked: imagine that MIUR decides that, starting from September 2022, English language will no longer be the foreign language studied in primary school, but it will be substituted with another language, which could be Spanish, German, Arabic, or even Chinese. What would you think of this decision? A more direct question was avoided because the risk of obtaining biased answers was high: if teachers were directly asked to say whether they think that some languages are more important than others, some of them would probably give an answer that was not completely honest. Having said so, it is possible to identify a general opinion that is common to all participants. English seems to be valued as fundamental for the future of children, even if some of them are aware of the dominant position of this language due to economic factors: "Perchè l'inglese lo imparano… perchè sanno che prima o poi tutti lo devono sapere. È vero che ci sono motivazioni di tipo economico che rendono stabile questa situazione […]" (*Interviewee 11610*). Generally speaking, teachers consider English to be irreplaceable:

> Lo troverei poco efficace, nel senso che comunque l'inglese è una lingua conosciuta in tutto il mondo, parlata in tutto il mondo ok? E che quindi permette, in un futuro, al bambino di approcciarsi a realtà diversificate, ecco. E questo è il motivo per cui io penso sia fondamentale insegnarglielo fin da piccoli (*Interviewee 41910*).
>
> L'inglese è una lingua conosciuta in tutto il mondo, quindi mi sembra un po' la lingua base forse che ci permette di andare al di fuori dell'Italia e a volte poter anche stare in Italia e

comunicare, […] l'inglese è una lingua indispensabile, quindi non so se sarei d'accordo (*Interviewee 91811*).

Two teachers looked at this question with a more pragmatic eye, claiming that a similar change would not be possible because primary school teachers are not trained to teach those languages, connecting to a particularly thorny issue, id est the fact that in primary schools English language is not taught by language experts but by common teachers, something which is considered to be completely inadequate and not effective.

Unexpectedly, 5 out of 10 teachers proposed an alternative solution: they would be happier if the teaching of English language was matched with the learning of a second foreign language, a proposal that aligns with the recommendations of the CoE and of the European Commission that suggest that future European citizens should learn at least two foreign languages other than their mother tongue (see Chapters 1.3.2 and 1.3.3). At the same time, this suggestion would not be easy to be translated into practice, since primary school teachers are not prepared to teach these languages. Besides, would this proposal be doable in terms of time available? If we think that only a few hours per week are dedicated to the study of the English language, would there be enough time left to study another one?

The first question regarding linguistic and cultural diversity was developed by asking participants whether they consider this diversity as a resource or as a problem to manage (or even both) and why. At first, every teacher agreed on the fact that linguistic and cultural diversity can constitute a precious resource, but then the focus moved on the possible difficulties that are related to this issue, which will be now summarised. The majority of the interviewees declared that one of the most stressful sides of their job is to strictly follow the scholastic programmes for every discipline, which ask them to discuss certain topics with the students and to verify their knowledge through written and oral tests. The necessity to give proof of what they have done during the year to their superiors and the urge to get everything done by June leads them to only focus on this aspect, leaving no extra time for anything that falls outside the sphere of the curriculum: "Se si segue il programma ufficiale… nel senso, non ci sarebbe tempo per fare niente" (*Interviewee 52210*). If some of their colleagues even use break time to finish their lesson, how could there be enough time to dedicate to plurilingualism? May it be that this idea is related to the fact that the valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity is perceived as another discipline to be inserted in the curriculum and therefore needs extra time within the scholastic week? Why could it not simply be inserted as a daily habit that does not need a dedicated time but can be discussed by any teacher during any lesson of any subject?

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The issue of time is also specifically related to the hours dedicated to the study of the foreign language. A teacher explains that linguistic diversity "può rivelarsi risorsa per i bambini, soprattutto se i bambini si raccontano e tu gli concedi degli spazi per raccontarsi […]" (*Interviewee 41910*). But what spaces could be dedicated to the valorisation of languages in the classroom, when the study of the English language deserves only a few hours per week compared to other disciplines? According to some participants, not enough time is dedicated to languages in general in primary school. A teacher claims that this problem could be partially solved if language experts were asked to teach foreign languages; instead, what happens is that many English teachers are also responsible for the teaching of other disciplines, and sometimes they use some hours dedicated to English to make up for any topics left behind of other disciplines. It appears that the Italian school system still has to fully understand the importance of language(s) teaching.

Another matter related to linguistic and cultural diversity seems to be the educational agreement between the school and the family: "L'alleanza educativa scuola-famiglia è una delle basi della didattica della scuola, e senza questa a volte è difficile […]" (*Interviewee 80811*). This might become a serious issue when the two parts cannot communicate because of the linguistic barrier or, as a teacher says, when the family does not commit to integrating into Italian society:

Ci sono appunto, come ti dicevo prima, altre famiglie in cui per vari motivi non c'è tutto questo sostegno, c'è anche un po' di timore nel confrontarsi con gli insegnanti, perchè forse è anche la cultura appunto… Noi non vediamo mai i genitori capito? Quindi non c'è il confronto diretto insegnante-genitore. A casa parlano solo la loro lingua, non hanno mai i compiti, e 'ste cose qua vanno a svantaggio del bambino purtroppo (*Interviewee 21810*).

Once again, this idea seems to be connected to a monodirectional type of integration, the one where the effort is all on the shoulders of the child and their family, and the school only waits for them to learn the Italian language and the Italian lifestyle and culture, without giving them the possibility to freely express themselves through their language and culture.

A participant called herself into question and admitted that she could be the problem that hinders the valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom. She feels she is not adequately prepared to do a similar activity with her pupils, especially because she believes she lacks basic knowledge of languages and cultures:

[…] Può diventare un problema per il fatto che… Io mi rendo conto, sono un'insegnante formata per insegnare alla scuola, sono formata ad insegnare tante discipline, e a volte mi

pongo un po' anche questo problema. Mi chiedo: ma allora io dovrei essere specializzata in inglese, continuare a tenermi aggiornata in inglese, italiano, matematica, eccetera… e in più cercare di essere sempre attenta anche a quello che ci succede intorno! Io però mi rendo conto che non so quasi niente […] penso per nessun essere umano non è facile avere l'apertura mentale, anche la possibilità proprio di farci stare tutto nella testa, non so se mi spiego… a livello proprio di conoscenze (*Interviewee 91811*).

How could she help her pupils to exploit their linguistic abilities and turn them into a precious resource that can benefit all the classmates if she does not know much about the languages and cultures that are present in the classroom? This idea can be connected to two issues. As we previously discussed, the current initial education of primary school teachers is still inadequate from this point of view, especially if we think that Italian classes are increasingly multilingual and multicultural. Moreover, the idea of "not knowing enough" is probably related to an old conception of teaching and school in general, where the teacher is the figure who is responsible for passing down knowledge, and the student must receive and learn. Why should linguistic and cultural diversity become a subject that is taught by the teacher? Could it become instead an occasion through which the traditional roles are inverted and the pupil is turned into the linguistic expert? These fixed roles indeed constitute a habit that is difficult to abandon, but this change could represent the solution to the problem presented by the teacher.

After realising that in-service courses dealing with plurilingualism and language diversity are still a rarity, the interviewer asked the participants if they would take part in a similar course if it existed and they were given the possibility to participate. This proposal aimed at answering a hidden question: are teachers genuinely interested in this topic? How do they perceive it? Do they feel that this might represent an actual opportunity for their classes to improve?

The answers can be divided into two opposite halves. On the one hand, 5 out of 10 interviewees claimed they would participate unconditionally. On the other hand, the other 5 participants admitted they have reservations:

Sono sincera nel dirti che prima preferirei fare altro. […] La diversità culturale è una cosa tanto ampia e, cioè, nel senso, se ti formi dovresti un po' formarti su tutte le culture, dovresti un po' conoscerle in linea generale (*Interviewee 21810*).

Adesso forse ci sarebbero altri… dovendo scegliere, ci sarebbero altri corsi che mi premerebbero, ecco (*Interviewee 41910*).

Non lo percepisco come un bisogno primario in classe. […] Nel momento in cui
cominceranno a mettere delle formazioni obbligatorie su questo argomento, allora
sicuramente si potrà pensare di cominciare a puntare su questa cosa (*Interviewee 70511*).

Why is it so? Some teachers explained that before taking part in a similar course they would prefer
to follow other courses that focus on other topics (e.g. socio-emotional education, management of
provocative behaviours in the classroom), another one pointed out that there will not be enough
time to dedicate to a course on plurilingualism. It is clear that plurilingualism and the promotion of
language diversity are still not perceived as a priority in primary schools by many teachers. How
could this opinion be changed? A teacher suggested that only when teachers have to follow
compulsory courses that train them to deal with this topic, things will start to change: the solution
would be a legislative revolution on a national basis. But would this choice be effective if the
teachers' mentality is not changed in the first place?
One of the participants that would like to participate in these courses added an interesting condition:

Chiederei da questi corsi, se ci fosse la possibilità, che appunto dessero delle… come si può
dire, degli spunti di attività che si possono effettivamente fare in classe ma a livello proprio
continuativo, non che devi programmare delle lezioni apposta o comunque togliere una parte
[…] del programma, cioè che non siano diverse da quello che normalmente si dovrebbe fare a
scuola. […] e fattibili soprattutto! […] un corso di formazione è valido se insegna o se dà
spunti per poi applicare veramente nel contesto quotidiano (*Interviewee 52210*).

The teacher perfectly summarised what was discussed in other terms in the previous chapters: there
are still many gaps that divide the theory from the practice, and many aspects related to the topic of
plurilingualism keep remaining on documents and are not translated into concrete actions. If the
teacher was to participate in this course, she would need it to be mainly characterised by practical
suggestions and not only theoretical notions. A similar course should not only teach her how to
promote linguistic and cultural diversity in her classes, but it should also show her how to integrate
these activities into the curriculum and the scholastic week, with the aim to turn them into daily
habits. How could she do it? The translanguaging approach (see Chapter 3) might constitute a
solution.

Practices

These questions tried to investigate the state of the art, asking the participants to think about Italian primary schools and the schools where they teach and say what is done to give value to language diversity and what is still missing. Interviewees were read the following extract from the document *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* (Mᴘɪ, 2007):

> La scuola italiana sceglie di adottare la prospettiva interculturale, [che non vuol dire] limitarsi a mere strategie di integrazione degli alunni immigrati, nè a misure compensatorie di caratte speciale. Si tratta, invece, di assumere la diversità come paradigma dell'identità stessa della scuola nel pluralismo, come occasione per aprire l'intero sistema *a tutte le differenze* (pp. 8-9).

Is it really true that diversity can be considered the paradigm of Italian schools? Almost all teachers gave the same answer: "Idealmente sì, perchè non ti nego che se ne parla […] si parla di intercultura si parla di integrazione ma poi concretamente, a mio avviso, per promuovere questa cosa non viene fatto sostanzialmente nulla o comunque gran poco" (*Interviewee 80811*). To express it in a few words: a lot is being said, but only a little is being done. Participants contributed even further, explaining what the possible reasons behind this situation could be.

The lack of resources was addressed as one of the main problems: "Penso che nella realtà sia ancora molto difficile, non perchè gli insegnanti non conoscano queste cose, però ci sono poche risorse nella scuola, poche poche poche" (*Interviewee 21810*). This issue connects to other previously discussed problems: the initial education and professional development of primary school teachers, little time available to do everything, but also the difficulty of managing a numerous group of pupils alone.

Another teacher addresses an even more serious problem: Italian schools do not strive for diversity, but rather for uniformity and homogeneity.

> La diversità, soprattutto quando è diversità culturale e linguistica, è un "devi integrarti", come dire, è un qualcosa che deve essere superato nella scuola. Cioè: ti devo dare gli strumenti perchè tu possa lavorare nella scuola come lavorano tutti gli altri. Non è un valore, non è qualcosa che viene valorizzato, non c'è uno scambio tra bambini in merito a questo. Quindi il bambino straniero che magari ha delle esperienze che possono arricchire il patrimonio di tutti gli altri viene, come dire, si cerca di portarlo a quello che è l'equilibrio (*Interviewee 41910*).

It is quite a strong statement: the children who bear linguistic and cultural diversity are led to adapt to the larger group and they are not given the possibility to express their unicity nor to use it as a resource that can benefit all their classmates. What could be the reasons behind this behaviour? According to a teacher, it is the general tendency to always put first the Italian language and culture, a monolingual and monocultural attitude that reproduces the nationalistic policies that spread over the last decade: "[…] Il fatto che vada tutelata innanzitutto la nostra cultura, hai capito? E che qualsiasi cosa si debba fare e si metta in atto debba innanzitutto favorire quella che da sempre è l'utenza delle nostre scuole" (*Interviewee 31810*). Another interviewee suggests that diversity constitutes a factor that generates some sort of inner crisis in the teacher: "Forse la diversità fa paura. […] è difficile diciamo uscire dall'idea che nella classe ci sono troppe diversità e a volte preparare una lezione e doverla pensare per [tanti] a volte ci mette un po' in crisi" (*Interviewee 91811*). Whatever is the reason, these teachers agree on the fact that "Ci sono, si stanno facendo dei grandi passi in avanti ma da quello che mi è dato di vedere […] molto deve essere ancora fatto" (*Interviewee 31810*).

And what about the schools where these teachers work? How is linguistic and cultural diversity valued? The answers were all similar: some steps ahead have been taken during the last years, but there is still work to do. "Io vedo un'attenzione potrei dirti sempre maggiore. Dirti che è un paradigma… non vorrei sposare questa cosa, ma dirti che è una lezione che negli anni io ho visto crescere di anno in anno sempre più, questo sì" (*Interviewee 31810*). These are the most relevant points that participants brought up when talking about their schools and the aspects that they think should be improved:

a) *a movement towards the family*: mediation should become a keyword according to a teacher, who believes that both the school and the family have to learn to know each other to strengthen the abovementioned educational agreement: "A volte anche noi dovremmo conoscere, cercare di conoscere meglio un po' anche queste culture che ci troviamo ad avere qui" (*Interviewee 11610*). If the family makes an effort to integrate and to learn the Italian language and culture, why should teachers not do the same?;

b) *linguistic and cultural diversity seems to be worth discussing only when it is present in the classroom*: a teacher working in a small town teaches to pupils who are all of Italian origins. When asked if she thought that projects regarding plurilingualism could be done with her class, she replied: "è fattibile ma non è una cosa che ti sorge spontanea fare, nel senso che ovviamente non essendoci la diversità così tangibile, […] non ti viene in mente di andare magari a valorizzare […] delle culture diverse dalla nostra" (*Interviewee 41910*). If diversity does not belong to the daily routine of children, it is rarely discussed because it is perceived

as something that does not concern them. Once again, a similar statement shows that we are still not used to dealing with these topics;

c) *the sanitary emergency slowed down the spreading of plurilingual and pluricultural projects*: more than one teacher stressed this aspect, admitting that Covid19 made things worse even from this point of view. The difficulties are related not only to the organisation modalities (children cannot work in groups and it is difficult to involve people who do not work in the school), but also to the in-service training: as we previously saw, this emergency led to the necessity to train to the use of new technological devices during DAD periods, and the direct consequence was that less attention was paid to courses treating other topics and other projects (included those related to plurilingualism and valorisation of cultural and linguistic diversity);

d) *the word "diversity" is mainly related to disability*: generally speaking, the school is "molto attenta alle diversità, in specifico come, diciamo, disabilità. Quindi più che diversità a livello culturale/linguistico ci si sofferma molto sulle diversità come disabilità" (*Interviewee 91811*). This inclination can also be perceived from the fact that many in-service courses are dedicated to the integration of disabled children.

Last, but not least, participants were asked if they have any occasions to exploit the cultural and linguistic diversity of their classes and turn it into a "precious resource", as they defined it. 3 out of 10 teachers realised that they have not had the chance to do something similar yet; however, this might be related to the fact that these are the youngest of all the participants, and they have been teaching for only a couple months. The other 7 reported some episodes that gave them the occasion to discuss and compare different languages and cultures (most of them are now suspended because of the sanitary emergency):

a) teachers asking their pupils to say a specific word in their home language;
b) use of disciplinary topics to make comparisons between cultures, e.g. the invention of numbers by Arabs;
c) breakfasts form the world: pupils and teachers prepare some typical breakfasts with the help of school cooks and parents, using them as occasions to learn something more about the country associated with a specific breakfast;
d) collective celebrations where parents bring different food from their country;
e) comparisons between traditions and festivities;
f) parents who are asked to prepare a lesson about their cultural traditions.

The first thing that we can notice is that almost all these projects and activities are linked to the cultural aspect of diversity, while the linguistic aspect seems to be left aside. If we connect this fact

with what was previously said about academic courses for aspiring teachers, we can assume that progress was made as far as interculture is concerned, but the majority of work still left to do regards the *educazione linguistica* in general, that goes beyond the mere teaching of the English language and considers it as the sole foreign language worthy of attention: "Con la bambina inglese, sai ci sono tanti termini inglesi che usiamo nella lingua italiana normale, e quindi ogni volta la coinvolgo" (*Interviewee 62810*). Another relevant aspect that can be noticed is that these types of activities are episodic, sporadic, and they are not part of the daily routine of the class.

What follows is the report of Interviewee 31810 and the projects she is developing with her class and her school, which can be considered as a positive example to follow. She admits that many of these activities are not structured, but she is trying to insert them into the daily routine of her first-year class. For example, every day each pupil who can speak another language other than Italian is asked to teach their mates how to say that word in their home language (English, Russian, Spanish, German, Chinese); in addition, children are asked to describe their snacks when they are typical meals of another country. At the same time, she launched some long-term projects regarding the promotion of language diversity that will last until June 2022:

a) her pupils are learning to write the alphabet, and for each letter they draw pictures of objects which name begins with that specific letter. The drawings include objects which initial is the same in another language (e.g. A di Albero = drawing of a tree, but also Amarillo = drawing of colour yellow in Spanish), or as an alternative children translate the name of a drawing in their home language (e.g. U di Uovo = drawing of an egg → translation into German "Ei");

b) a collaboration with the town library will bring a reader in the class that will read children a fairy tale in a foreign language (English excluded);

c) she will exploit a book focusing on Italian lexicon and she will implement it with words coming from the languages that her pupils speak during the next 5 years;

d) being a Music teacher, she has started to introduce songs written in other languages, and she is doing the same with fairy tales;

e) after the children realised that there are no books written in their home language in the school library, the school has decided to invest a budget of 500€ to buy books written in other languages.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Based on the *Results and discussion* section, it is now possible to try to give an answer to the research questions presented in chapter 2.3.1:

a) *what types of knowledge do primary school teachers possess related to the themes of the promotion of plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity in the classroom?* The majority of the participants know only a few details about these topics. When asked to explain what plurilingualism is, 9 out of 10 teachers gave a definition that was more similar to those of bilingualism and multilingualism. Except for the CEFR and the 8 European key competences, their knowledge of COE documents and recommendations about the promotion of plurilingualism and language diversity is very limited. Among the pluralistic approaches that these teachers know, the most cited one is CLIL methodology (Integrated language teaching approach), followed by the intercultural approach. The others are not familiar to them;

b) *what instruments and pieces of information are teachers provided with during their initial and in-service training to implement pluralistic approaches and other good practices to give value to plurilingualism?* Initial education for aspiring teachers still does not treat these themes. Teachers who started working before the new century declared that classes were mainly monolingual and monocultural, therefore there was no occasion to deal with diversity; younger teachers confirmed that current academic courses mainly focus on interculture, but not on linguistic aspects, nor do they teach how to give value to diversity in the classroom. The same can be said about professional development: in-service courses are dedicated to new technologies, disability, teaching Italian as L2, CLIL methodology: almost no space is left for plurilingualism. Being the knowledge of these topics scarce, teachers find it difficult to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. The reasons behind this go far beyond the lack of education in this sense: other problems that were individuated were the lack of resources, the scarce amount of time dedicated to the study of languages, the predominance of a monolingual and monocultural attitude that tries to bring every child towards homogeneity. The result is that the activities carried out with children are sporadic, episodic, not thought beforehand; in addition, they focus on the intercultural aspect of plurilingualism, leaving aside the linguistic dimension.

c) *what is the general attitude of teachers towards plurilingualism and the idea of adopting the paradigm "unity in diversity" as a fundamental principle of the Italian school?* Despite considering linguistic and cultural diversity as a *ricchezza*, teachers still have many doubts

about the possible realisation of this project in Italian primary schools. The main problems lie in the pressure coming from the necessity to follow the programmes of each discipline, the predominance of the English language, the realisation that teachers are not adequately prepared to face these topics, the feeling that plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity are still not to be considered as a priority.

These results can be considered valid to this group of participants but cannot be generalised to the whole target population, due to some limitations of this study that are mainly related to the sample and the instrument chosen to collect data. One of the main weaknesses of the qualitative paradigm has to do with sample size and generalizability of the results: in this case, the sample coincided with a small group of 10 participants, a number that does not allow a generalisation of the results to the target population (Italian primary school teachers). Despite this fact, this study might be considered as a starting point for further research that may enlarge the scope and involve a larger number of participants (quantitative paradigm): the results of the interviews could be used to elaborate specific questions to ask participants through a questionnaire. In this way, the larger sample could increase the possibility to generalise the results to the target population.

The results of this interview showed that these teachers are not and do not feel entirely prepared to bring into their classes activities that aim at promoting the linguistic and cultural diversity of their children. What kind of solution could be offered to them? The next chapter will present the translanguaging approach, which could represent a viable and easy option to adopt in the classes.

Chapter 3. The translanguaging approach in plurilingual classes

The third and last chapter considers the educational gaps found in chapter 2 and presents a new pedagogical approach (it started to spread a decade ago, around 2010) known with the name of *translanguaging*. As the subtitle of this dissertation reports, translanguaging could represent a sort of pedagogical bridge that partially fills the void between plurilingual theory and practice, and the implementation of this pedagogy in Italian classes could lead to a slight improvement in this field. The first subchapter will introduce the concept of translanguaging, explaining where and how it originated and how it was later developed and turned into a proper pedagogy. It will also illustrate the principles that guide this approach and the purposes it tries to fulfil, along with the new roles that the teacher has to adopt within this pedagogy. Last, it will feature a presentation of the commonalities and divergences between translanguaging and plurilingualism.

With the second subchapter, we will analyse in detail the features of one of the first translanguaging projects that were developed in the United States, the CUNY-NYSIEB, born to practically sustain the education of Latinx emergent bilinguals in the state of New York. We will illustrate the vision, the core principles, and the working procedure of this project (*Translanguaging Unit Design* and *Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle*) by making reference to their website, where it is possible to find an immense variety of resources regarding translanguaging.

Moving from American schools and emergent bilinguals to the Italian context, where classes are mainly multilinguals, the third subchapter focuses on L'AltRoparlante, a project similar to the CUNY-NYSIEB that tries to bring translanguaging pedagogy into Italian schools. We will explain how the project was born, how it educates teachers and school staff in general to the themes of plurilingualism, language diversity, and translanguaging, and what is their *modus operandi* through which they organise translanguaging activities (*Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento*).

The last subchapter will be mainly dedicated to the presentation of possible translanguaging activities that can be easily implemented in Italian primary school classes.

3.1 Translanguaging as an approach to bilingualism

Even if it does not officially appear in the CARAP/FREPA, translanguaging is slowly starting to be recognised by many scholars as a new pluralistic approach (Cognigni 2020), especially because it shares common goals with the other pluralistic approaches (see Chapter 1.2.2). This first subchapter will be dedicated to the presentation of the origins and main features of translanguaging, considering it on two different levels:

a) s*ociolinguistic perspective*: translanguaging "describes the fluid language practices of bilingual communities";

b) *pedagogical perspective*: translanguaging "describes the process whereby teachers build bridges between these language practices and the language practices desired in formal school settings" (Flores & Schissel, 2014, pp. 461-462).

3.1.1 Origins and development of translanguaging

As a didactic practice, translanguaging is relatively recent when compared to the other pluralistic approaches we have dealt with (see chapter 1.2): a translanguaging theory started to be properly developed only a decade ago, but it still remains quite unknown and not well spread. Even if it may appear as a sort of "embryo-approach", its origins as a concept date back to last century. The word "translanguaging" was born in Wales in the 1980s and was first used in the education context as "a reaction against the historic separation of two 'monolingualisms' (Welsh and English) with a difference in prestige" (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 642). The Welsh educationalist Cen Williams coined the term *trawsieithu* (translated in English by Colin Baker) to indicate his *modus operandi* during his lessons with his bilingual students: "[it] was initially coined to name a pedagogical practice which deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms" (p. 643). To provide an example: students are asked to read a text in English and are later asked to orally summarise it in Welsh. In order to fulfil such task, only once they have processed the information in one language can the student resort to the other language to produce. But it is not a mere translation operation we are talking about: "Translanguaging entails using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding, and in order to augment the pupil's ability in both languages" (Williams, 2002, p. 40). It is a skill that bilingual people naturally possess: when the pupil carries out this operation, he/she "internalises the word he hears, assigns his own labels to the message/concept, and then switches the message/concept to the other language, augments the message/concept and supplements it" (p. 40). Precisely because translanguaging does not coincide with translation, Williams claims that this process requires "a full understanding of the language in which the message is received, and sufficient vocabulary and a firm enough grasp of the other language in order to express the message" (p. 40): in other words, translanguaging seems to fit the purpose of developing and giving strength to bilingualism, while it may not be apt for students who are in their early stages of learning a second language.

Thanks to the contribution of Williams and other academics, at the beginning of the new century the term and practice of translanguaging, together with the concept of transliteracy, was officially

recognised and promoted by the central government as a means to develop "dual literacy" in Wales. Dual literacy is defined as the capacity to possess receptive and productive skills in both English and Welsh and at the same time to switch from one language to the other according to the purpose; this ability is believed to be particularly useful because

> It assists individuals' intellectual development by refining their ability to think, understand, and internalise information in two languages. It prepares individuals to learn additional languages, by developing flexibility of mind and a positive approach towards other languages and cultures. It prepares individuals effectively for situations where they need to use both languages and transfer from one language to the other (Estyn, 2002, as cited in Lewis et al., 2012, p. 646).

A decade later, the concept of translanguaging moved outside Wales and the classroom context, and it started to be explored by North American and English academics in relation to both the school and everyday life context as a process that belongs to bilinguals' cognitive processing. We can individuate four main publications that contributed to developing the theory of translanguaging:

a) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (2001, 2006, 2011), by Colin Baker;

b) *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (2009), by Ofelia García;

c) the article 'Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching?' in the *Modern Language Journal* (2010), by Creese and Blackedge;

d) *Multilingualism: A Critical Perspective* (2010), by Blackedge and Creese.

The definition of translanguaging provided by García stresses a shift in focus that characterises and distinguishes this approach from the others: she believes that translanguaging is "an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable". These practices are "the normal mode of communication that, with some exceptions in some monolingual enclaves, characterizes communities throughout the world" (García, 2009, p. 44, as cited in García & Lin, 2017, p. 121). Otherwise said, translanguaging is not only a pedagogical practice as originally intended by Williams, it can also be intended as a powerful cognitive mechanism and a communicative means that bilinguals implement in different social contexts to make meaning and that goes beyond the commonly intended use of named languages (Cognigni, 2020). But how does translanguaging work? What are the principles that rule it? And what is the role of the teacher from an educational perspective? The next section will answer all these questions.

3.1.2 Guiding principles, pedagogical purposes and role of the teacher

"Translanguaging is *the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages*" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281 [italics in the original]). This definition of translanguaging can be used as a point of departure from which we will explore this concept in depth, starting from the theoretical foundations that lie under this definition. According to Vogel and García (2017), translanguaging theory is based on three main premises:

a) It posits that individuals select and deploy features from a unitary linguistic repertoire in order to communicate;

b) It takes up a perspective on bi- and multilingualism that privileges speakers' own dynamic linguistic and semiotic practices above the named languages of nations and states;

c) It still recognizes the material effects of socially constructed named language categories and structuralist language ideologies, especially for minoritized language speakers (p. 4).

The first foundation is of particular importance because it represents a breaking point from previous theories on bilingualism, in particular the Separate Underlying Proficiency theory (Sᴜᴘ) and the Linguistic Interdependence theory by Jim Cummins. The former, now discredited, claimed that the storage system of bilinguals consisted of separate compartments with limited capacity, which resulted in the belief that the languages of the bilingual speaker would "fight" each other to obtain more storage space in the brain, and that proficiency in L2 would only increase through exposure to that L2 and not to the L1 (Ibrahim, 2015). The latter, described by Cummins, presents the two languages spoken by the bilingual person as interdependent: below the surface, a common underlying proficiency unites the two languages, and most importantly develops through reading/writing/speaking/listening in both languages. This means that "the development of competence in a second language (L2) is partially a function of the type of competence already developed in L1" (Cummins, 1979, p. 222), i.e. the bilingual brain hosts a dual linguistic system that allows the passage of competences from a language to the other.

The translanguagin theory detaches from the previous ones by declaring that "there are not two interdependent language systems that bilinguals shuttle between, but rather one semiotic system integrating various lexical, morphological, and grammatical linguistic features in addition to social practices" (Vogel & García, 2017, p. 5). These multimodal features are dynamically used by

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bilinguals in different contexts to achieve different communicative results. This is why it is no longer sufficient to claim that bilingualism can simply be additive:

> In the 20th century, bilingualism was seen as "additive," as the simple sum of two languages. But additive bilingualism doesn't capture the complexity of a bilingual's linguistic repertoire. […] a bilingual's language repertoire is not made up of two distinct and separate languages that are linearly and separately acquired and used. Bilinguals are not two monolinguals in one, and bilingualism is not simply the sum of one language and the other. Ofelia García speaks of *dynamic bilingualism* in describing the complex language practices of bilinguals, shedding the notion of additive bilingualism, and recognizing translanguaging as a bilingual discursive norm (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, p. 4).

To make an example, when children with a migratory background enter a new school system for the first time, they are required to use the language of instruction, which differs from their home language. It might seem to us that they are acquiring a new language, but according to translanguaging theory they are acquiring new linguistic features that will contribute to expand their unique unitary repertoire, where there are no boundaries between languages (García, 2020).

But on what basis stands the idea of a single semiotic system? Considering that translanguaging is an approach that does not focus directly on languages, but on the linguistic practices of bilinguals, Otheguy, García and Reid (2015) make an important distinction between the way a bilingual speaker sees how they use these language features (internal perspective) and the way society considers and labels the use of two named languages (external perspective). We are all accustomed to the use of such concepts as "L1", "Second Language", "mother tongue", etc., to indicate individuals' language practices, but the truth is that these are simple labels that are based on external social constructs. When thinking about what features to use and in which context, bilinguals do not resort to these labels to make a decision, but instead use language in a fluid and flexible (dynamic) way, therefore these practices simply cannot be enclosed in common social constructions referring to languages: "Translanguaging does not merely refer to going across languages, shuttling or switching between one language and another, […] Translanguaging is about going beyond the concept of named languages to recognize the single language system of bilinguals" (García & Seltzer, 2016, p. 23). This is also why it is not correct to claim that the term and process of translanguaging are interchangeable with the one of code-switching since the latter "assumes that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other. Instead, translanguaging posits that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire

from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively" (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, p. 1).

As it was previously mentioned, translanguaging was originally developed as a pedagogical practice, and still today it is in the education field that this theory has been the most applied, especially throughout the last decades that have been characterised by an increasing presence of bi- or multilingual pupils who bring with them translanguaging practices. But how can a translanguaging pedagogy be effectively implemented in the classroom? The collaboration of the teacher(s) is fundamental. In particular García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) indicate three main components that influence the success of a translanguaging pedagogy:

a) *stance*: A belief that students' diverse linguistic practices are valuable resources to be built upon and leveraged in their education;
b) *design*: A strategic plan that integrates students' in-school and out-of-school or community language practices. The design of instructional units, lesson plans, and assessment are informed and driven by students' language practices and ways of knowing, and also ensure that students have enough exposure to, and practice with, the language features that are required for different academic tasks;
c) *shifts*: An ability to make moment-by-moment changes to an instructional plan based on student feedback (García et al., 2017, as cited in Vogel & García, 2017, p. 10).

The *stance* of the teacher in translanguaging pedagogy is of particular importance because it represents the starting point from which the following two will develop. At first, the teacher might adopt a *scaffolding stance,* based on the belief that the linguistic repertoires of their students can be used as a temporary scaffold that helps them to acquire the language used at school. It is only when the teacher adopts a *transformative stance* that the translanguaging pedagogy can really become effective: such stance implies the necessity to recognise that the linguistic repertoires of the students are always valuable and should be included in every didactic activity. Once the teacher has adopted this transformative stance, they will be able to *design* lesson plans and activities based on translanguaging that will allow them to promote concrete *shifts* in the way they teach (Cognigni, 2020).

When implementing a translanguaging pedagogy, the teacher also has to adopt four fundamental roles, which are summarised by García (2017a);

a) *the detective*: the teacher needs to know their students and their linguistic story in depth. This means to ask oneself specific questions: what does this pupil know? What languages do

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they speak? In what ways do they use language(s)? What motivates them to learn? What linguistic level do they possess (receptive skills and productive skills) in that particular language? Of course, this cannot be on the sole shoulders of the teachers: it is a collaborative work of investigation to carry out with colleagues, classmates, external members, etc.;

b) *the co-learner*: the teacher necessarily has to be available to learn something new from their students to make translanguaging pedagogy effective. This concretely translates into engaging "their students in collaborative research and linguistic ethnographies of the community", being "curious about students' worlds, their words, and their entanglements", engaging their "students in representing and producing their worlds and words using all the features of their repertoire" (García, 2017a, p. 23);

c) *the builder*: the teacher should be able to construct, to design lesson plans that adjust to the characteristics of the students and that are able to give exposure to their linguistic repertoires;

d) *the transformer*: it is up to the teacher to change their vision and their students' about the importance of every language and every linguistic repertoire: "teachers must be ready to build on the human ability to re-mix and recontextualize; that is, to inscribe language performances and identities into new contexts" (García, 2017a, p. 23).

But what teachers can implement such pedagogy in their classes? Are there any specific prerequisites that teachers need to meet? Translanguaging activities can be carried out by any kind of teacher in various classroom contexts:

[…] translanguaging strategies can be carried out by all educators, although their use might differ as strategies are adapted to the types of students they teach and their own strengths. Both bilingual and monolingual teachers can carry out translanguaging strategies if they consider the bilingualism of their students a resource for teaching and learning. All that is needed is a bit of good will, a willingness to let go of total teacher control, and the taking up of the position of learner, rather than of teacher (Celic & Seltzer, 2011, p. 5).

It is teachers and language policies in schools' responsibility to let the *translanguaging corriente* emerge, "the current that is always present in a classroom with multilingual speakers, although sometimes it is not on the surface" (García & Seltzer, 2016, p. 23). And to do that, it is not necessary to be bi- or multilingual: as one of the participants to the interview claimed (see chapter 2.3.3, *Beliefs, opinions, attitude*), it is impossible to know everything, in particular it is impossible to know all the languages that the students speak. But translanguaging pedagogy is not about

teaching languages, it is about legitimizing students' language practices (specific activities will be presented in chapter 3.4):

> […] it is possible for teachers to build a classroom ecology where there are books and signage in multiple languages; where collaborative groupings are constructed according to students' home language so that they can deeply discuss a text written in the dominant school language using all their language resources; where students are allowed to write and speak with whatever resources they have and not wait until they have the "legitimate" ones to develop a voice; where all students language practices are included so as to work against the linguistic hierarchies that exist in schools; where families with different language practices are included (García & Seltzer, 2016, p. 24).

According to what García and Lin (2017) explain, translanguaging pedagogy is currently experiencing tension between two different theories on translanguaging practices. On the one hand "there is a weak version of translanguaging, the one that supports national and state language boundaries and yet calls for softening these boundaries"; on the other hand "there is the strong version of translanguaging, a theory that poses that bilingual people do not speak languages but rather, use their repertoire of linguistic features selectively" (p. 126). In order to help educators to critically analyse the fundamental role that schools have played in building an elitarian language education and in maintaining the concept of named languages, the "strong" version is also needed to "provide an instructional space where translanguaging is nurtured and used critically and creatively without speakers having to select and suppress different linguistic features of their own repertoire" (p. 127).

The implementation of translanguaging pedagogies in multilingual classes can bring with it five potential educational advantages, presented by García (2017b):

a) Translanguaging to assist and motivate learning, and deepen meaning, understandings and knowledge;

b) Translanguaging for greater metalinguistic awareness and linguistic consciousness, including critical sociolinguistic consciousness;

c) Translanguaging to affirm bilingual identities;

d) Translanguaging for greater social interaction and communication, including home-school cooperation;

e) Translanguaging for empowerment (García, 2017b, p. 261).

When used as a scaffold, translanguaging allows plurilingual students to gain access to new content and to put it in relationship with previous knowledge developed through one of the languages they speak. At the same time, translanguaging practices give students the possibility to become aware of their language practices and to critically reflect on it and the language area in general (purpose shared with the pluralistic approaches). Once schools and educators give the *translanguaging curriente* the chance to come to the surface, they implicitly let the plurilingual and pluricultural identities of their students shine and be properly valued; by doing so the distance between the school and the student, but also the school and the family, shortens. Last, but not least, "translanguaging pedagogies can be used for the empowerment of bilingual communities, and especially for those that have been minoritized, enabling them to use and view as legitimate their complex and dynamic practices" (García, 2017b, p. 261).

3.1.3 Debates in the field: translanguaging versus plurilingualism

Being a relatively new and innovative approach that completely changes the way we see languages and language speakers and tries to disrupt linguistic hierarchies in pedagogical practices, translanguaging can be considered as a sort of political act linked to the desire to legitimize the until now ignored and even understated practices of minoritized bi- and multilingual individuals. Because of this, translanguaging theory places itself in contrast with previous theories concerning bilingualism and languages in general. Such contrasts give life to a series of debates mainly regarding the epistemological foundations of this theory, which see scholars who completely embrace and defend translanguaging on one side, and scholars who still have some doubts about this new approach and resist the sometimes extreme positions of the other group.

We have already seen (chapter 3.1.2) how translanguaging theorists refuse and discredit the Linguistic Interdependence theory by Cummins and the notions of additive bilingualism and code-switching. These notions are based on an external vision of bilingualism that sees the languages as separate and autonomous systems, while the translanguaging theory adopts the internal perspective of the speaker that does not perceive languages as separate entities but rather as a continuum from which they can choose the most appropriate linguistic features for each occasion and context (Cognigni, 2020).

More recently, the focus of the debate has moved towards the comparison between the concepts of translanguaging and plurilingualism, which we are now going to analyse to answer some important questions: do translanguaging and plurilingualism have something in common or are there some fundamental features that characterise and distinguish them? Is it possible to claim that they pursue

the same goals and can therefore be used as two means to achieve greater linguistic justice and a fair representation of linguistic and cultural diversity in schools?

According to García and Otheguy (2020), the two terms need to be distinguished because they are completely different both in terms of epistemology and societal goals. As we have extensively explained in the previous chapters, the concept of plurilingualism was born out of the contribution of European institutions such as the European Commission and the CoE to describe the future citizens of a multilingual Europe. Right from the beginning, plurilingualism has been intended not only as the capacity to learn and use a variety of different languages (at least two languages in addition to the mother tongue) in different contexts and for different purposes (plurilingual and pluricultural competence), it has also been considered as an important educational value to instil in the minds of young European citizens to teach them language equality, the respect for each linguistic form and the value of language diversity. The various multilingual awareness projects that were born all over Europe, especially those connected to the plurilingual approaches, have the ultimate goal of providing the young European citizen with a plurilinguistic repertoire, i.e. a repertoire of more languages at disposal to use. The critic moved by García and Otheguy (2020) to this notion is that it uses the abovementioned purposes to hide utilitarian interests born out of a neoliberal policy that only follows an economic imperative: in this sense, the building of a plurilingual repertoire is not only needed to protect the linguistic heritage of European citizens and to learn to tolerate and promote linguistic diversity, it also serves the purpose to bring economic development. The two authors add that the feature of developing a plurilingual repertoire made of every linguistic competence possessed by the speaker, even partial ones, applies to white European citizens but does not seem to be valid for brown and black refugees and immigrants, who have the possibility to use their so-called "first language" to acquire the dominant language of the nation and to use it proficiently, and not to varying degrees. In another document, García (2018) finds further fault with plurilingualism, claiming that this concept does not disrupt the construction of named languages and therefore leaves intact the linguistic hierarchies, which implies that it does not question "the use of the national language as the main medium of education. Thus, plurilingualism, is still tied to national languages, usually European ones, without paying attention to the many language practices of individuals" (p. 40).

García and Otheguy (2020) contrast this concept with the one of translanguaging, starting from the different origins of the two notions: translanguaging "did not emerge from a position of power by those who believed in the value of multilingualism for national integration into a neoliberal economy", which is the case of plurilingualism, but it rather started "from a minoritized multilingual position that understood the effects that colonialism and nation-building had had on the

community's identity, language, and economy" (p. 24). Plurilingualism seems to be born for the greater majority, i.e. monolinguals, and its primary goal is to give them the chance to turn into multilinguals; instead, translanguaging was at first created to support a minoritized group (bilingual students) and to help them express their bilingualism freely. As we have already specified, "whereas plurilingualism leaves the concept of named language intact, translanguaging recognizes that named languages are important sociocultural constructs that learners desire, but does not accept their psycholinguistic reality" (p. 28). How does translanguaging theory show that there is no place for named languages in the mind of a bilingual speaker? By positing that the bi/multilingual possesses a unitary linguistic repertoire that does not hold boundaries of any kind, included those corresponding to named languages, which instead find a place in the plurilingual conception of the multilingual speaker, who is believed to possess a repertoire of languages. By renouncing boundaries between named languages, translanguaging considers the language competence of the bilingual to be "always and at every stage complete" (p. 28), which is never the case of plurilingual competence, that is constantly evolving and transforming through the deployment of plurilingual resources in new strategic and creative ways. In the light of all these divergences, can translanguaging pedagogy work in synergy with plurilingualism in the European panorama to promote language diversity and the spreading of language education in general, or do the differences between them constitute an insurmountable obstacle that impedes a collaborative work?

Despite the existing differences, other scholars have decided to focus on the commonalities that bring closer the two approaches, which is the case of Vallejo and Dooly (2020). To begin, they argue that despite being born in two different areas and contexts of the world, both translanguaging and plurilingualism have the merit of recognising that the world today is characterised by an increasing presence of bilingual/multilingual/plurilingual speakers, and at the same time they realised that their practices and competences are rarely recognised or given any value at all. Both terms rely on the idea that language cannot be regarded as a standard notion that is equal for everyone: language is the result of the life experiences of a single individual and is therefore influenced by numerous factors (birthplace and birth year, dialects, language of instruction, fashions, street jargon, etc.). As a consequence, each individual possesses a unique repertoire of linguistic resources that can be strategically used according to the context and the situation: the shared goal of both translanguaging and plurilingualism is to give prominence to the dynamic practices of multilinguals and to win against the still embedded idea that languages are discrete systems. The two theories seem to connect the most in the pedagogic field, for they both claim that the two approaches should become part of the daily school routine to make language practices of multilingual speakers visible and valued: "Both defend that promoting pupils' hybrid languaging

practices can enhance knowledge acquisition and students' confidence as it enables them to interact in fluent ways, develop metacognitive aspects, manage tasks, mediate understandings and co-construct meaning" (García & Lin, 2014, as cited in Vallejo & Dooly, 2020, p. 9).

Another aspect that both plurilingualism and translanguaging unfortunately share is the difficulty to completely upturn the approach to languages that dominates in European schools and in schools all over the world: the monolingual tradition is difficult to eradicate, especially when it responds to nationalist ideologies. Perhaps a combined work of the two approaches that goes beyond the seemingly insurmountable differences between them could represent a stronger solution that, if properly spread, could convince teachers (and consequently national governments) that a new plurilingual education where students are free to translanguage and to express their linguistic resources freely is viable and represents a fair means to promote linguistic justice. It is also true that, as one of the teachers that participated in the interview clarified, teachers need practical solutions, examples of activities to carry out with their pupils, and most importantly they need proof that these approaches can effectively be applied to their classes and can bring benefits to their students. This is why the next section will be dedicated to the presentation of the CUNY-NYSIEB, the translanguaging project founded by García and other scholars to support emergent bilinguals in the state of New York, United States.

3.2 The American model: CUNY-NYSIEB

The success of translanguaging pedagogy is deeply influenced by the three abovementioned elements (*stance* of the teacher, *design* of activities, ideological and operational *shifts*), but it is clear that it cannot all be on the shoulders of the teacher. How can they adopt a transformative stance if they have never heard of plurilingualism, promotion of language diversity, translanguaging, and related topics? How can they promote substantial shifts in their working environment if they do not possess the knowledge nor the strategies to plan and design specific translanguaging activities? To solve this problem, a group of researchers (initially led by Dr. Ricardo Otheguy, Dr. Ofelia García, and Dr. Kate Menken) gave life to one of the first American projects dedicated "to assist educators in developing programming and instruction for emergent bilinguals that recognizes and builds on multilingual students' full linguistic repertoires" (Seltzer et al., 2020, p. 26). The subchapter presents in detail the birth and development of this project, called CUNY-NYSIEB.

3.2.1 Latinx population in the United States and the birth of the Cuny-Nysieb project

Cuny-Nysieb is an acronym that stands for "City University of New York – New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals" and it refers to a project whose main aim is to ameliorate the bilingual education of students through the use of translanguaging pedagogy. The initiatives related to this project are based in New York State, since the project was born thanks to the collaboration of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (Rislus) and the Ph.D. Program in Urban Education of the New York State Education Department. The acronym makes a specific reference to the target audience of this project, i.e. emergent bilinguals. But who are they? What features characterise them? What are their needs in the bilingual education context?

The majority of bilingual speakers in the United States belongs to the Latinx population, people who moved from Latin America to the Usa or who were born in a Latino family, whose linguistic repertoire includes both English and Spanish. What the Cuny-Nysieb project tries to do is to provide this community with an "educational equity" and to work "to counteract the subtractive schooling experienced by many bilingual Latinx learners across the state" (Seltzer & García, 2019, p. 3). On a total of approximately 332 million people living in the Us, individuals with a Hispanic origin represent 18.5% (United States Census Bureau); although they might come from different countries, what binds them together is Spanish language, which is often used in pair with English: in 2015, 57% of the Latinx population showed a very high proficiency in English, thus demonstrating to be functionally bilingual (Seltzer & García, 2019). Unfortunately, when it comes to education "the bilingualism of language minority students is rarely considered an asset, and thus, schools often see education through English-only lenses, insisting in measuring academic success only through English monolingualism" (García & Sánchez, 2015, p. 81). To give a practical example, in New York State the majority of bilingual education programs created for "English language learners" make use of the minority language (Spanish in most cases) only as a scaffold, which is progressively abandoned once children have reached a sufficiently high proficiency in English (Seltzer & García, 2019). Being one of the cities with the largest Latinx population in the United States, and with almost half students of Hispanic origins, the city and state of New York has put a great effort into the development of bilingual education programs since the 60s, but with very poor results: only 34.3% of those considered "English language learners" managed to graduate in 2012 after four years of high school, compared to the 74% rate in the whole state. It was exactly because of the failing bilingual educational policies that the Cuny-Nysieb project was born in 2011. The first schools who were included in the project were labelled as "failing" by the New York State Education Department because of the poor educational accomplishments of their students,

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among which a great percentage were considered as "English language learners" (García & Sánchez, 2015). The co-principal investigators Dr. Ricardo Otheguy, Dr. Ofelia García, and Dr. Kate Menken started this project by introducing an important change related to the way the target population was defined, a change which reflects the mission and the core principles of the CUNY-NYSIEB:

> Students who speak languages other than English and who are learning English at school are commonly referred to as "English Language Learners." We prefer the terms "emergent bilinguals" and "multilingual learners" because they acknowledge the ways these students draw on rich home language practices as they learn. We believe the education of these students must go beyond simply English language learning, to incorporate a challenging curriculum in the content areas taught through their home languages and English, which also meets their social and emotional needs (CUNY-NYSIEB website).

Such change implies that these students are not to be considered as lacking linguistic features and skills that put them in a disadvantaged position anymore: the concept of emergent bilinguals is linked to the precious possibility that these children have, i.e. to amplify their linguistic repertoire if properly helped and sustained. By changing perspective, it is easy to see that emergent bilinguals are not limited in the English language because they do not know it, they are limited *by* it because it is the only language through which they are usually required to perform and do not have the chance to express themselves in other languages. If these children are considered emergent bilinguals, learning English will not be seen as the only way through which they can be assessed in schools, but it will be seen as the addition of new, enriching linguistic features to their unique unitary repertoire (García & Sánchez, 2015). Thanks to projects like the CUNY-NYSIEB, bilinguals are not seen anymore as cripples who need a prosthesis to be like the others (they need to learn English), but as able-bodied people who have an edge on the others and can train to run even faster.

3.2.2 Vision, core principles, resources

The definition of students as emergent bilinguals is the first fundamental element that constitutes the vision statement of the CUNY-NYSIEB project, which comprises other three important tenets:

a) *emergence*: it connects directly to the target population of this project, i.e. students whose bilingualism is starting to grow, like a developing embryo. The emergence of their

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bilingualism determines a development which "is not linear, static, or able to reach an ultimate end-point of completion" (García & Sánchez, 2015, p. 83), but rather continuous, something that is deeply connected to the students' relationships with texts, the learning environment, other people. According to this view, a language is never attained by a speaker: it is used and performed. It is clear that the emergence of bilingualism proves to be fruitful once students are provided with the right opportunities and affordances to build new knowledge and understanding;

b) *dynamic bilingualism*: the fact that emergent bilingualism is something that keeps moving and evolving directly connects to the idea that "bilingualism is *dynamic*, and not simply additive" (CUNY-NYSIEB website), meaning that a bilingual person is not the sum of two monolinguals. As it was previously explained, bilingual speakers make use of their full unitary linguistic repertoire to make sense of the world and to construct meaning (in other words, they translanguage). And according to this dynamic bilingualism view, "new language practices only emerge in interrelationship with old language practices. Together they constitute a flexible linguistic repertoire that bilingual students use in order to meet their communicative and academic needs" (CUNY-NYSIEB website). This means that educators need to give emergent bilinguals the chance to use their entire linguistic repertoire (in the case of Latinx students, Spanish) if they want them to develop proficiency in the English language;

c) *dynamic development*: dynamism is the keyword that links all these elements. This dynamic vision of bilingualism contrasts with the rigid distinction between the notions of "native language", "first language", "second language", which are not accepted by the CUNY-NYSIEB project. The focus is on language practices in general, which should be all given the chance to be used in the educational context: this is why the project helps schools to "support a multilingual context that recognizes the language and cultural practices of bilingual children as an important part of the school's learning community" (CUNY-NYSIEB website).

It is on the basis of these three elements that the CUNY-NYSIEB project develops, intending to introduce schools to these concepts and helping them revolutionise the way bilinguals and emergent bilinguals are educated. Between 2011 and 2016, coordinators of this project intensively worked in schools across New York State, even if most of them were located in New York City. Their main job was to individuate the school's need and consequently set the main goal to reach, along with developing "a cohesive language policy" and making "changes to existing curriculum and instruction so that it better leveraged students' bilingualism through the use of translanguaging

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strategies" (Seltzer et al., 2020, p. 27). In addition, their interventions also consisted in hosting seminars for principals, school personnel and teachers to educate them about practices and activities that follow the translanguaging pedagogy and that embrace the vision of dynamic bilingualism as a powerful resource. During these seminars, two non-negotiable principles are presented to participants, which need to be respected throughout the entire duration of the collaborative project:

a) *support of a multilingual ecology for the whole school:* the school that commits to this project is willing to change its pedagogical practices as well as its outlook. This means to make all languages visible in every space and context (signs, texts, books in the library, conversations): "the entire range of language practices of all children and families are evident in the school's textual landscape, as well as in the interactions of all members of the school community" (CUNY-NYSIEB website). Visibility also needs to be given to language practices of all students, not only emergent bilinguals': "the students' language practices and cultural understandings are used in all classrooms as resources for deeper thinking, clearer imagining, greater learning, and academic languaging" (CUNY-NYSIEB website);

b) *bilingualism as a resource in education*: it does not matter the structure of the program, it does not matter the role of the educators, the whole school has got to recognise, nurture and develop the language practices of emergent bilinguals, which need to be considered as a "crucial instructional tool" (CUNY-NYSIEB website).

From 2016, the work of the CUNY-NYSIEB focused on the production of resources that provide school principals, educators and teachers with useful information and practical solutions to support emergent bilingual learners. In particular, the website proposes a series of materials grouped according to the purpose they serve:

a) *Establishing Your School's Emergent Bilingual Leadership Team*: these resources help the school teachers and educators to "establish their teams, and to begin setting goals to enhance their programs, curriculum, instruction, and environment";

b) *Nurturing a Multilingual Ecology*: how can the school change in order to give visibility to the set of language practices of all the students? These materials provide teachers and educators with the instruments to learn about the languages and cultures of all children, and stimulate them to reflect on how all language practices "might be integrated into the school environment to create a truly multilingual ecology";

c) *Culturally Relevant Books and Resources*: the list includes literature for students of all grades and of different origins (not only Latinx). These texts serve the double purpose of bringing linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom and helping emergent bilinguals to "draw upon their background knowledge to comprehend their reading";

d) *Resources for Work with Particular Subgroups*: these subgroups include Emergent

Bilinguals with Individualized Education Plans, Newcomer Emergent Bilinguals, Emergent

Bilinguals labelled Long-Term English Language Learners, Emergent Bilinguals labelled

Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education, Young Emergent Bilinguals. The

list increases if we also consider the resources from the State;

e) *Fostering Bilingual Reading and Writing Identities*: how can teachers help students develop

their identities as bilingual readers and writers? The suggested activities are planned for

children of all ages, included those who are still attending kindergartens, who can resort to

playtime and stories;

f) *Translanguaging Guides*: being the theory upon which the entire project is built, the website

dedicates translanguagin an entire section, where it is possible to find a series of manuals

and guides developed by the CUNY-NYSIEB that offer plenty of strategies and activities to

adopt with emergent bilinguals (CUNY-NYSIEB website).

3.2.3 The Translanguaging Unit Design and the Translanguaging Design Instructional Cycle

We have previously seen that in order to effectively implement a translanguaging pedagogy in the classroom, three essential elements are needed. Once the teacher has become aware that all the linguistic repertoires of the students have to be involved and properly valued and has adopted an adequate *stance*, they can proceed and *design* new didactical plans that can promote ideological *shifts* in the school. The element of design is of particular importance because it represents the key to practically transforming the traditional teaching into a new plan that answers to the needs and abilities of bilingual students:

Translanguaging design in instruction refers to how we strategically plan instruction to work

within the translanguaging corriente.[…] The design is flexible; it intentionally connects

bilingual students' home and community language practices and identities to the language

practice and identities deemed appropriate for school settings, while working to address social

justice (García et al., 2017, p. 61).

The feature of flexibility is essential since it reproduces the intrinsic dynamism of the linguistic repertoire of the students: not only instruction must be designed carefully, it also has to adapt to the unique features of the students. In order to help teachers and educators with the designing process, the team of scholars and researchers of the CUNY-NYSIEB project propose a well-structured and

effective procedure to follow, which is constituted by two main components: the *Translanguaging Unit Design* and the *Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle*.

The Translanguaging Unit Design (or Plan) can be considered as a sort of preliminary stage before starting with the organisation of the activities to carry out with the students, and it consists of a series of elements that bring together the traditional lesson planning with features that are specific to the translanguaging pedagogy. It is made up of six main components (García et al., 2017):

a) *essential questions*: these are to be asked to students at the beginning of the lesson. They aim to lead students deep into the topic by stimulating reflection and critical thinking, and if it is possible to help them create connections between the content and their personal experiences;

b) *content standards*: they specify what students are going to learn. It is important to remember that translanguaging pedagogy does not imply a deviation from content standards established by national governments. On the contrary, content standards are kept as a guideline, but they are expanded in order to overcome monolingual instruction and they are localised to help create meaningful links with students' language practices: "Translanguaging classrooms reimagine the use of standards. Rather than start with standards themselves, we start with students' language practices. Teachers help bilingual students develop the language practices demanded by the standards using the full features of their linguistic repertoires" (García et al., 2017, p. 66);

c) *content and language objectives*: if content objectives remain the same for almost all students, a distinction needs to be made about language objectives, which are divided into two main categories in order to respect the dynamism of translanguaging. On the one hand we have *general linguistic performance objectives*: these are specifically designed to motivate students to use their entire linguistic repertoires when engaging with content, expressing their thoughts and making inferences. On the other hand we have *language-specific performance objectives*, which are related to the use of the national language (in this case, English) paying attention to standard grammar, usage, and vocabulary. When planning language performance objectives, it is fundamental to always adapt them to single students, taking into account their linguistic repertoires and their performances in the national language;

d) *translanguaging objectives*: they are specific to translanguaging pedagogy, and they are "planned ways of leveraging bilingualism and ways of knowing so that students can better access both content and language practices valued in school" (García et al., 2017, p. 69). These goals are fundamental because they give value to the entire linguistic repertoire of the

students and make them understand that all their linguistic features are valuable and useful while learning new content;

e) *culminating project and assessments*: the project represents the product that students will create throughout the whole translanguaging unit. Most of the time this project is action-oriented since it requires students to actively use their linguistic repertoire to carry out activities and to expand their knowledge in a new and creative way. Teacher assessment reflects the structure of the unit of instruction and it focuses on "content understanding, intellectual curiosity, and language practices, with attention to whether students can perform tasks independently or with assistance, using all the features of their linguistic repertoires […] as well as language-specific features" (García et al., 2017, p. 70). Students are also required to assess themselves by providing feedback on what they think they learned and how their linguistic repertoire developed;

f) *texts*: materials used during the unit are fundamental. The word "texts" refers to the set of multilingual and multimodal resources that are used to implement content and language learning. In this sense, they have to be meaningful to translanguaging pedagogy, i.e. to be diverse in language.

Once the Translanguaging Unit Design is filled out, it is possible to move on to the detailed planning of activities, which can be done through the use of the Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle. It is a model on which teachers can rely to bring the translanguaging corriente of their students to the surface, letting them engage with bilingual language practices. The cycle is organised into five stages (García et al., 2017):

a) *explorar*: the first step students need to take is to explore the new topic. The questions they ask and the answers they get are particularly useful to establish a first contact between the new theme and their personal experience, thus starting to construct meaningful knowledge. The exploration stage in the translanguaging cycle differs from other introductory discussions because it allows students to face the topic from a multimodal and multilingual perspective: the initial understanding of the issue can be done using all the linguistic repertoires that are present in the classroom and through different means;

b) *evaluar*: once students are introduced to the new topic, they are required to critically analyse it by expressing their opinions and asking questions. It is not sufficient to only absorb new information, students need to engage with the topic and assess it through the use of their linguistic repertoires. The focus can be either on content or linguistic aspects: what is important is that students critically understand from what point they are starting to face the new topic to later transform it and adapt it to translanguaging practices;

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c) *imaginar*: this is the stage that connects learning with the creation of a product. Students learned something new in the previous stages, and now they have to use their knowledge to "stimulate new thinking and new ways of using language to learn" (García et al., 2017, p. 73). Students usually work in groups, and by using their linguistic repertoires and through the use of strategies such as brainstorming, drafting, formulation of hypotheses, they are asked to take a step further and start to imagine how they could transform what they learned into a final product that reflects their ways of learning and their ways of expressing;

d) *presentar*: the fourth stage of the cycle is the one in which students work together to provide a presentation of the product they created, always bearing in mind to pay attention to the linguistic choices they make. The audience can vary: it can be teachers and peers, their families. What is important is that students support each other in the presentation and make use of their entire linguistic repertoire to add depth to the presentation: in this way, they can train to give public speeches and at the same time adapt their linguistic performance to the public. Based on their performances, the teacher can assess the dynamic evolution of students' linguistic repertoires;

e) *mplementar*: in the last stage, students have to demonstrate what they learned and what they can do through the use of their full linguistic repertoire. They are encouraged to use their new knowledge to carry out activities in the real world, to meaningfully engage with other people, to show that what they created and learned can really be useful. The implementation stage can also be carried out by sharing their products with other members of the school community.

Figure 10

Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle

Explorar
Exploration of the context

Implementar
Implementation of the product

Evaluar
Critical analysis of the topic

Presentar
Plurilingual presentation of the product

Imaginar
Creation of a product
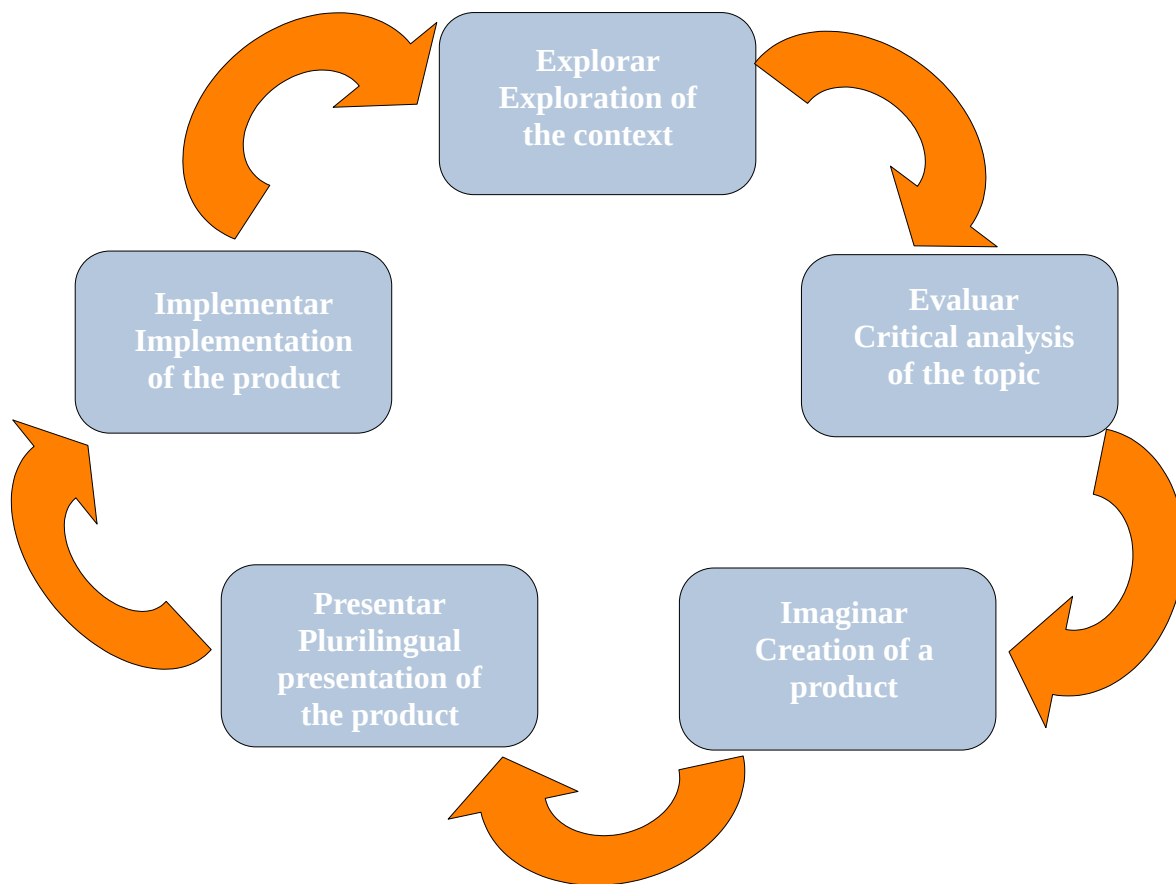
Note: Graphic illustration of the Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle.

The activities that can be carried out throughout these stages are manifold, and some examples will be presented in Chapter 3.4. Before doing that, we will try to answer the following question: can translanguagy pedagogy be implemented in other contexts? In other words, could translanguaging activities represent a valid solution to introduce the themes of plurilingualism and promotion of language diversity in Italian classrooms? The next subchapter will analyse this issue, focusing the attention on a specific Italian project that strives to reach language equality and valorisation through translanguaging.

3.3 Translanguaging in Italy and the project L'AltRoparlante

The extracts of the interviews presented in chapter 2.3 hinted that the interviewees were not used to discuss the topics of plurilingualism, language diversity and valorisation of the individual's unique linguistic repertoire. Teachers possess very basic notions about these themes or do not know them at all, and the few occasions during which there are cultural and linguistic comparisons and reflections in the class are casual, sporadic: they are not planned activities, and as such they remain confined to the "funny and relaxing activity" sphere. But is there the possibility to change things? Is there a project that is equivalent to the CUNY-NYSIEB that adapts to the Italian context and brings a plurilingual revolution in Italian schools? The following subchapter will introduce one of the few Italian projects that took inspiration from the American model and makes use of the translanguaging pedagogy, called L'AltRoparlante.

3.3.1 Translanguaging in Europe and Italy: main differences with the American context

So far, the CUNY-NYSIEB project represents the most noticeable case of translanguaging research and didactic application, but this does not mean that this new approach remains confined to the American continent: not only because the concept was born in Wales, but also because it is possible to find some (direct or indirect) references to it in important European documents that determined an opening to the concept of plurilingualism. Translanguaging is officially presented as one of the terms/actions that can be encompassed by the broader term of plurilingualism in the *CEFR Companion Volume* (2018 ed.): here it is defined as "an action undertaken by plurilingual persons, where more than one language may be involved" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 31), and it is put in relationship with the mediation ability that, together with others, constitute one of the fundamental elements of the plurilingual and pluricultural competence. But it is in the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning* that translanguaging pedagogy is legitimised, even if in an indirect way (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a; Martini & Carbonara, 2019). The document improves the previous 2006 version by introducing some important changes: in particular, the term *Communication in the Mother Tongue* is substituted with the term *Literacy competence*, while the term *Communication in Foreign Languages* is replaced by the new term *Multilingual competence*. As far as the former is concerned, the Recommendation underlines the importance of acquiring oral and written abilities to express oneself and communicate "in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language in a country or region" (Council of European Union, 2018, p. 8). This particular clarification implies that the mother tongue

of an individual does not always coincide with the language of schooling or the national language, nevertheless, it is as valuable (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a). Such statement deconstructs the traditional linguistic hierarchy by declaring that each European citizen has to develop a literacy competence in each of the languages comprised in their plurilingual repertoire, something for which translanguaging pedagogy was explicitly developed (Martini & Carbonara, 2019). This concept is reiterated through the definition of Multilingual Competence, which "can include maintaining and further developing mother tongue competences, as well as the acquisition of a country's official language(s)" (Council of European Union, 2018, p. 8). The connection with translanguaging can be spotted both in the mentioning of the mediation ability presented in the CEFR, and in the related positive attitude that leads the individual to appreciate "cultural diversity, […] respect for each person's individual linguistic profile, including both respect for the mother tongue of persons belonging to minorities and/or with a migrant background and appreciation for a country's official language(s) as a common framework for interaction" (p. 8).

Translanguaging is slowly starting to appear in several pedagogical projects all over Europe, but still, it remains quite unknown and not widespread, especially in Italian schools (Cognigni, 2020). This is not only due to the fact that this approach is relatively new, but also because there are some important elements that differentiate the Italian school environment from the New York City context and that are connected to the difficulty to apply the CUNY-NYSIEB model to our national environment without modifying it.

An important difference can be individuated in the cultural and linguistic background of students (Cognigni, 2020). As we previously saw, the CUNY-NYSIEB project mainly works with emergent bilinguals of Latinx origins, whose family language is Spanish. This is not the case in Italy, where students without Italian citizenship have different migratory backgrounds:

Figure 11

Students without Italian citizenship: country of origin

A.S. 2019/2020		
Paesi	v.a.	per 100 alunni stranieri
Romania	156.718	17,9
Albania	118.778	13,5
Marocco	108.454	12,3
Cina	55.993	6,4
India	29.572	3,4
Egitto	28.963	3,3
Moldavia	26.071	2,9
Filippine	26.008	3,0
Pakistan	22.483	2,6
Bangladesh	20.749	2,4
Sub totale	*593.789*	*67,7*
Altri paesi	283.012	32,3
Totale	876.801	100,0

Note: These are the first ten countries in terms of numbers, the others are grouped under the category "Altri paesi". The first column represents the absolute value, while the second column represents the percentages. The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ufficio Statistica e studi (2021). Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. A.S. 2019/2020. Available at

https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Alunni+con+cittadinanza+non+italiana+2019-2020.pdf/f764ef1c-f5d1-6832-3883-7ebd8e22f7f0?version=1.1&t=1633004501156

The table shows that, unlike the New York City context, there is not a consistent group of students with the same migratory background: as a consequence, the family languages of these students are manifold and therefore impede the organisation of a bilingual development program, since the context is clearly multilingual. It is also important to add that even the distribution of these students along the Italian peninsula is not homogeneous:

Figure 12

Students without Italian citizenship: distribution per region

Regioni	Romania	Albania	Marocco	Cina	India	Egitto	Moldavia	Filippine	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Altri Paesi	Totale
Piemonte	28,0	14,1	18,5	4,7	1,2	2,5	1,4	2,9	0,9	0,6	25,1	100,0
Valle D'Aosta	25,0	13,9	26,6	5,2	1,1	3,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,2	23,8	100,0
Lombardia	11,6	11,0	12,0	5,5	4,9	2,0	4,5	9,4	4,0	1,5	33,6	100,0
Trentino A.A.	11,5	16,6	11,2	2,7	2,6	3,5	0,4	0,4	9,0	1,8	40,3	100,0
Veneto	20,8	9,3	12,9	8,1	3,5	7,3	1,4	0,4	1,0	3,7	31,5	100,0
Friuli V.G.	19,8	13,1	6,3	3,9	2,7	2,1	0,7	0,3	1,0	5,6	44,5	100,0
Liguria	9,5	23,3	13,2	3,9	1,2	1,6	0,9	1,4	0,6	2,4	41,9	100,0
E. Romagna	12,2	15,0	16,4	5,9	3,8	5,3	2,5	1,3	4,9	1,8	30,9	100,0
Toscana	13,9	23,5	10,0	17,2	1,8	1,3	3,1	0,6	1,7	1,6	25,3	100,0
Umbria	19,4	22,1	16,2	2,8	1,7	2,8	2,0	0,4	0,6	0,6	31,4	100,0
Marche	12,0	18,0	11,9	7,1	3,6	3,4	1,2	0,4	4,1	3,6	34,7	100,0
Lazio	33,4	6,4	3,3	4,1	4,4	3,1	6,7	2,8	1,0	5,6	29,1	100,0
Abruzzo	22,1	22,6	14,3	5,2	1,1	0,8	0,7	0,4	1,0	0,9	30,9	100,0
Molise	22,8	10,8	19,9	1,9	4,4	0,9	0,2	1,0	1,9	0,4	35,7	100,0
Campania	15,4	7,8	11,8	5,6	3,5	0,9	1,3	0,3	1,9	3,1	48,5	100,0
Puglia	19,1	29,5	10,5	4,9	2,9	0,4	1,5	0,3	1,2	1,0	28,6	100,0
Basilicata	34,1	22,9	12,2	3,6	3,7	0,4	0,0	0,6	0,7	0,4	21,3	100,0
Calabria	28,0	5,6	23,2	3,0	5,6	0,6	2,5	0,5	1,1	0,9	29,1	100,0
Sicilia	23,9	12,1	11,1	4,0	0,8	0,1	2,8	0,4	0,6	4,4	39,9	100,0
Sardegna	18,7	3,0	15,5	10,3	1,0	0,7	6,3	0,3	1,6	2,0	40,7	100,0
Italia	17,9	13,5	12,4	6,4	3,4	3,0	3,0	3,3	2,6	2,4	32,3	100,0

Note: The percentages make reference to the previous table. The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Ministero dell'Istruzione – Ufficio Statistica e studi (2021). Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. A.S. 2019/2020. Available at https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Alunni+con+cittadinanza+non+italiana+2019-2020.pdf/f764ef1c-f5d1-6832-3883-7ebd8e22f7f0?version=1.1&t=1633004501156

The uneven distribution of students of different origins makes it quite challenging to organise a translanguaging didactic that can be applied nationwide, and the multiplicity of family languages in the classroom makes it difficult to involve all of them as means of learning and teaching (Cognigni, 2020).

Another important factor that cannot be taken for granted is the ability of students to read and write in their family language, two skills that students in Italy with migratory background often lack, especially those who were born in Italy: the knowledge of the family language is often related to the oral level (Cognigni, 2020).

Despite the great heterogeneity of languages in Italian classrooms and the presence of students who possess different linguistic skills at various levels in different languages, it is still possible to implement a translanguaging pedagogy, as the project that will be presented in the next sections

demonstrates: what is necessary is to transform and adapt the American model to the characteristics and necessities of the Italian context, and specifically speaking of the single regions and provinces.

3.3.2 The Italian model: L'AltRoparlante

Even if translanguaging theory is still not very well known in Italy, a few projects[11] were developed throughout the last ten years to experiment with this pedagogical approach in Italian schools, especially in areas where students with the same migratory background are present. The most relevant project that will be here presented is *L'AltRoparlante*, that works in some primary and middle schools in Northern and Central Italy since 2016 and introduces students and teachers to translanguaging pedagogy and related activities. The project is relatively young, therefore the schools who have adhered to the project are only a few, but the number of students and teachers involved is slowly growing throughout the years: the schools that are currently participating in the project are IC "Martiri della Benedicta" in Serravalle Scrivia (AL), Primary school "Collodi" in Stabbia (FI), Primary school "Guasti" in Prato (PO), IC "G. Bertolotti" in Gavardo (BS), IC "R. Gasparini" in Novi (MO).

The project was created thanks to the collaboration of the Centro Linguistico dell'Università per Stranieri di Siena and the Centro Bilinguismo Conta – Nuovi Cittadini. The scholars who are responsible for the promotion of the project (Bagna, Carbonara, Scibetta) define it as a transformative action research, where teachers and researchers collaborate together, sharing their knowledge and competences to promote and spread translanguaging pedagogy and to give value to all the languages that are present in the classroom. *AltRoparlante* is a made-up term that unites two existing words and their related concepts:

a) *altoparlante*: it stands for "loudspeaker" and it is connected to the idea of speaking out loud;

b) *altro*: the Other, here intended as something close to us and our life.

Mixed together, these words convey the idea of giving the "other languages" the possibility to be expressed out loud: through this project, all the languages that belong to the collective plurilingual repertoire (family languages, but also minority languages and local dialects) are used and valued during classes. This is the first and most important stated goal of L'AltRoparlante, together with the following (Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website):

a) to verify what type of impact translanguaging activities have on teachers, students, and parents;

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11 Namely the LI.LO project (Lingua Italiana, Lingua d'Origine), University of Genova, and the case study conducted by Coppola and Moretti (2018). For a general introduction to these projects, see Cognigni (2020).

b) to encourage the development of multilingual literacy skills and strategies to facilitate the empowerment process of family languages, and at the same time to reduce episodes of marginalisation;

c) to promote language awareness competences and meta-linguistic reflection, and to support the creation of a global citizenship identity.

It is clearly stated in L'AltRoparlante website that the whole project takes inspiration from the concept of translanguaging pedagogy developed by García and other American scholars, but at the same time it represents a completely new and authentic product that adapts translanguaging to the Italian panorama. By making reference to the documents and recommendations of the CoE and the European Centre for Modern Languages and the national documents that promote plurilingualism, the project is planned as a path organised in four different phases that have the main goals of transforming the classes into multilingual spaces and at the same time spreading the translanguaging pedagogy and the results of the collaborations with schools through education programs and academic research.

As a first step, L'AltRoparlante organises preliminary meetings with teachers of schools who want to start a collaboration, during which educators are introduced to the main themes that regard translanguaging pedagogy: bilingualism and cognitive development, instruments for ethnolinguistic collection of data, reshaping the school curriculum by adopting a democratic and plurilingual vision, translanguaging activities. Teachers are given a general overview of the topic so that they can start the educational path with a clear vision of what translanguaging is and what needs to be done in order to promote a real change in their classes:

Figure 13

L'AltRoparlante: what is/is not translanguaging

Translanguaging Is Not	Translanguaging Is
• A workshop • A subject • A sporadic/episodic experience • Interculture • Italian L2	• A transversal approach • A means to obtain democratic education • A way to support linguistic rights • A means to give value to bilingualism • A way to disrupt current linguistic and cultural hierarchies

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What the project aims to do is not only to give space to the family languages of newcomers or children with a migratory background, but also to integrate translanguaging activities into school curricula. L'AltRoparlante researchers cooperate with schools in order to turn translanguaging into the norm, so that once a week every teacher that adheres to the project commits to transforming an Uᴅᴀ, or a specific activity, adopting a plurilingual lens (Zanzottera et al., 2021). Teachers are not left alone to do this: after the initial education, the organisers of the project propose refresher meetings (every two weeks or every month) during which teachers have the chance to recount what they did with their pupils and receive further suggestions from researchers (Unistrasi Centro Cᴌᴜss website).

Before starting with the planning of the activities, teachers and researchers need to proceed with an ethnolinguistic survey: they need to know how many and which languages should be involved, and in order to do so they have to ask students or their parents. This is an essential phase: as the website points out, teachers are often not aware of the importance that the family language has for each child with a migratory background. But teachers are not to blame for this: generally speaking, children who were born in Italy but whose parents come from a foreign country tend to not share their plurilingual repertoire with their mates, maybe because they are ashamed of it or because they fear to be punished. Therefore, in order to bring every language and dialect to the surface and to give value to each of them, teachers and researchers use specific instruments (questionnaires, focus groups, recreational activities) to collect information and useful data about their students. On the basis of the data collected, teachers and researchers can start planning the activities to carry out with the students. It is important to point out that the aim of L'AltRoparlante is not to propose a set of translanguaging activities to be taken as a model that is valid for all classes of all schools; on the contrary, it is quite difficult to design a universal pedagogical plan since every group of students has its own peculiarities and unique linguistic and cultural features that must always be considered. This is why teachers and researchers cooperate to create a personalised series of activities that perfectly suit a specific group of children. At the beginning, every teacher is paired up with a researcher that helps them with the design, offers suggestions, and takes part in the activities, sometimes as an external observer, sometimes helping the teacher to coordinate children. (Unistrasi Centro Cᴌᴜss website). The final aim is to give the teacher the responsibility of implementing the activities on

their own, while the researcher only supports the teacher during the planning sessions (for examples of translanguaging activities, see Chapter 3.4).

But the work of L'AltRoparlante does not stop here. The scholars involved in the project use the data collected during the activities with the various schools and share them with their colleagues through publications, seminars and national/international conferences, in order to bring advancement in their scientific field[12].

3.3.3 Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento (UDLA) and possible difficulties

One of the questions that L'AltRoparlante tried to answer is the following: is it possible to use the CUNY-NYSIEB procedure (Translanguaging Unit Design and Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle) and adapt it to the Italian context to carry out translanguaging activities in schools? In what way could this model be transformed and rearranged to suit the linguistic and cultural features of Italian students? L'AltRoparlante proposes a very similar structure, which is organised on two distinct levels: the *Quadro generale dell'Unità* (corresponding to the Translanguaging Unit Design) and the *Fasi di Sviluppo* (the alternative to the Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle), the latter being planned according to the operating model called *Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento* (UDLA).

The preliminary stage to go through before the actual implementation of the activities is the so-called Quadro generale dell'Unità, thanks to which teachers and researchers can start to plan their work. The elements the frame is made up of are similar to the American model, but with some additions and slight variations that are determined by the different context:

a) *new European key competences and the learning goals of the Indicazioni Nazionali*:
   L'AltRoparlante operates in Italy and within a wider European frame, therefore it needs to take into account the competences and the learning goals that national and European documents have settled. On a structural level, this element can be compared to the *Content standards* and the *Content and language objectives* of the CUNY-NYSIEB;

b) *plurilingual competences*: as we saw, Italian classes are dominated by multilingualism rather than bilingualism. As a consequence, it is more appropriate to substitute the original *Translanguaging objectives* with competences that refer to plurilingualism, according to the FREPA/CARAP recommendations;

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12 For further information about the publications of L'AltRoparlante, visit the webpage "Ricerca" of the Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website. Available at https://cluss.unistrasi.it/1/116/159/Ricerca.htm

c) *assessment*: like the American model, it is a performance-based assessment that consists in evaluating the linguistic strategies used by the students and giving the children the possibility to self-evaluate;

d) *instruments and materials*: comparable to the *Text* element;

e) *methodologies*;

f) *human resources* (Martini & Carbonara, 2019).

Once the teacher and the researcher have established these parameters, they can proceed with the organisation of the activities to carry out with the students during the class. L'AltRoparlante suggests to adopt a specific operational model, called *Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento* (UDLA), which comprises different *Fasi di Sviluppo* that correspond to a specific task to accomplish:

Figure 14

UdLA: Fasi di Sviluppo

INSEGNANTI	STUDENTI
Motivazione	Rscaldiamoci!
Globalità	Incontriamo il testo!
Analisi	Cerchiamo e ricerchiamo!
Sintesi	Facciamo a modo nostro!
Riflessione	Scopriamo la regola(rità)!
Rinforzo	Alleniamoci!
Verifica e valutazione	So fare!
Feedback	Che cosa ho imparato? Come mi sono sentito?

Note: The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Pona, A., Cencetti, S., Troiano, G. (2018). *Fare grammatica valenziale nella scuola delle competenze*. Napoli: Tecnodid, as cited in Carbonara, V. Martini, S. (2019). Un modello operativo per l'approccio pedagogico del translanguaging? Esempi di applicazione in un'Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento (UDLA). *Lend. Lingua e nuova didattica, 4*, 18-36.

Some of these Fasi di Sviluppo resemble the stages of the CUNY-NYSIEB Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle, but the most important thing to notice is that the two models perfectly

coincide when it comes to work modality. L'AltRoparlate decides to organise the implementation of the activities based on the cooperation of classmates, replicating the modality of the American model; in this case, the Italian project operates according to a specific methodology called *Apprendimento Linguistico-Cooperativo* (ALC), where each student is assigned a specific role inside their work team and can carry out tasks that are cognitively stimulating and within their capability. As we will see in the next subchapter, which will be dedicated to examples of translanguaging activities, both models expose students to a rich input that is analysed by using all the languages that are present in the classroom, and they both lead the students to produce a plurilingual output that can also have an impact outside their classroom (Carbonara & Martini, 2019).

This work scheme is quite different from what we are used to in Italian schools: truth be told, it constitutes a real revolution in our classes where lessons see the predominance of monolingualism. Adhering to this project represents a great step away from our traditions, which are often difficult to leave behind, especially to adults (in this case, teachers). This is why L'AltRoparlante dedicates attention to the doubts of teachers and educators who are about to participate in the project, showing them that developing plurilingualism and giving value to the collective linguistic repertoire does not try to be an alternative to the traditional model of teaching, but rather wants to integrate it and improve it:

a) *what if I cannot participate in the project because no colleague of mine wants to adhere to it?* The single teacher will never be left alone: not only will they receive the support of a researcher, they will also have the possibility to discuss with other teachers from other schools and to share with them materials and suggestions about possible translanguaging activities. The keywords that guide L'AltRoparlante project are research, sharing and peer discussion;

b) *how can I organise plurilingual activities if I do not speak all the languages of my students?* Translanguaging pedagogy does not require the knowledge of all the languages involved (also because it would be quite difficult). The most important task that the teacher has to accomplish is to adopt the right stance (see Chapter 3.1.2) and leave their students the possibility to freely use the languages they know/prefer to complete the activities;

c) *I fear that Italian parents might not agree with this new approach: what can I do?* Parents should be given the chance to get to know this approach, and maybe find out that these translanguaging activities have a transformative power that can even change their point of view;

d) *I do not have enough time and I have to complete the program of each discipline: how can I find enough time to dedicate to translanguaging?* As it was previously explained,

translanguaging is not a workshop nor an additional subject to be studied. Translanguaging is an approach that revolutionises the way of teaching and learning from a methodological point of view. It does not want to change the content of instruction, it simply tries to use all the linguistic resources that are present in the classroom (Zanzottera et al., 2021).

Teachers are given substantial support during both the initial education and the phases of the creation and organisation of the activities. In the next subchapter we are going to see some concrete examples of translanguaging activities (both from L'AltRoparlante and the CUNY-NYSIEB project) that can be used in Italian classrooms.

3.4 Translanguaging activities in Italian classrooms

After being educated about the themes of plurilingualism, language diversity, promotion of the individual's linguistic repertoire, and translanguaging pedagogy, one of the answers that we could expect from a teacher would be: "How can I turn my knowledge into practice? How can I implement translanguaging projects with my group of children? Are there any examples of activities that I can use with pupils or that can even inspire me to create activities on my own?". This last subchapter illustrates a series of exercises and activities taken from both the American and Italian projects that can be put into practice in Italian primary school classes.

3.4.1 The advantages of translanguaging activities for Italian students

The previous chapters of this dissertation focused on the manifold European and national documents and recommendations that deal with plurilingualism and the necessity to turn young European citizens into individuals with a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, who are provided with a sense of respect for language diversity; at the same time, we have seen that it is not always easy to turn written words into concrete actions and that there is a gap between what the documents claim and what is done in European and Italian schools. This was confirmed by the teachers who participated in the interview, who underlined the fact that plurilingualism is still not perceived as an important matter and that teachers are not entirely prepared to face these topics because they lack knowledge and skills. Besides, how could they dedicate enough time to language valorisation if there are no resources available and they need to strictly follow the programs of each discipline? The possible solution presented in this chapter is translanguaging, which could represent a first, concrete step towards plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity:

> Translanguaging does not obviate multilingualism. It liberates it. And it is in schools where it makes a huge difference, pushing the *barreras* of what are said to be two or three languages. Translanguaging recognizes that students come into school with a linguistic potential that keeps them *bajando* into their past and simultaneously *subiendo* not toward a dominant standard language or even two or three standard languages, but toward creative languaging that open up limitless possibilities of knowledge generation (García, 2017b, p. 258).

After presenting the American CUNY-NYSIEB project, we have seen that it is possible to "translate" this pedagogy that was mainly thought for emergent bilinguals in the state of New York and adapt it to the Italian context, where classes are characterised by multilingualism and students have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. L'AltRoparlante project is proof that translanguaging activities can be implemented in Italian classes and can direct teachers and students towards respect for all languages and the valorisation of the collective linguistic repertoire. Perhaps the most difficult step to take is the first one, i.e. to help teachers change their perspective (*stance*) towards these themes (see Chapter 3.1.2): if teachers struggle to realise that their students have linguistic rights and that it is fundamental to give the entire linguistic repertoire of each child the possibility to be used during classes, it would be impossible to properly design translanguaging activities to prompt and ideological shift (Carbonara & Martini, 2019). The initial education offered by L'AltRoparlante contributes to solving this problem by giving teachers and educators the chance to study these topics and to adopt the right stance, even though it would be necessary to introduce academic courses for aspiring teachers that deal with plurilingual and intercultural education (Cognigni, 2020). Once the teachers have understood why it is important to educate children to the world of languages and that it can be done by exploiting the linguistic resources that are already present in the classroom, translanguaging pedagogy can bring with it significant advantages.

According to the American model, translanguaging pedagogy is particularly pertinent for bilingual speakers and emergent bilinguals, but this does not necessarily imply that it cannot be useful for other types of learners. The process of translanguaging regards every speaker, monolinguals included: "all speakers select features from their linguistic repertoire that seem to be most appropriate for the communicative task at hand" (CUNY-NYSIEB, 2021, p. 15), which means that monolingual speakers make use of certain features when they address their teacher, and they use other features when they return home and speak with their parents. Translanguaging belongs to the human capacity of using languages, and this is why translanguaging activities, if properly organised and adapted to the characteristics of the students of every single class, make no distinction between monolinguals, bilinguals and plurilinguals and bring benefits to all of them:

All students would benefit from the translanguaging instructional contexts and strategies […]. For students who speak but one language at home, these translanguaging strategies would "awaken" them to language diversity, and would build the linguistic tolerance the world needs, and the linguistic flexibility that would enable them to learn additional languages throughout their lives. For students who speak languages other than [the national language], at home, these translanguaging strategies would validate their home language practices, even when there is no instruction in their home languages. For those who are developing an additional language like English, those we call emergent bilinguals, these translanguaging strategies may be the only way to teach rigorous academic content, as well as developing language (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 5).

If we think about the Italian context, not only does translanguaging function as a scaffold for newcomers who have limited competence in Italian L2, it is also useful to students with a migratory background who were born in Italy to develop a bilingual competence, avoiding the so-called language attrition (Zanzottera et al., 2021). The decision of embracing translanguaging as a pedagogical bridge means to recognise these children as emergent bilinguals and to give them the chance to fully express their linguistic repertoire and their cultural identity, thus moving away from the monocultural and monolingual conception of school and the urge to bring all students to the same level in the name of homogeneity. Moreover, monolingual Italian children are not excluded from the process: the exposition to the various languages that are present in the classroom is the way through which they can increase their linguistic repertoire and start to develop the plurilingual and pluricultural competence, in addition to the capacity to critically reflect about the functioning of other linguistic systems (metalinguistic knowledge/language awareness, see Chapter 1.1.5) when properly supported by the teacher (Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website).

During the interview, some teachers showed an interest in the proposal of inserting a second foreign language to teach to primary school children, but at the same time they admitted that it would be extremely difficult because languages play a small and almost insignificant role in the primary school curriculum (even English is only studied for a couple hours per week) if compared to the other disciplines. The organisation of translanguaging activities can represent a practical and feasible solution to these problems. Translanguagin pedagogy does not take time away from school subjects because it is not another school subject to study, and it certainly does not slow teachers down: on the contrary, it constitutes an alternative methodology through which teachers and pupils can face school disciplines by exploiting the linguistic resources that each child possesses. Through the creation of a new space inside the classroom and the implementation of specific activities, the

class turns into a rich, plurilingual area where students are exposed to a certain number of languages other than Italian and English that give them the chance to enrich their linguistic repertoire, making it unnecessary to add another foreign language to study as a compulsory subject. As it was previously explained, the teacher does not even need to be a linguistic expert to create and organise these activities, because translanguaging works through the cooperative learning of the groups of children, who are given the occasion to turn into the experts of the situation.

One of the teachers who participated in the interview claimed that the topic of plurilingualism will be regarded with interest and will start to become part of the Italian school only when teachers are "forced" to participate in compulsory training courses that deal with these matters. But how can a law be created if the central government does not know the linguistic and cultural features of Italian classes and what the teachers think is needed to bring a plurilingual revolution? Being a transformative action research, the project of L'AltRoparlante and translanguaging pedagogy itself aim at prompting change starting from the nano level: the main protagonists of this revolution are students and teachers, and it is only them who can determine what is really needed to be helped and sustained in the journey towards plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity (Zanzottera et al., 2021).

These are the features that make the translanguaging approach one of the best candidates to introduce and implement plurilingual didactics in the Italian school, at all levels: being a flexible approach that integrates the school curriculum and that adapts to the features of the group of children, it can be shaped and adjusted to the educational goals of each ISCED level (Cognigni, 2020).

Figure 15

Plurilingual approaches and translanguaging: contexts of implementation
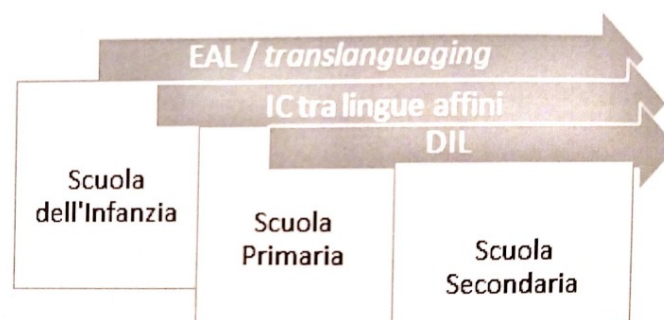
Note: EAL: éveil aux langues; IC: Intercomprehension; DIL: Integrated language teaching. The figure was taken and adapted to fit the page from Cognigni, E. (2020. *Il plurilinguismo come risorsa. Prospettive teoriche, politiche educative e pratiche didattiche*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS.

Translanguaging represents the union of the two features distinguished by Gajo (2014, as cited in Cognigni, 2020) presented in chapter 1.2.2: while it aims at promoting a positive and open-minded approach towards language and culture diversity (teaching plurilingualism), it also exploits the linguistic resources that are present in the classroom to help students develop a plurilingual repertoire (plurilingual teaching).

3.4.2 Examples of translanguaging activities

As it was reported in chapter 2.3.3, Interviewee 52210 manifested the necessity not only to be educated about the themes of plurilingualism and language diversity on a theoretical level, but also to be provided with concrete examples of feasible activities that she could organise and implement with her pupils: theory can be useful to a certain extent, but it results unproductive if it does not turn into practice. The teacher also reflected on the fact that, in order to be beneficial, these activities should take into account the unique features (qualities and difficulties) of the group of pupils, and most importantly they should become part of the school curriculum and should be implemented in an ongoing way, moving away from the episodic dimension.

This last section is dedicated to the presentation of a series of possible translanguaging activities that can be used with pupils of Italian primary schools. The examples are taken from both L'AltRoparlante webpage "Didattica" (Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website) and the CUNY-NYSIEB manual *Translanguaging: A CUNY – NYSIEB guide for educators,* written by Celic and Seltzer (2013). It is important to mention that these are not the only activities that can be planned: because of space and time issues, only a small selection will be here presented. These can be considered as a sort of introduction to the world of translanguaging, but the combinations and the ways in which these activities can be organised are potentially limitless: we need to remember that translanguaging is not a predetermined scheme to strictly follow, but a pedagogy that provides teachers and pupils with the wider theoretical frame and structure, which constitute a provisional track to be enriched with personal proposals and unique activities that are based on the unique characteristics of the pupils (Zanzottera et al., 2021). The title of the manual by Celic and Seltzer perfectly summarises the concept: translanguaging is a guide that points us towards the right direction and gives us the basic instrument to face on our own the incredible journey towards plurilingualism, during which

we are called to make our own choices and choose the best path to follow that leads us to the valorisation of all languages.

The activities will be introduced in subgroups, according to the goal they fulfil.

First steps: the creation of a multilingual ecology

Translanguaging is a journey, and it is fundamental to be adequately prepared before leaving. It is an experience that has the aim of changing our perspective, the way we see languages, the way we teach them, and most importantly the way we value them: for this reason, it is essential to "leave" fully equipped, which means to deeply reflect on the initial conditions of the group of pupils and the features that make each member of the class unique. L'AltRoparlante proposes a series of essential questions that the "commander" (the teacher) should ask themselves before starting to approach translanguaging:

a) *who am I?* The teacher needs to know who they are as an educator that operates inside the school, and therefore they need to give thought to the way they teach, their knowledge and competences, their preferences in terms of approaches, methodologies, activities. All these features will not be abandoned once translanguaging pedagogy is adopted: they will simply be integrated with a new plurilingual vision that will allow the teacher to transform the plurilingualism of their pupils into a useful resource to all the group;

b) *who are my students?* We have seen that translanguaging activities can be beneficial to all types of children, but the preliminary condition is to deeply know the characteristics of the pupils. This is why an ethnolinguistic survey is conducted before starting with the planning of the activities;

c) *what are the features of the students with a foreign origin?* Are they newcomers? Were they born in Italy? Do they master Italian language? Are they emergent bilinguals? What skills do they possess in their family language? All these questions can help the teacher to individuate the possible difficulties to face and, consequently, the possible solutions to adopt;

d) *what resources can I use? Who can I involve?* There are numerous instruments and means that can be used during translanguaging activities: books, the whiteboard, the internet… And there is more: translanguaging pedagogy can always count on the support of individuals that are external to the classroom: parents, other teachers, mediators, researchers, older students;

e) *how old are my students?* Clearly, the age factor determines the types of activities that can be carried out by the students;

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f) *what types of texts could I propose?* The age of pupils also orientates the teacher towards the choice of the proper text. This is valid for each subject since translanguaging is not a discipline itself but belongs to the whole curriculum;

g) *in what language should the text be?* There can be different levels of mixing according to the composition of the group of students;

h) *what types of activities can I build around the text?* The options are almost infinite. The most important thing is that these activities involve all the pupils, especially those with a migratory background, and that they allow to work with languages and develop metalinguistic skills;

i) *what types of outputs can I propose?* Even in this case there are various possibilities;

j) *how should I assess the whole process?* The assessment phase is the most debated one. It could be useful to create an evaluation grid right from the beginning, and the teacher could take inspiration from the FREPA/CARAP or other European documents to value the knowledge and skills aquired[13].

Once these preliminary questions are answered, it is possible to move on to the fundamental first step, which is the transformation of the schoolscape into an inclusive environment where all the languages and dialects that are spoken by the children are made visible (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a). In the case of Italian primary schools, where it is teachers who move from one class to the other, the classroom in which each group of children spend the school days will be the perfect place to be redesigned and revolutionised in a linguistic sense. But how? There are a series of different, feasible activities that children and teachers can do together (sometimes with the help of parents) to start turning the classroom (and even the surrounding places) into a multilingual environment (Celic & Seltzer, 2013):

a) *greetings*: classmates can teach each other the greeting they use in their home language. These could be practised until the whole group is able to use them in the morning when they meet before starting school, and they could even be written on a sheet to be hung on the door of the classroom as a memorandum. Grown-ups could even turn this activity into a workshop where they teach these greetings to the whole school staff, in order to extend the multilingual transformation to the school level;

b) *songs*: they are a very relaxed but effective way to introduce languages that are different than Italian and English. They could be played during break time, during a mourning

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13 For further information about these essential questions, visit the webpage "Didattica" of the Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website. Available at https://cluss.unistrasi.it/1/116/158/Didattica.htm. The file containing the questions is also available at https://cluss.unistrasi.it/public/articoli/158/DomandeEssenziali_DEF.pdf

routine, or even during Music class, and it could be children who suggest which songs could be played;

c) *rules and routines charts*: these charts are quite used in Italian classes, so why not translate them by including all the languages spoken by children? It can be pupils themselves who help with the translation, or the teacher can use Google Translate or even ask for the help of a parent;

d) *labels*: English teachers usually label the objects inside the classroom to help children remember them. The same could be done with all the other languages that the children speak. The association of words of different languages that indicate the same thing could also serve as an exercise of metalinguistic reflection, where children are helped by the teacher to notice the written and oral similarities and differences between languages.

The labelling of physical objects inside the classroom can even evolve to another level, constituting one of the most common translanguaging activities, i.e. the multilingual word wall (*bacheca plurilingue*). Word walls are used almost in every country, and they consist of a list of words that were introduced to pupils (the list could be related to a school subject but also to a general topic). Both L'AltRoparlante and the CUNY-NYSIEB project consider word walls as one of the key activities during a translanguaging project because they represent a very simple solution to create a multilingual environment: by creating these colourful sheets to be hung on walls, children and teachers bring the plurilingualism to the surface. These *bacheche* can serve various functions (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a; Celic & Seltzer, 2013):

a) *free use*: children autonomously insert plurilingual words and messages that do not necessarily have to do with school subjects;

b) *Italian L2 word wall*: newcomers can rely on these word walls for a rapid translation of basic messages, in order to be immediately understood even if they do not master Italian. In this case, the *bacheca* could include words and related images referring to school objects and spaces, sentences that allow them to interact with teachers and classmates;

c) *routine word wall*: the daily routine and the key sentences to use could be translated in all the languages that are present in the classroom;

d) *school subject word wall*: potentially speaking, a word wall could be created for each topic treated in each school discipline. As an example: children are dealing with the topic of mammals during Science classes. The names of the various animals could be associated with the corresponding word in the various home languages (a picture could be also inserted to facilitate the association). Newcomers could also benefit from a translated definition of the concept;

e) *archive word wall*: this type of word wall could collect and display all the translanguaging activities done.

Not only does the creation of multilingual word walls give space and visibility to every language, it also represents a strategic instructional move that can bring great benefits, in particular to newcomers/emergent bilinguals and other plurilingual children: it is a way to "scaffold your [pupils'] understanding of the [Italian] vocabulary words you've introduced", to "improve their understanding of new content, given their fuller understanding of the key vocabulary words" while "simultaneously [developing] your students' level of academic vocabulary in their home languages, fostering a more advanced level of bilingualism for them" (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 148).

Figure 16

Multilingual word wall: Geography

Note: The figure depicts an example of a multilingual word wall focusing on keywords related to Africa (Geography). The column on the left presents the keywords in English and the corresponding French translation; each word is paired up with a visual element that facilitates comprehension. On the right column, the keywords are inserted into example sentences related to the topic. The picture was taken and adapted to fit the page from Celic, C., Seltzer, K. (2013). Translanguaging: A CUNY – NYSIEB guide for educators (Rev. ed.). New York: CUNY – NYSIEB.

Figure 17

Bacheca plurilingue in Italy

Note: This *bacheca* represents a mix between an Italian L2 word wall and a routine word wall. Children inserted the request formulas, the school objects and the school spaces and translated them into English, Chinese, and Romanian. The picture was taken and adapted to fit the page from Carbonara, V., Scibetta, A. (2019a). Oltre le parole: Translanguaging come strategia didattica e di mediazione nella classe plurilingue. In Aldinucci, B., Carbonara, V., Caruso, G., La Grazza, M., Nadal, C., Salvatore, E. (Eds.). *Parola. Una nozione unica per una ricerca multidisciplinare* (pp. 491-509). Siena: Edizioni Università per Stranieri di Siena.

Figure 18

Word wall variation: the Four-box graphic organizer

Note: The organizer includes the most useful vocabulary words for this specific topic. There can be different versions of this box; this one includes the keywords, pictures representing the words, a simple definition, and a sentence including the keywords. The box makes use of three languages: English, Spanish, and Chinese. The picture was taken and adapted to fit the page from Celic, C., Seltzer, K. (2013). Translanguaging: A CUNY – NYSIEB guide for educators (Rev. ed.). New York: CUNY – NYSIEB.

The creation of these *bacheche* could foster the development of another related activity, i.e. cognate charts. The concept of cognate refers to words of different languages that can be easily compared because they are written and/or pronounced similarly. The production of these charts can constitute an important means through which pupils can easily compare languages and critically reflect on them, thus developing their metalinguistic knowledge while pursuing the goals of translanguaging activities. According to the linguistic level of children and their age, different charts can be created: content-area vocabulary words (e.g. words belonging to Geometry that look and sound similar in the various languages that are present in the classroom), cross-content vocabulary words (e.g. all the cognate words that children identify are grouped together, regardless of the content area), word parts (e.g. last-year primary school children or middle school student can study the roots of words, as well as the phonetics, usage and expressions), false cognates (e.g. words that look/sound similar in different languages but do not mean the same thing can be grouped and displayed as a memorandum).

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Figure 19

Cognate charts: content-area vocabulary words

Spanish	English
El Tiempo	**Weather**
otoño	fall
invierno	winter
primavera	spring
verano	summer
termómetro	thermometer
temperature	temperature
día	day
noche	night
sol	sun
luna	moon
ciclo	cycle

Note: The pupils focused on weather and seasons (science). The chart was designed to help children find cognate words, words with partial similarities, words that looked and sounded completely different. The picture was taken and adapted to fit the page from Celic, C., Seltzer, K. (2013). Translanguaging: A CUNY – NYSIEB guide for educators (Rev. ed.). New York: CUNY – NYSIEB.

The plurilingual transformation of the working environment allows pupils to approach translanguaging at their own pace, starting to focus on the lexical level and working with single words to later move on to more complex sentences and even texts (see section *Working with plurilingual texts*). The immense variety of words that appear throughout these activities can also be "brought home" thanks to a similar but portable instrument: the plurilingual dictionary. Once the teacher has explained how to organise the various sections, these dictionaries can be autonomously filed by pupils. Like the word wall, the dictionary is versatile and can be organised according to the needs of the class: it can collect everyday vocabulary, it can be dedicated to the keywords of a specific subject, it can include pictures or drawings that facilitate comprehension.

Getting to know each others' plurilingual repertoire
As we previously saw (Chapter 3.3.2), teachers and researchers cannot start planning translanguaging activities unless they conduct an ethnolinguistic survey that allows them to acquire

fundamental information about the languages and dialects pupils know, what skills they possess, and what is their relationship with their languages. It is possible (and maybe easier) to ask their parents through questionnaires or interviews, but it is even possible to directly ask pupils by involving them in playful activities that reveal precious pieces of information about their cultural background and their plurilingual repertoire. The CUNY-NYSIEB guide reports a "warm-up" activity that a Spanish/English bilingual teacher included during the first day of school, which could be easily used in Italian classes, too. By using a world map, the teacher asked her pupils to indicate where each of them was born, and what was the place of origin of their families; each child pinned their name and their photograph to the map.

L'AltRoparlante project suggests investigating the plurilingual repertoires of children and their relationship with languages through the use of *linguistic biographies*, a simple but effective instrument that can be used even with little children. The linguistic biography (otherwise called plurilingual portrait) consists of a plain black-and-white silhouette drawn on a blank sheet. Each child is provided with one of these silhouettes, and they are asked to think about the languages they know and/or feel inside of them; each language has to be paired up with a colour, and the child has to paint the different parts of the silhouette using the colours associated to their linguistic repertoire. Later on, children are asked to motivate their choices. The analysis of linguistic biographies led to the individuation of three recurring categories:

a) *biographies presenting separated linguistic competences*: the separation is usually highlighted by the use of two or more contrasting colours, often in the zone of the head of the silhouette. This representation can be linked to the perception of different linguistic competences that the child struggles to connect;

b) *biographies showing strong bonds with the child's origins*: children usually draw symbols (e.g. flags) that show a connection with a nation and a language;

c) *multi-colour (Harlequin) biographies*: they include various colours, indicating that the child thinks to possess a plurilingual repertoire. It is interesting to notice that, often, many of the languages included are not mastered by the pupil, but they do belong to the collective plurilingual repertoire. This is biography is representative of a context where children are used to paying attention to plurilingualism, and this is the kind of linguistic biography that each child should paint after some time experimenting with translanguaging activities (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a).

Figure 20

Linguistic biographies: examples
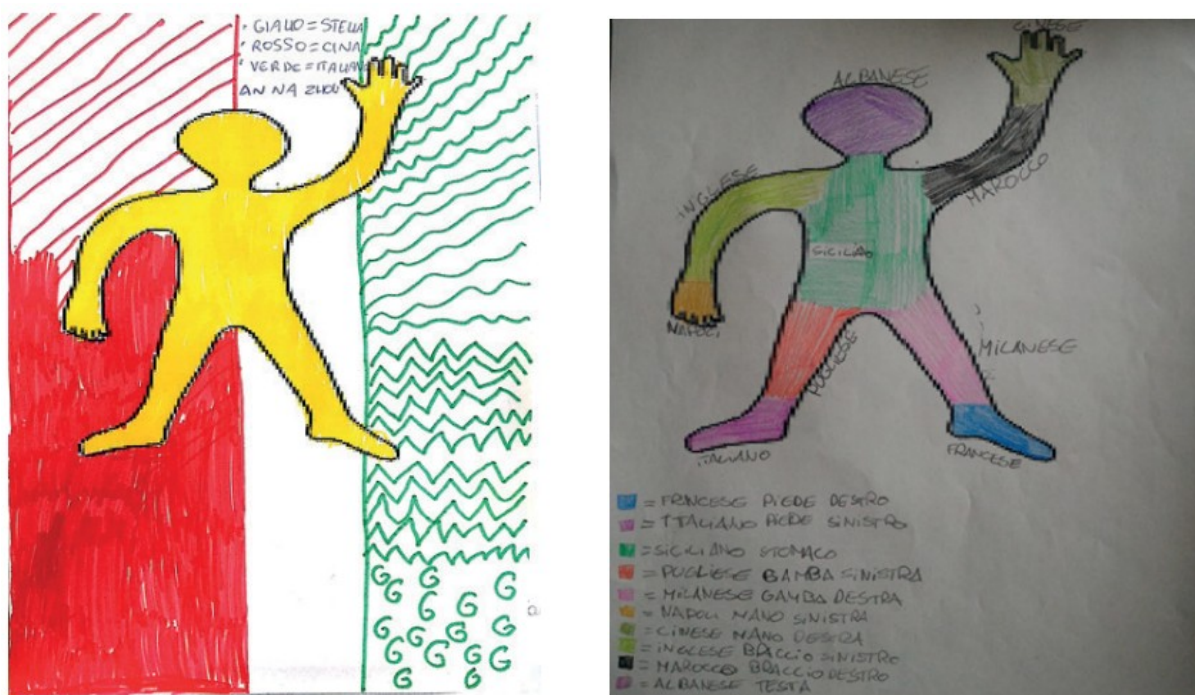
Note: The biography on the left shows a silhouette painted with the colours of the Chinese flag (red and yellow), while the background clearly refers to the Italian flag ("Strong bonds" type). The biography on the right is a "Harlequin" silhouette that includes regional Italian dialects and other languages spoken by other children in the classroom. The pictures were taken and adapted to fit the page from Carbonara, V., Scibetta, A. (2019a). Oltre le parole: Translanguaging come strategia didattica e di mediazione nella classe plurilingue. In Aldinucci, B., Carbonara, V., Caruso, G., La Grazza, M., Nadal, C., Salvatore, E. (Eds.). *Parola. Una nozione unica per una ricerca multidisciplinare* (pp. 491-509). Siena: Edizioni Università per Stranieri di Siena.

Another way to keep track of and celebrate the language learning and cultural experiences of children (when implementing translanguaging activities, children acquire new skills) is the European Language Portfolio, which was presented in chapter 1.3.4. The templates presented in the CoE Portal are designed for adults and middle-school students[14], but this does not mean that this instrument cannot be adapted and redesigned for younger students, like primary school pupils. The

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14 For further information, visit the webpage "Template of the 3 parts of a PEL" of the CoE Portal. Available at
https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/templates-of-the-3-parts-of-a-pel

section dedicated to the Language Biography includes children's "experiences in different languages and with different cultures" (Celic & Seltzer, 2013, p. 23), and in Italian multilingual classes it represents an occasion to reflect on the relationships each child has with classmates speaking different languages and with different origins. Monolingual children (who actually are a rarity today) would not be excluded, because anyone can create a language biography: "it is a place where [children] can record their language learning goals as well as their current language abilities. It is also a place where all students can record their intercultural understandings" (p. 23).

Figure 21

Language biography: skills, goals, intercultural understanding (for primary school children)

Note: The pictures were taken and adapted to fit the page from Celic, C., Seltzer, K. (2013). Translanguaging: A CUNY – NYSIEB guide for educators (Rev. ed.). New York: CUNY – NYSIEB.

Once children get used to translanguaging pedagogy and acquire new linguistic skills through translanguaging activities, they can update their Language Passport, which "captures" like a snapshot the pupil's linguistic repertoire in a certain moment of their life: bringing the Passport up to date at regular intervals allows to make comparisons and to record the linguistic progress of each pupil, which will surely be changed and upgraded compared with the beginning of a translanguaging project.

Figure 22

Language Passport for Irish primary school children

Note: The picture was taken and adapted to fit the page from Integrate Ireland Language and Training (2004 ed.). *European Language Portfolio – Primary*. Ireland. Available at https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/ELP_Portfolios/ea920271-a832-4a71-9957-07ac5f9e9ffb.pdf?ver=2011-09-13-160442-523

And what better way to collect and display the works done through translanguaging activities than inserting them in the Language Dossier? The Dossier is the proof of what is declared in the Passport

and in the Biography, and it documents the linguistic progress of the child throughout the entire scholastic year.

Working with plurilingual texts

After transforming the classroom into a multilingual space and after getting acquainted with translanguaging pedagogy for some time, children and teachers can step up to the next level and gradually start working on plurilingual materials, focusing first on receptive skills to later move on to productive skills (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a). The use of these materials represents a precious occasion for monolingual speakers to engage with basic but new linguistic structures and face them as a challenge to overcome through the help of their classmates, working in small groups where children cooperate to understand the material. But it is children who speak a home language that differs from the language of instruction and may have low Italian L2 proficiency that can benefit from the use of plurilingual texts: if the home language of pupils is included in texts that are used during school activities, children are supported in the building of background knowledge on a specific topic (which leads to the improvement of their reading comprehension) as well as being given the opportunity to develop home language literacy, thus enriching their linguistic skills (Celic & Seltzer, 2013).

One of the easiest ways to give prominence to all the languages of the school/classroom and at the same time to start working with plurilingual texts is to invest resources to enrich the school/class library by including multilingual books or even monolingual books written in the home language of children, as suggested by Interviewee 31810. The reading of these books could also be matched with parallel readings that, through the language of instruction, deal with the topics of plurilingualism and respect for language diversity, leading to metalinguistic reflections on language rights (e.g. *Io, Manola e l'Iguana* by Alex Cousseau). The introduction of multilingual reading material in the classroom is also possible through the use of textbooks in the home language of children (if they are available) or by providing bilingual pupils with bilingual summaries of a specific topic, which enable them to study and understand the concepts at a deeper, bilingual level (Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website). Another feasible option is to use audio materials (e.g. songs, podcasts, recorded versions of home language texts, movies/cartoons, etc.) to work on the oral/phonetic level and to have access to authentic pronunciation examples (Celic & Seltzer, 2013). The goal of translanguaging projects such as the CUNY-NYSIEB and L'AltRoparlante is to provide teachers and children with a series of examples, suggestions, strategies, input, sample activities that constitute a basic toolbox through which they can autonomously implement translanguaging activities, without any external support. The necessity to reach a sort of *Livello Autonomia*, or

Autonomy Level, is particularly strong in Italy, where many schools often lack the assistance of linguistic and cultural mediators, researchers, or other linguistic instruments (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019a). For this reason, L'AltRoparlante suggests starting with the reading of texts written in Italian (or containing some words or brief sentences in other languages) but to organise analysis and production activities that make use of the collective linguistic repertoire, thus guaranteeing a plurilingual approach. Here is a list of possible activities:

a) *analysis of keywords and glossary*: after reading the text, children are asked to identify the most important words and to translate them into the various languages and dialects that belong to the collective linguistic repertoire;

Figure 23

Translation of keywords

Note: The translation exercise regarding the body parts belong to a wider activity that can be found on the Unistrasi Centro Cluss website. Available at
https://cluss.unistrasi.it/public/articoli/158/Schema%20attivit%C3%A0%20-%20testo%20descrittivo.pdf

b) *translations of an Italian text*: children take on the role of linguistic experts and translate an extract of an Italian text to later read it out loud to their classmates (this activity can be realised on the condition that the children are literate in their home language);

c) *scanning*: through the 5 W-questions, children analyse the text looking for specific pieces of information. This operation can be done orally, but it can also be implemented on a written level, involving all the languages of the classroom;

d) *working on different text types*: for example, last-year pupils can transform the work on the newspaper text type into a plurilingual/translanguaging activity, where children compare different newspapers around the world, they translate the specific newspaper terminology, and they even produce a newspaper article in their home language;

Figure 24

Newspaper articles written by pupils
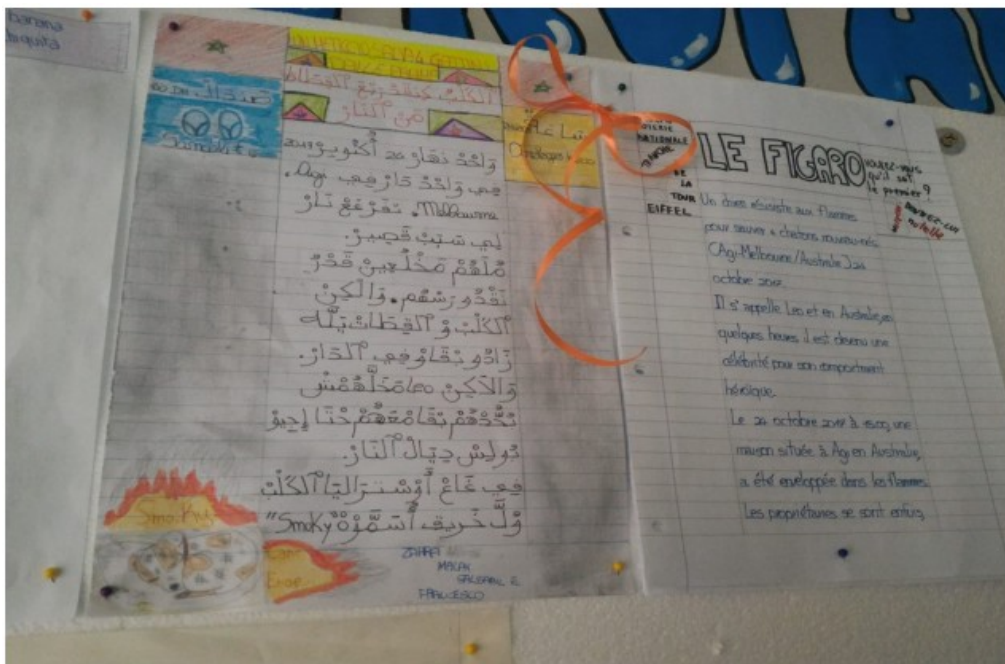
Note: As a final product, children were asked to write a brief article in their home language (if necessary, with the help of their parents) and to read it out loud to the whole class. This exercise belongs to a wider activity that can be retrieved in the "Didattica" webpage of the Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website. Available at https://cluss.unistrasi.it/public/articoli/158/LaStampa.pdf

e) *plurilingual concept map*: it represents an instrument that facilitates the comprehension of a text for children whose Italian L2 proficiency is still low. Because it is a tool that makes use of the language to show the relationship between the terms, it is not easy to create. For this reason, it could be useful to involve parents in the development of this map, when it is possible.

Involving parents in translanguaging activities

According to what some teachers declared during the interview, the existence of an educational agreement between the school staff and the family is of fundamental importance because it represents an understanding between the two parts, who cooperate to give the best education to the child. At the same time, it is not always easy to establish this agreement when the parents of the pupil are not Italian, i.e. they do not share the same linguistic and cultural background as the school staff. As far as teachers' point of view is concerned, the difficulties that may hinder the establishment of this relationship are the linguistic barrier (the parents do not fluently speak Italian or do not speak Italian at all, and therefore struggle to understand the messages of teachers) and the lack of will of the family to integrate into the Italian society. This type of attitude is probably linked to an old habit that is difficult to erase, which is the desire to adjust anything and everything to the norm: "It was your decision to move away from your native country and to live here in Italy, therefore it is you who has to adapt to our lifestyle, our language, our traditions: it is you who has to come our way". But why should this be a monodirectional movement? Would it not be easier and more effective to have the two parts meet halfway?

Translanguaging projects and related activities could represent a possible (even if partial) solution to this issue. The main aim of projects such as L'AltRoparlante and the CUNY-NYSIEB is to give visibility and importance to languages that, until now, occupied no space in Italian schools: these are mainly dialects and home languages, which are often passed down to children by parents. Translanguaging pedagogy does not remain confined to the walls of the classroom, but it also reaches the families of these children and try to actively involve them in their scholastic life, making them feel "wanted" because of their linguistic skills and their cultural knowledge: in other words, because of their uniqueness, which is valued and given importance. In this sense, translanguaging activities that let parents enter the class and bring their world in it constitute the halfway point, a sort of bridge that helps to create a connection between the school staff and the family and that can lay the foundations for the beginning of a real dialogue, a dialogue that leaves behind the concept of mere *integrazione* (the family has to adapt to the new context) while making

space for the idea of *inclusione* (living in a new place but maintaining one's own linguistic and cultural uniqueness).

The first way to involve parents in a translanguaging project is by including them in the preliminary ethnolinguistic survey from which teachers and researchers obtain data about the linguistic and cultural background of a pupil. Their contribution is particularly precious, especially when their children are very young, because they can give detailed pieces of information (e.g. if the child is literate in the home language or not) that will be later used during the project. This represents a sincere interest from part of the school towards the linguistic and cultural origins of a family, and it is a means through which teachers and families can start to "get closer". Here is a list of possible questions to ask:

a) What languages do your family members speak at home?

b) In what language do you speak to your child most of the time?

c) What languages does your child understand?

d) In what language does your child speak to you… to others?

e) What are some ways your child uses gestures or objects to communicate?

f) In what languages does your child attempt to read/write?

g) In what languages do you sing, read, or tell stories to your child?

h) How has your child learned [the national language] so far (television shows, siblings, childcare, etc.)?

i) What are some of your interests? What do you feel comfortable sharing with our class community? (Seltzer et al., 2020, p. 35).

The presence of parents during specific translanguaging activities is often of fundamental importance, like in the case of the creation of the plurilingual concept map: their contribution allows to develop a metalinguistic reflection on the linguistic and logic bonds that the map expresses, other than helping the children to create a useful instrument that supports the study of a certain topic (Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website). But parents can even become the protagonists of translanguaging activities, through the exercise of story-telling.

Story-telling makes use of the parent as a narrator, who brings children and teachers into their past and offers them an original recount of life experiences, myths and fairy tales of their native country, and even explanations on the functioning of their native language. We briefly report here the experience of Interviewee 100212, who asked the mother of a third-year primary school child to make some interventions and to talk about their country of origin during classes. These are the

activities she organised with the help of the teacher, which could be replicable in a translanguaging project:

a) *reading of fairy tales*: she selected some tales of her country and read them out loud to the group of children, using her native language. Being able to speak quite fluently in Italian, she later translated the story. It would be even possible to narrate using both languages at the same time, or even to only use Italian but leaving some keywords in the home language;

b) *recipes of typical dishes*: she brought some homemade biscuits and shared with the group of children some typical recipes belonging to the culinary tradition of her country. This type of activity can be turned into a translanguaging activity if children are asked to prepare a certain dish with the help of parents, and the instructions are only given in the home language/dialect[15].

c) *perfume workshop*: she brought materials to help children create their own fragrances, an activity typical of her country;

d) *traditional clothes*: she showed the children some clothes of her childhood and other clothes that she used to wear during specific occasions or celebrations.

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15 For further information about this activity, visit the webpage "Didattica" of the Unistrasi Centro CLUSS website. Available at https://cluss.unistrasi.it/public/articoli/158/Macedonia.pdf

Conclusion

Through this dissertation, we explored the broader area of plurilingualism, valorisation of language diversity, and other related themes. The first chapter served as an introduction to this topic and presented the concept of plurilingualism, describing all its features and the advantages it brings with it. All these pieces of information imply that plurilingualism is not something new, nor does it have to be perceived as something "distant" from our society: in fact, it is a feature that has always belonged to the human being and it represents the natural evolution of the concept of multilingualism, where different languages are present in the same context but are not necessarily tied by a relationship. In a more and more globalised world, where everything is interconnected and people constantly move from one place to the other, plurilingualism is the keyword that symbolises the current historical period: today, each individual is asked to possess certain abilities, skills and knowledge that allow them to interconnect with other people, which can be linguistically achieved by possessing a plurilingual and pluricultural competence. The first place where it is possible to start developing this competence is school: with its increasing multilingual and multicultural classes, it has all the potentialities to become the beacon of plurilingualism, if the right measures are adopted.

All education is plurilingual in its own way because it:
   a) welcomes/should welcome the linguistic diversity present in every society, as reflected in the diversity of languages and language varieties making up the personal repertoire of each learner […];
   b) may teach (in) a language of schooling which does not correspond to the first language of the learners or of some of them (who may belong to ethnic minorities, be the children of immigrants or deaf children having sign language as their first language etc);
   c) exposes learners - even those whose first language is the language of schooling - to varieties of the official/national language which are not those to which they are generally exposed in their home environment, or to which they are exposed to different degrees according to the sociocultural level of their original background;
   d) expands and enriches learners' initial linguistic and discursive repertoires:
      - by the teaching of writing;
      - by taking account of the plurality typical of every language and its different areas of variation;

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- by teaching the language of schooling (language as subject and language for teaching

and learning other subjects), the mastery of which can have an impact on their entry into

the life of society and work, and their social advancement

- by teaching other languages (majority, minority, foreign, second, classical or others)

[…];

- by teaching other subjects which, even if sometimes labelled "non-linguistic", make

extensive use of language, including everyday language, as a part of classroom

interaction, while involving the acquisition of discourse genres, specialised vocabularies

relating to different fields of knowledge and ways of thinking expressed in specific

modes of language and other semiotic systems peculiar to each of them (Cavalli et al.,

2009, p. 6).

The implementation of a plurilingual pedagogy in schools is not an impossible mission: the
CARAP/FREPA presents the pluralistic approaches (Intercultural approach, Éveil aux langues
approach, Integrated language teaching approach, Intercomprehension approach) as the means
through which it is possible to promote a positive attitude towards language diversity (*teaching
plurilingualism*) and even to develop a plurilingual repertoire through the use of specific resources
and by exploiting the different languages that are already present in the classroom (*plurilingual
teaching*) (Cognigni, 2020). Clearly, the use of these approaches should be included in the wider
frame of recommendations, documents, and instruments that were developed by the main European
institutions (COE, European Commission, ECML, etc.) and later reproduced at a national level that
try to spread the knowledge about plurilingualism and give practical suggestions to apply the
plurilingual pedagogy.

Even if there is plenty of these recommendations and instruments, with the second chapter we have
seen that implementing plurilingualism is easier said than done. After analysing in detail the
documents and tools that promote the spreading of plurilingualism, the dissertation tried to answer
one (apparently simple) question: do these words have a practical counterpart? Is there a
correspondence between theory and practice? Unfortunately, the answer is (often) no: by examining
the current European and Italian situation, we noticed that many recommendations are not translated
into actual language education policies, and that therefore there is a gap that divides theory from
practice.

[…] the crucial social function of language education policies based on the principle of

plurilingualism as a fundamental value of democratic tolerance and a specific competence to

be developed is to counteract linguistic denigration and intolerance in order to bring about democratic fraternity and peace.

This objective, which has been expressed in similar terms in other international bodies, is far from dominant in public opinion or among political decision-makers. The fact that it has still gained so little acceptance can be explained by the deep-seated nature of some social perceptions, which include overestimating the value of one's own language, regarding the competence of the native speaker as the only acceptable goal when learning a language, the belief that only early learning is 'worthwhile' and the universal value attributed to knowing English. In addition, language and language education policies are not always defined explicitly enough or discussed as such in the public arena (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 107).

The issues covered here are only a small selection, but further research could expand the field of investigation. The dissertation highlighted that, on a general European level, the great variety of languages spoken all over Europe does not match the not-so-great variety of languages that are taught at school, both in terms of languages chosen (English dominates over the rest) and number of languages that each individual learns (the ideal number of two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue is far from being reached); early language education seems to be an issue that is still not adequately contemplated by many European countries; plurilingualism pedagogy struggles to impose because of contrasting global market forces who defend the ideology of the single language; the process of diffusion of European language policies is not linear, for the institutions cannot produce prescriptive documents that may lead to homogenisation and therefore endanger the linguistic uniqueness of European countries; the ideology of the inequality of languages is far from being erased. Other gaps were also detected at a national level, where we assist to the dominion of the English language (both as main foreign language and as the language used for CLIL projects) and where the majority of high-school students are denied the possibility to keep on studying the second foreign language they took up during middle school; not enough time of the school curriculum is dedicated to language education and foreign language teaching; the home language(s) of students with a migratory background is not sufficiently valorised at school; the professional development of Italian teachers still seems to leave no space for the topics of plurilingualism and language diversity.

The extracts of the interview presented in chapter 2 confirmed the last point and stressed other relevant issues: currently speaking, the interviewees do not perceive plurilingualism and the valorisation of the linguistic repertoire as a primary necessity, and they feel they are not properly trained to fulfil the goals of plurilingual pedagogy, therefore they do not possess the knowledge and

the skills to implement activities that exploit the linguistic resources of the class to improve language education. Being a qualitative study, it is clear that the opinion of the interviewees cannot apply to the whole population of Italian teachers; nevertheless, the same investigation could be expanded at a broader level (province or even region).

Another problem that the interview highlighted was the sporadic, episodic nature of the activities related to language diversity and comparison of the different languages and cultures present in the classroom, which suggested a question that led us directly to chapter 3: "The key question is whether it is possible to switch from the use of occasional inclusive practices to a more structured and ordinary framework of translanguaging-based pedagogy in the Italian school context" (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2019b, p. 116). It is the translanguaging approach that was presented as a possible pedagogical bridge that may be used in Italian schools of all grades as a first promoter of the values of language diversity, respect for all varieties and development of the collective plurilingual repertoire. It is not officially described in the CARAP/FREPA as a pluralistic approach, and yet it possesses all the main characteristics typical of the other approaches; what makes it an appropriate choice for the Italian school is that:

a) it combines the *teaching plurilingualism* and *plurilingual teaching* features;

b) it represents an alternative work methodology that exploits the already existing linguistic resources in the classroom and it potentially allows for the creation of infinite different activities;

c) it integrates the school curriculum and it adjusts according to the necessities of the group of students and the goals established by the teachers;

d) it is flexible and therefore can be adapted to all instructional levels, from pre-primary school to high school.

Of course, the main translanguaging reference model (CUNY-NYSIEB) cannot be applied to the Italian context without some modifications. The American project developed by García and colleagues is expressly devised to potentiate the abilities of emergent Latinx bilinguals, a group of students which is dominant in many schools of New York City; the situation is quite different in Italian schools, where classes are increasingly multilinguals and the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students are heterogeneous (endogenous and exogenous plurilingualism). But the presence and success of projects like L'AltRoparlante make us understand that translanguaging pedagogy can be adapted to the Italian context and that, in accordance with European and national recommendations, it can help promote the values of plurilingualism and chase the dream of a more and more plurilingual society that is open to and respectful of language diversity.

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Perhaps the most challenging step that is left to take and that represents the *conditio sine qua non* to produce a real change is to turn these plurilingual experiences into a habit, into something that fully becomes part of the school curriculum and that is implemented by every school of every instructional level; it could be appropriate to differentiate the modalities according to the school level and to the linguistic context (influenced by local dialects, minority languages, home languages spoken by individuals with migratory background), but it should become a shared goal to reach. This type of change could probably be accomplished only through a legislative reform on a national scale that takes into account the unique features and needs of local communities (*bottom-up* approach) to create a general structure that can be personalised and adapted to each school context.

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Appendix

Research questions and related interview questions

Research Question 1. *What types of knowledge do primary school teachers possess related to the themes of the promotion of plurilingualism and the valorisation of language diversity in the classroom?*

Category in 2.3.3 Results and discussion: *Knowledge of the topic*.

Interview questions:

a) Hai mai sentito parlare del concetto di plurilinguismo? Se sì, dove? Se no, vuoi provare a dare una tua interpretazione personale di cosa potrebbe essere?

b) Sei a conoscenza delle direttive del Consiglio d'Europa sull'implementazione dell'approccio plurilingue e della valorizzazione del repertorio linguistico individuale/di classe?

c) Hai mai sentito parlare/utilizzato gli approcci plurali per lo sviluppo della competenza plurilingue ed interculturale? Questi approcci sono: Éveil aux langues, aproccio interculturale, didattica integrata delle lingue (ad es. Metodologia Clil), intercomprensione, translanguaging?

Research Question 2. *What instruments and pieces of information are teachers provided with during their initial and in-service training to implement pluralistic approaches and other good practices to give value to plurilingualism?*

Categories in 2.3.3 Results and discussion: *Initial education and professional development* and *Practices*.

Interview questions:

a) Durante la tua formazione iniziale, ti sono stati proposti corsi riguardanti la promozione della diversità linguistica in classe?

b) Ci sono proposte di questo tipo nei vari corsi di aggiornamento annuali per insegnanti?

c) Ti leggerò un estratto dal documento pubblicato dal Miur *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* (2007):"La scuola italiana sceglie di adottare la prospettiva interculturale, che non vuol dire limitarsi a strategie di integrazione ne a misure compensatorie di carattere speciale. Si tratta di assumere la diversità come paradigma dell'identità stessa della scuola nel pluralismo, come occasione per aprire l'intero sistema a tutte le differenze". Secondo te, in base alla tua esperienza, questa cosa viene fatta nella scuola italiana? Se sì, in che modo?

d) E nella scuola in cui insegni? Se sì, in che modo?

e) Ti sembra di sfruttare le potenzialità che la tua classe offre a livello di diversità linguistica e culturale?

Research Question 3. *What is the general attitude of teachers towards plurilingualism and the idea of adopting the paradigm "unity in diversity" as a fundamental principle of the Italian school?*

Category in 2.3.3 Results and discussion: *Beliefs, opinions and attitude*.

Interview questions:

a) Che cosa significa per te diversità linguistica e culturale a scuola?

b) Immaginiamo che il MIUR decida che dal prossimo anno scolastico non verrà più insegnata la lingua Inglese come lingua straniera alle scuole primarie: ci sarà una sostituzone. Verrà proposto l'insegnamento di un'altra lingua straniera, che potrebbe essere lo Spagnolo, il Tedesco, oppure il Cinese o l'Arab. Cosa ne penseresti di questa decisione?

c) Considerando le tue classi, credi che la eterogeneità/diversità linguistica e culturale sia una risorsa o un problema da gestire?

d) Se la ritieni un problema da gestire, quali sono le difficoltà che incontri?

e) Saresti disponibile a seguire un corso di aggiornamento che ti forma sui temi del plurilinguismo e diversità linguistica per poter avviare progetti di promozione del plurilinguismo nelle tue classi?

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