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**Translanguaging at school to support  
plurilingualism and multiculturalism:  
a teaching experience**

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## ABSTRACT

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L'eterogeneità linguistica e culturale è una realtà sempre più comune nella scuola italiana e necessita il rinnovamento della tradizionale didattica. L'obiettivo di questo elaborato è quello di presentare un'esperienza didattica che tiene in considerazione la pluralità linguistica e culturale degli studenti portando il *translanguaging* in classe.

Dopo una panoramica relativa al contesto storico in cui viviamo, la prima parte di questo lavoro è dedicata alla presentazione delle indicazioni fornite dal Consiglio d'Europa e dal MIUR relativamente alla gestione del plurilinguismo e del pluriculturalismo nella scuola. Successivamente, viene illustrato il concetto di *translanguaging* come pratica linguistica per promuovere una didattica linguistica inclusiva. Particolare attenzione viene posta sul ruolo del docente come mediatore e promotore di opportunità d'uso della lingua e sui vantaggi che il *translanguaging* porta con sé, quali lo sviluppo di un atteggiamento positivo nei confronti della diversità linguistico-culturale.

Infine, il *translanguaging* è applicato nella realizzazione di un'esperienza didattica in una classe terza di una scuola secondaria di primo grado con l'obiettivo mostrare la sua praticità nella valorizzazione della varietà linguistica e culturale degli studenti.

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# INTRODUCTION

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During my career as an English teacher, I have developed a particular interest in promoting plurilingualism and pluriculturalism and I have found in *translanguaging* an interesting and innovative approach to support diversity in education. Thanks to this practice no language is considered dominant, but all the students are given the opportunity to use their language of origin according to the context.

The present work aims to examine how it is possible to facilitate the increasingly linguistic and cultural heterogeneity at school by bringing *translanguaging* into the classroom and why it is an effective practice to promote plurilingual students' linguistic repertoire and cultural variety. In order to answer these questions, I will present a teaching experience based on the *translanguaging* approach conducted with third-year students at a private middle school (Istituto Canossiano Feltre) in the province of Belluno. This experience gave me the chance to explore the advantages of promoting this practice to encourage a positive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity among students.

The first chapter will introduce globalization and migration as major phenomena that are determining the world as a place in continuous evolution. In this context, plurilingualism and multiculturalism are central aspects of these changes, and they call for new approaches particularly at school. Then, it examines the main indications of European institutions and the Italian Ministry of Education about plurilingualism and multiculturalism to promote inclusion. These documents provide us with guidelines to follow in order to better address the changes that linguistic and cultural heterogeneity requires schools to adopt.

The second chapter aims to discuss the practice of translanguaging as a response to the new needs previously outlined. It focuses on the origin of the term and its meaning, moreover it examines the aspects that characterize it with particular attention to the role of the teacher as a facilitator of inclusive language teaching. Two reference models will be illustrated: the CUNY-NYSIEB of the University of New York and the AltRoparlante of the University of Foreigners of Siena.

Finally, the third chapter will describe an operative teaching experience as a possible application of *translanguaging* in the didactic activities at school. It will show the effectiveness of this practice, occurred issues and possible solutions.

As mentioned above, with the present work I want to highlight that *translanguaging* is an innovative approach to promote awareness about linguistic and cultural heterogeneity in everyday practice at school.

# CHAPTER I: Towards a plurilingual and multicultural education

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We are living in a globalized world characterized by increasing mobility and migration flows that are transforming our societies. Plurilingualism and multiculturalism are central aspects of these changes and call for new approaches particularly at school. This chapter introduces the European and Italian scenario about the increasing variety of languages presents in schools and examines the main indications of European institutions and the Italian Ministry of Education about plurilingualism and multiculturalism in order to promote inclusion and provide the same educational opportunities for all.

## 1.1 Shaping a plurilingual and multicultural society

The globalized world we are living in is characterized by commercial exchanges, financial transactions, migration flows, wars, intercultural connections, social networking and fast-paced technological development. All these features affect our world and connect people, cultures, languages, and ways of thinking.

Recently developed, the term globalization has deeply increased starting from the early 1990s and now it has become part of the “global consciousness” (Robertson, 1992: 8). Globalization is a phenomenon which does not only affect state economies and international relations but also various aspects of human life, especially culture (Premoli, 2008: 12-16). Researchers affirm that its effects are contributing to create even more standardized culture – it is sufficient to think about people around the world that share the same interests in different fields such as fashion, music, cinema and sport. In this context, mobility and migration flows increase rapidly and migrants can easily maintain contact with their home culture thanks to the new means of communication. People from different places around the world are in constant relation through the exchange of information, culture, lifestyles and languages (Premoli, 2008: 12-16). For this reason, globalization has been transforming our societies facilitating the presence of different languages and cultures within a community.

Even if the terms *plurilingualism* and *multilingualism* are sometimes used interchangeably, in the context of the European policies a distinction is made. While plurilingualism refers to the ability of an individual to speak various languages, the term multilingualism indicates the presence of different languages in a specific community. This distinction is mentioned

several times in the works of the Council of Europe starting from the CEFR (“Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” 2001):

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. In other words, the presence of two or more languages in an area does not necessarily imply that people in that area can use several of them; some use only one. (Beacco et al., 2016: 16)

In other words, with multilingualism the attention is mainly given to languages and their coexistence in a specific territory, while with plurilingualism what is mostly emphasized is the individual’s experience of language as a speaker and learner. What the Council of Europe (CE) underlines is that learners do not keep these languages and cultures separated, instead they shape a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact (CE, 2001: 4).

Nowadays, a plurilingual speaker is considered to have different degrees of language competence depending on the situation. According to sociolinguists, plurilingualism and/or bilingualism is the norm rather than the exception (Berruto, 2004: 133). Therefore, plurilingualism is a condition that characterizes most people and, in the educational contexts, most students, whether they are newly arrived foreigners, second generation migrants, multiethnic people or can speak dialect. In this context, institutions are called not only to acknowledge this increasingly plurilingual and multicultural condition, but also to enhance it making it an educational resource. Starting from the first version of the CEFR in 2001 onwards the Council of Europe has largely promoted the adoption of plurilingual and multicultural approaches to design educational paths with the aim of effective inclusion. In the following paragraph, we will shed lights on the European scenario about plurilingual education examining the milestones of this journey.

## 1.2 An overview on European policies

As previously said, the linguistic and cultural diversity is a distinctive element of the European Union. Thus, within the European policies, several initiatives, projects and programs have been established to encourage the learning of different languages and the enhancement of linguistic and cultural diversity. In the Report EUNEC<sup>1</sup> (European Network of Education Councils, 2012) about migration and education, it is highlighted the significant relation between the enhancement of plurilingualism as an educational resource and the strengthening of the migrants' identity with the aim of establishing an effective integration path. It is reported that:

As long as education for migrants focuses only on the knowledge of the host language and neglects to view the multilingual repertoires of migrants as an asset, integration policies are doomed to fail. [...] Instead, the plurilingual repertoires of these pupils can be exploited as didactical capital for learning. Attention to the mother tongue and culture will reinforce the identity of migrant pupils and enhance their self-confidence (EUNEC, 2013: 112).

In this context, the FREPA ("The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures") developed within the *Across Languages and Cultures project* provides tools and resources useful for the design of educational paths aimed at raising awareness on linguistic and cultural diversity. The starting point of this work is the lack of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to plurilingualism and multiculturalism. To bridge the gap, it is necessary to develop the so-called "pluralistic approaches", that is "didactic approaches that use teaching/learning activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages or cultures" (CE, 2012: 6). In other words, by totally rejecting a monolingual-monocultural didactic approach, the FREPA brings forward that linguistic variety that characterizes school environments today. According to the document (Ibid., 6-9), in fact, the pluralistic approaches refer to:

- a. the intercultural approach, which knows many variants based on didactic principles encouraging the use of phenomena relating to one or more cultural area(s) to understand others relating to another cultural area. These principles also support the implementation of strategies to

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 EUNEC Report available at <http://www.eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/attachment/files/report.pdf>



encourage reflection on the modalities of contact between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

- b. The integrated language teaching, which aims to help the learner 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) to facilitate the learning of the first foreign language, then to use these two languages as the basis for learning a second foreign language.
- c. In the intercomprehension between related languages the learner works in parallel on two or more languages of the same family (Romance, Germanic, Slavic languages, etc.), – one of these languages could be his/her mother tongue, the language of education, or another language he/she has learned.
- d. The awakening to languages concerns activities related to the language of education and any other language that the school generally does not intend to teach. It integrates all kinds of linguistic varieties, of the family, of the environment and of the world, without any exclusions.

These pluralistic approaches promote the development of global competences which are valid for every language and culture and concern the relationships between language and culture. These competences are organized in areas as shown in Figure 1.

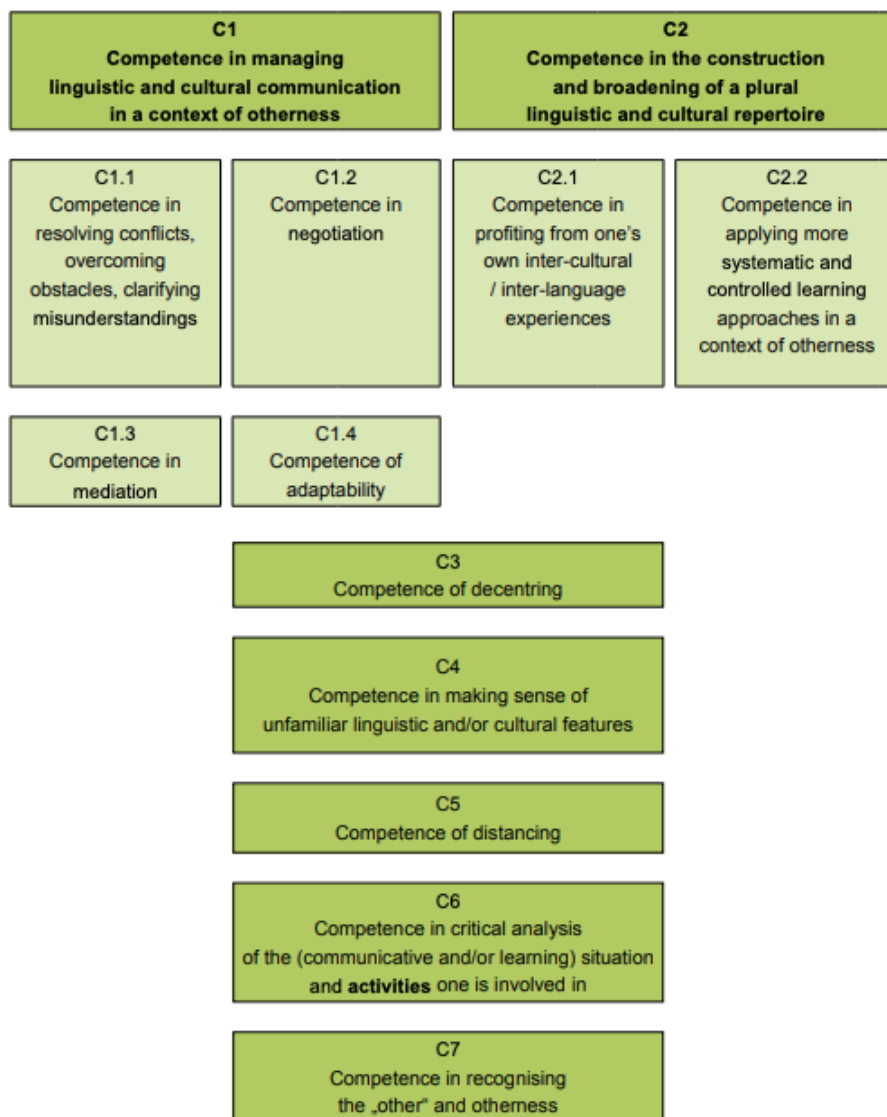


Figure 1 - Table of global competences as outlined in the FREPA (Council of Europe, 2012: 20).

Figure 1 shows the competences aimed at making the learner aware of linguistic and cultural diversity on the one hand, and at facilitating communication in context of otherness, on the other hand. In particular, with reference to competence C2, it is interesting to underline the emphasis given to the benefit that the openness to plurilingualism may produce on students at school and, more in general, on people in their everyday life.

Finally, the FREPA presents three levels of “internal resources” that the learner should activate in order to increasingly broaden his or her global competences, namely (CE, 2012: 24-59):

- knowledge (K), i.e. knows that each culture determines / organises at least partly the perception of the world / way of thinking of its members (K8.6); Is familiar with some specificities of one's own culture in relation to certain social practices or customs from other cultures (K 8.7.2); or also knows that the interpretation that others give to one's behaviours may be different from that which that same person himself/herself gives to that same behaviours (K 10.5).
- attitudes (A), i.e. being curious about (and wishing) to understand the similarities and differences between one's own language / culture and the target language / culture (A 3.2.1); or being sensitive to the complexity / to the diversity of the relationship which every person has with language(s) / cultures (A 16.1).
- skills (S), i.e. can compare linguistic / cultural features of different languages / culture (S 3).

Thanks to its detailed indicators, the FREPA is recognized as an extremely useful tool to enhance and manage linguistic and cultural plurality at school since it considers the benefits of developing global competences for both plurilingual students and non-bilingual students (Carbonara and Martini, 2019).

Another relevant European document is the "Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education" (Beacco et al., 2016) which introduces the idea of the "multilingual curriculum intended to facilitate improved implementation of the values and principles of plurilingual and intercultural education in the teaching of all languages (Ibid.: 9). The Guide proposes concrete actions to implement plurilingual and multicultural education at school, by defining both pedagogical and didactic guidelines to be applied through appropriate approaches. The goal of the Guide is twofold (Ibid.: 15-21):

1. facilitating the acquisition of linguistic and intercultural abilities [... and] the teaching of all languages, i.e. languages of schooling, foreign languages, regional or minority languages, or classical languages.
2. promoting personal development to realise individuals' full potential, including encouraging them to respect and accept diversity in our multilingual and multicultural society, and helping to make them aware of the extent of their own competences and potential.

Therefore, two main areas are involved - on the one hand, the language learning and, on the other, the development of each individual - which contribute to inclusion and social cohesion and put the basis for a democratic citizenship. In addition to promoting the languages taught and used at school, the Guide invites to develop forms of 'transversality' that make it possible to articulate the teaching of languages among themselves. Therefore, in order to develop a curriculum, it is essential to take into consideration the various levels of the education system which interact among each other: international (supra), national/regional (macro), school (meso), class, teaching group or teacher (micro) or even individual (nano) (Ibid., 2016: 19) – as shown in Figure 2.

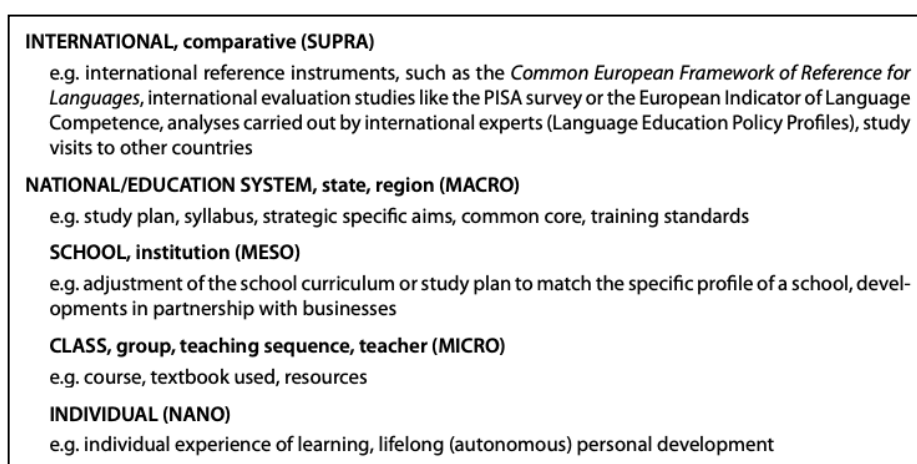


Figure 2 - The curriculum on different levels of the education system (Beacco et al., 2016: 19)

Specifically, the measures for the curriculum development involve the following (Ibid., 2016: 26):

- increasing coherence in the teaching approaches of different subjects (content, methods, terminology)
- identify bridges between subjects and learning paths to ensure such coherence;
- highlighting language components shared by the various subjects learned;
- promoting awareness of possible transfers;
- linking subject-specific knowledge and competences for the purpose of developing intercultural competence

These measures must be specific of the teaching of individual languages and their cultures and transferable to the teaching of other disciplines. At the basis of the curriculum, there

is, in fact, a concrete collaboration among disciplines and among teachers. The Guide demands, therefore, a re-evaluation of school curricula based on projects and activities that highlight the integration of different languages and cultures in everyday teaching.

In order to develop effective communication skills, the CEFR affirms the importance of leveraging the learner's previous knowledge. It extensively describes the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence through three sub-competences (CE, 2018):

- 1) building on pluricultural repertoire which refers to the ability of making use pluricultural repertoire with reference to intercultural competence, such as the sensitivity to differences, tolerance to ambiguity in the context of cultural diversity, willingness to offer and ask for clarification anticipating possible risks of misunderstanding. The descriptors included in the scale are also the ability to recognize and act on the basis of cultural, socio-pragmatic and sociolinguistic conventions and elements; to recognize and interpret similarities and differences in different perspectives, practices and events; to evaluate in a neutral and critical way.
- 2) Plurilingual comprehension, that is to say the ability to use the knowledge and proficiency (even partial) in one or more languages as resources for understanding texts in other languages and achieving communication purposes. The scale of descriptors includes key concepts such as openness and flexibility in working with different elements from different languages; the ability to exploit contextual clues and linguistic similarities.
- 3) Building on plurilingual repertoire which is the ability to make use of plurilingual repertoire by exploiting all possible resources in order to communicate effectively in a multilingual context and / or in a mediation situation where the interlocutors do not share the same language. Among others, the descriptors include the ability to adapt to the situation; the ability to know how to adapt language based on the linguistic skills of the interlocutors; the use of code-mixing and code-switching if necessary.

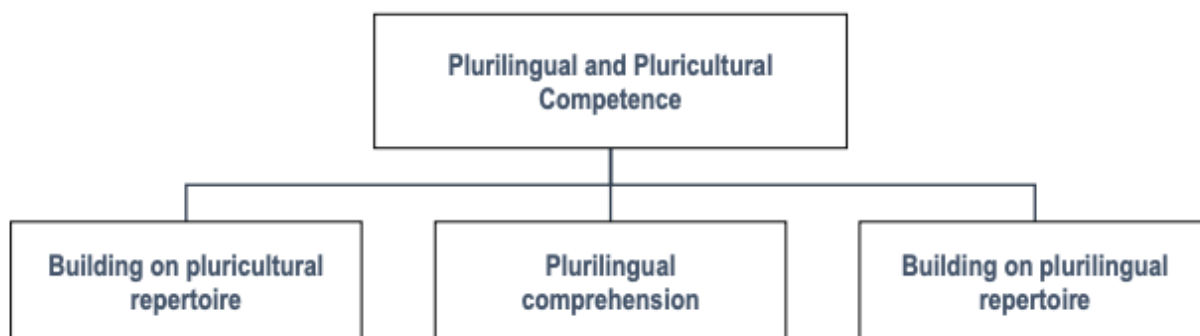


Figure 2 – Plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018).

Thus, this transversal standpoint requires to take advantage of all the languages known by the learner as a way to facilitate the learning of another language, emphasizing the common aspects between them.

More recently, the Council of Europe has issued some new “Recommendations related to key competences for lifelong learning” (CE, 2018).



Figure 4 - The 8 new competences by the Council of the European Union (2018: 14).

These competences (Figure 4) have the aim of supporting individuals to “participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market” (CE, 2018: 7). According to the original version of the work in 2006, these key competences included the “competence in communication in foreign languages”. In the latest version of 2018, the

definition was revised, and it was replaced with “multilingual competence”. This lexical choice implies a more inclusive and flexible point of view which considers the linguistic and cultural diversity typical of European Union. Here “multilingual competence” is defined as “the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication” (CE, 2018: 8). According to this definition, it does not only refer to the development of the competence to communicate in both oral and written form in a foreign language but, more widely, it suggests the promotion of a positive attitude towards cultural and linguistic diversity. Indeed, a strong emphasis is given to intercultural communication as a tool to mediate between different languages and cultures, as well as media.

The European scenario just described offers essential instruments concerning the enhancement of plurilingualism and multiculturalism to achieve a real inclusion of all students within the classroom. It is evident that in order to obtain an effective plurilingual education it is critical that coherent directives are issued both at European and national levels. In fact, in every region, city, school and classroom there are unique factors that determine that specific reality. Here, commitment in plurilingual educational should be taken not only by learners and teachers, but also by families themselves and local community.

In the following paragraph, we will describe the Italian scenario regarding plurilingualism and pluriculturalism at school and we will analyse the indications provided by the Italian Ministry of Education about the integration of students with migrant backgrounds.

### **1.3 The Italian perspective: from “Ten Thesis” (1975) to “National indications and new scenarios” (2018)**

Starting by presenting some data concerning the presence of foreign students (see below for a definition) in the Italian school system, this paragraph will try to describe the most important steps taken by national institutions to support plurilingual and multicultural education.

According to the 2020 MIUR Report<sup>2</sup>, the number of students from kindergarten to secondary school with non-Italian citizenship present in the Italian school in the 2019/20 school year is approximately 877.000, a percentage of almost 10% of the entire school population. Figure 5 shows the trend of the presence of foreign students, which is gradually stabilizing in the last few years.

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<sup>2</sup> 2020 MIUR Report available at <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/>

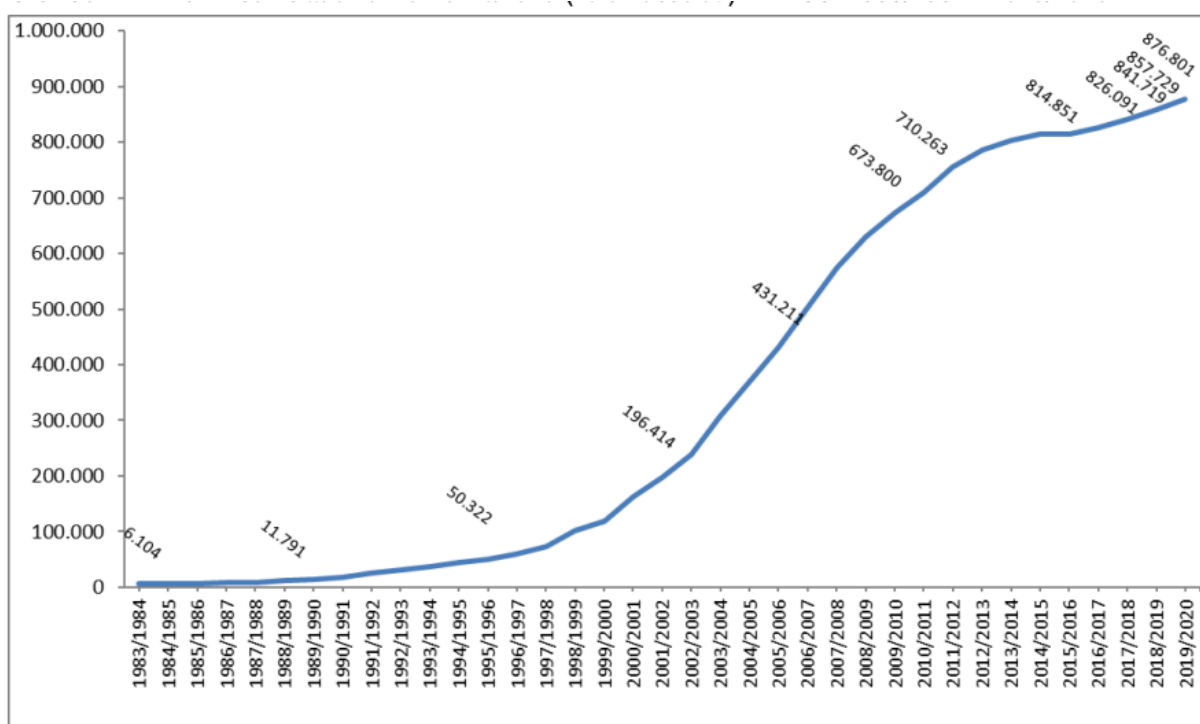


Figure 5 - Pupils with non-Italian citizenship (absolute values) - AA.SS. 1983/1984 - 2019/2020.

In Figure 5, we can see how these students are distributed in different school grades and it is immediately evident that most of the students with non-Italian citizenship are present in primary school. On the other hand, this percentage drops in secondary school and, particularly, in upper secondary school.



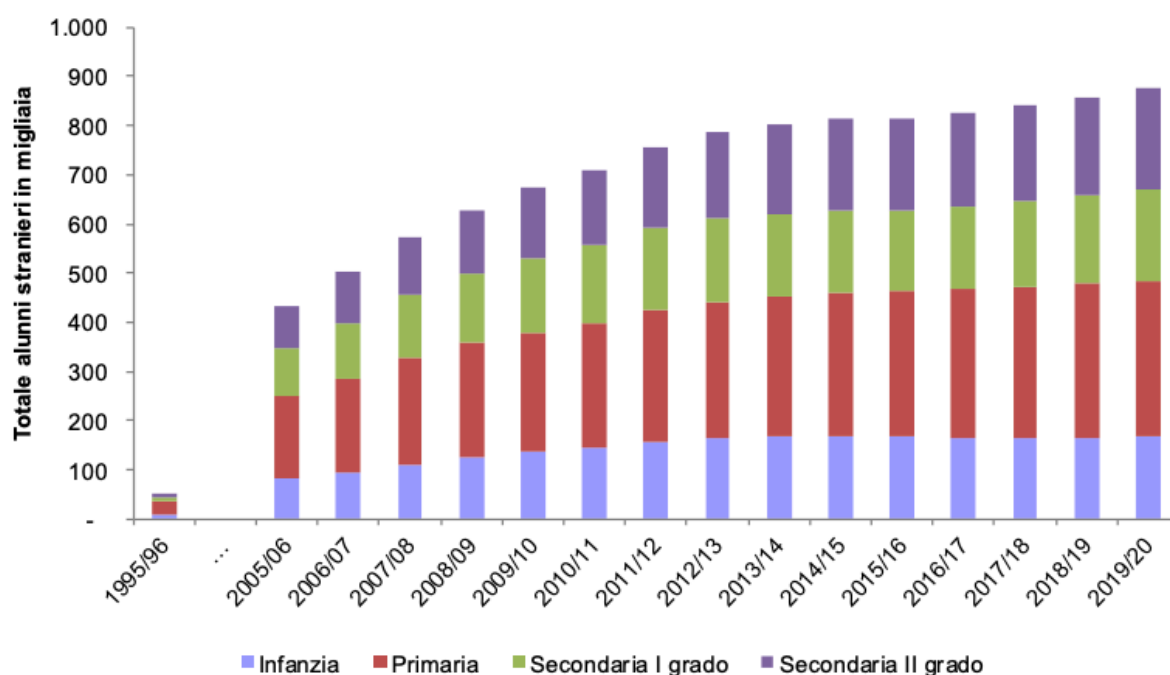


Figure 6 - Pupils with non-Italian citizenship by school grade - AA.SS. 1995/1996, 2005/2006 – 2019/2020.

Among the students with non-Italian citizenship, we can find two different groups:

- 1) Students who were born abroad, who are usually divided into two subgroups, namely the NAI (Newly Arrived Students) who have arrived in Italy for less than 2 years, and those who have been in Italy for a longer period of time.
- 2) Students born in Italy who have lived their whole life in Italy, but do not have an Italian citizenship because their parents are foreigners. They represent the so-called “second generation”. An interesting fact is that 65,4% of students with non-Italian citizenship is made up of this group of students.

In this context, students have a very heterogeneous linguistic and cultural skills due to their personal history. For example, there may be students who have recently arrived in Italy, but they are not able to speak Italian; there are second generation students who, instead, have a good competence both in Italian and in their home language. On the other hand, there are second generation students who may only speak their language of origin at home and have limited competence in Italian; another possibility includes those students who do not know their native language but that are able to speak and understand Italian very well. As shown, Italian schools are therefore increasingly plurilingual and

pluricultural and, in line with the European guidelines analyzed in the previous paragraph, Italian institutions have taken up the challenge to support teachers in this way.

It must be highlighted, however, that the attention paid to language diversity is not new in our country. Between the Sixties and Seventies, something particularly relevant in the history of Italian language education happened: a group of scholars belonging to the Italian Society of Linguistics (GISCEL - Gruppo di Intervento e Studio nel Campo dell'Educazione Linguistica) published a revolutionary document, the "Dieci Tesi per l'Educazione Linguistica Democratica" [Ten Theses for a Democratic Linguistic Education]. These theses are a proposal of a new educational path which put the learner at the center of the learning process, in contrast with the traditional pedagogy which was considered to be ineffective and anachronistic (GISCEL, 1975: Thesis VI). It also highlights the importance of taking into high consideration all the languages spoken by the students, as the school must be able ensure the respect and protection of all linguistic varieties (GISCEL, 1975: Thesis IV). Moreover, it draws attention to the transversal dimension of the language in the school, emphasizing the need of involving all subjects and all teachers in the development of language skills (GISCEL, 1975: Thesis VII). In particular, Thesis VIII represents the core of the proposal for a real democratic language education, whose main principles are listed in ten points. To name only a few (GISCEL, 1975: Thesis VIII):

- the importance of considering the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students as a starting point to gradually enrich and extend his or her linguistic heritage.
- The opportunity to develop both productive and receptive linguistic skills and stimulating the ability to understand and increasingly extensive vocabulary.
- The need to practice all linguistic varieties in order to experience the diversity that characteries the linguistic heritage and make students aware and appreciate this variety.

It is evident that this document, with its ten theses, shares many of the key concepts promoted by the Council of Europe illustrated in the previous paragraph - from plurilingualism as an educational resource to the transversality of language teaching involving different subjects.

Another major turning point concerning the promotion of plurilingualism and multiculturalism in the Italian school system is represented by the document "La via

Italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri" [The Italian Way for a Multicultural School and for the integration of Foreign Students] (MPI, 2007) drawn up by *Osservatorio nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'interculturalità*. Its aim is to propose a national model for the integration of foreign students by presenting conceptual and practical actions in the field of the linguistic and cultural diversity. In details, the document underlines the need to enhance plurilingualism in two ways (MIUR, 2007: 13-14):

- 1) as a system by promoting not only the study of the common foreign languages but also opening to other languages spoken by the community.
- 2) As an individual trait by enhancing the preservation of the native language.

Moreover, the document highlights the importance of multilingual competence as an opportunity for all students within the classroom and the openness towards minority languages present in Italian school contexts.

Concerning the integration of students with a migrant background in Italian schools, the Italian Ministry of Education provides some indications in "Linee guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione degli studenti stranieri" [Guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign students] (MIUR, 2014) which integrates and updates the 2007 document which inspired it, substantially confirming its principles and general guidelines. Following a detailed description of the migratory context of schools in Italy, it draws attention to the intercultural educational choice and the importance of taking charge of students' multilingual repertoires, as the basis for the formation of individual and collective identities. Indeed, a specific section is dedicated to multilingualism as both an individual and a collective value. As previously mentioned, the analysis of the phenomena linked to immigration led the Ministry of Education to identify two different groups of foreign students: those who were born and educated in Italy and those who have just arrived in Italy. More in details, the Ministry defines several specific situations (MIUR, 2014: 5-6):

- 1) students with non-Italian nationality which include those born in Italy from non-Italian parents.
- 2) Students with a non-Italian-speaking family background. They have a limited knowledge of Italian and do not receive useful support for learning writing and reading skills. However, they usually have a good

competence of the language of origin which can be used to overcome linguistic weakness in Italian.

- 3) Unaccompanied minors who usually have a limited competence of their language of origin due to experiences of abandonment and deprivation.
- 4) Students of mixed couples which is increasingly common as a sign of an integration process that is consolidating. These students have an Italian parent and are generally bilingual. Bilingualism indeed is a very useful resource from a cognitive, affective, and emotional point of view.
- 5) Students arrived from international adoptions for whom it is extremely important to organize specific and personalized interventions with the aim of strengthening their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- 6) Students who come from nomadic communities who are often affected by socioeconomic deprivation and a psychological resistance to schooling, perceived as a threat to their cultural identity. It is also very important to keep in mind that they usually have very different cultural traditions compared to the Italian ones that may cause big problems of communication and coexistence.
- 7) University students of foreign nationality including second generation student and students coming from abroad to receive an education in Italy.

Even if it is a simple generalization, this classification shows that the situation teachers face within their classrooms is extremely heterogeneous. To promote inclusion and equality the only way is to spread values of citizenship in the perspective of the European policies and international laws on human and child rights. Therefore, the enhancement of an intercultural education would affect both Italian and non-Italian students and encourage the acquisition of values, knowledge, and skills necessary for democratic cohabitation and for an active role in the world of work, culture, social engagement (MIUR, 2014: 8). The document shows a list of possible operative actions for an intercultural education approach, such as (MIUR, 2014: 19):

- the teaching of non-EU languages.
- The clarification of exchanges between languages in the various themes of the curriculum.
- The creation of lists of key terms or bi / multilingual glossaries relating to the disciplinary contents.

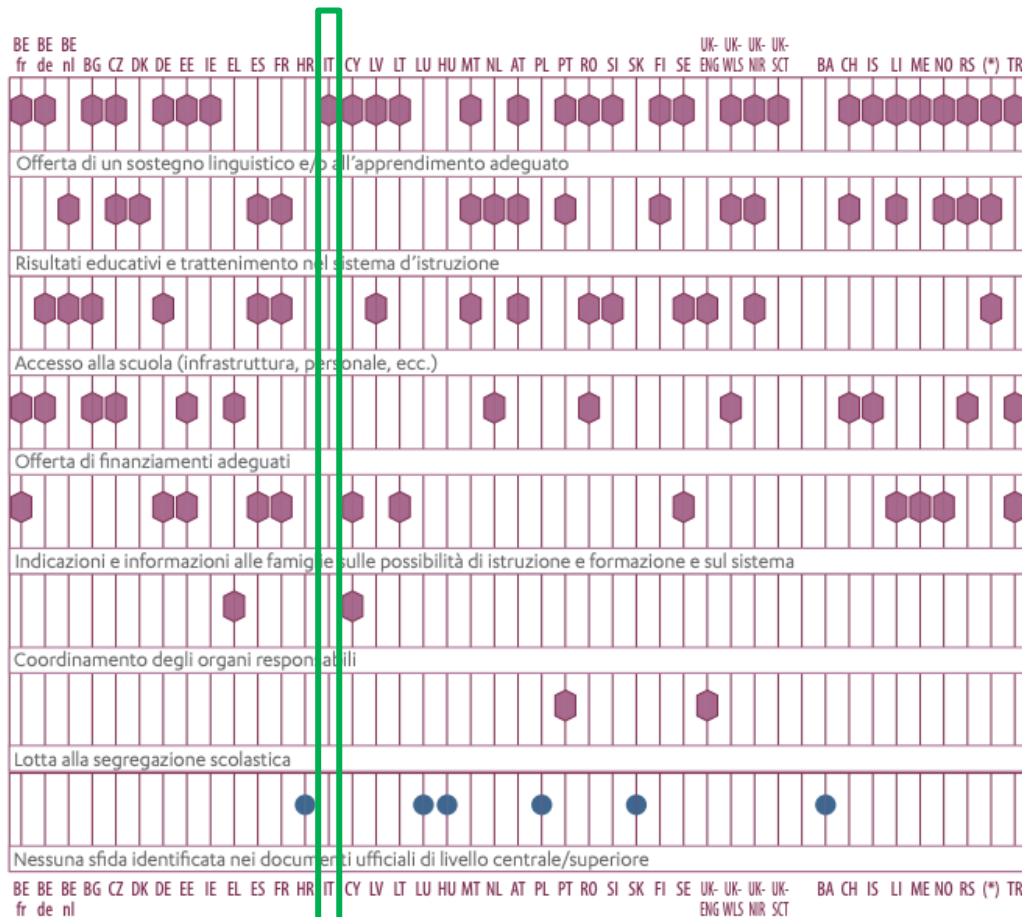
- The use of fairy tales and narratives from the world in version bi / multilingual.
- The use of questionnaires and multilingual forms to detect incoming skills.
- The use of placards, brochures, booklets and multilingual welcome and welcome signs.

Among the various following ministerial measures, the more recent document titled “Indicazioni nazionali e nuovi scenari” [National indications and new scenarios] (MIUR, 2018) presents traces of the major elements of innovation of the policies already recommended by the Council of Europe. A couple of key points seem to be of great interest for the purpose of the present work:

- 1) the reference of plural approaches in which the existence of multilingual classes requires that teachers are prepared to teach Italian as a second language and practice multidisciplinary approaches such as the CLIL methodology (MIUR, 2018: 10). In this context, the document clearly states the decisive role played by teachers as their communication methods, management of relationships in the classroom, teaching choices may convey a truly inclusive and democratic model of citizenship.
- 2) The need to prioritize the learning of schooling language as a means of communication and access to knowledge, while enhancing the linguistic repertoires of each student. In fact, all these languages allow students to develop a plurilingual and pluricultural competence as well as to exercise an active citizenship (MIUR, 2018: 9). This perspective clearly embraces the European perspective of the CEFR.

The documents referred to above show the openness of the Italian scenario towards a plurilingual and multicultural education based on the values of democracy and inclusion. However, as it often happens, there is a gap between theory and practice – what national policies advocate is not exactly what generally happens at school. In fact, both Linee Guida (MIUR, 2014) and Indicazioni (MIUR, 2018) do not accurately mention neither tools





Fonte: Eurydice.

(\*) = ex-Repubblica jugoslava di Macedonia

Figure 8 – Main challenges in integrating children and young people with a migratory background in schools, primary, general secondary and IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2017/18

Figure 7 shows how at a European level Italy meets all the priority areas to support plurilingualism at school; the situation is overturned instead if we look at the existing investments in which the Italian school satisfies only one of the parameters (Figure 8). Compared to a few decades ago, much has been done to support linguistic and cultural plurality but there is still a long way to go. In Chapter 2, we will examine the translanguaging approach as a possible response to these new emerging needs.

## CAPITOLO II: Il *translanguaging*

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Nel precedente capitolo abbiamo esaminato le indicazioni fornite dal Consiglio d'Europa e dal MIUR relativamente alla gestione del plurilinguismo e del pluriculturalismo nella scuola. Questi documenti ci forniscono delle linee guida da seguire per affrontare al meglio i cambiamenti che l'eterogeneità linguistica e culturale comportano a scuola. Questo capitolo mira ad approfondire la pratica del *translanguaging* come risposta a queste nuove esigenze. Dopo un'introduzione relativa all'origine e al significato del termine *translanguaging* (paragrafo 2.1), vengono esposti gli aspetti che lo caratterizzano e i benefici di promuovere questa pratica in classe (paragrafo 2.2) con particolare attenzione al ruolo del docente come facilitatore e promotore di una didattica linguistica inclusiva (paragrafo 2.3). infine, vengono illustrati due modelli di riferimento: il CUNY-NYSIEB dell'Università di New York e L'AltRoparlante dell'Università degli Stranieri di Siena (paragrafo 2.4).

### 2.1 Origine e significato del termine

Originariamente, il termine *translanguaging* deriva dall'espressione gallese *trawsieithu* ed è stato usato per la prima volta negli anni Ottanta dall'educatore Cen Williams (1994, 1994, citato in Wei, 2011: 1223). Il termine si riferiva ad un approccio didattico innovativo che incoraggiava l'uso dell'intero repertorio linguistico degli studenti al fine di massimizzare il loro apprendimento. In particolare, era basato sull'alternanza tra gallese ed inglese in ambito scolastico. Ad esempio, si chiedeva agli studenti di leggere in inglese e scrivere in gallese e viceversa, o parlare in una lingua e leggere nell'altra. Williams ha notato numerosi benefici nell'attuare questa pratica tra i quali il potenziamento delle abilità linguistiche durante l'apprendimento. È importante considerare il contesto di riferimento di quegli anni in cui l'inglese era la lingua dominante e godeva di una posizione prestigiosa, mentre il gallese era considerata una lingua minoritaria. Con l'avvio delle ricerche nel campo della linguistica diffuse nella seconda metà del XX secolo che studiavano i vantaggi del bilinguismo nei bambini e negli adulti, il concetto di *translanguaging* si è evoluto (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012: 2).

È Colin Baker il primo a tradurre il termine in inglese nel 2001 e successivamente definisce il *translanguaging* come "the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining



understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011: 288). Sia il punto di vista di William che quello di Baker ci mostrano come il *translanguaging* sia concepito come un processo in continuo cambiamento e una pratica linguistica strategica volto a massimizzare l'apprendimento. Inoltre, entrambi gli studiosi concordano nell'affermare che, dal punto di vista pedagogico, i vantaggi educativi nell'attuare pratiche di *translanguaging* risiedono nel:

1. promuovere una comprensione più approfondita dei contenuti;
2. aiutare lo sviluppo della lingua più debole;
3. promuovere il rapporto casa-scuola e la cooperazione nell'uso della lingua;
4. accelerare il processo di apprendimento della lingua grazie all'integrazione tra i parlanti fluenti con coloro che la conoscono meno (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012: 2).

Canagarajah contribuisce alla definizione di *translanguaging* affermando che si tratti della abilità del parlante plurilingue di passare da una lingua all'altra, trattando ciascuna lingua che costituisce il proprio repertorio, come un sistema integrato (2011: 401). Secondo questa definizione, la competenza di un bilingue non ruota intorno alla sola costruzione del repertorio linguistico, ossia all'insieme delle diverse abilità possedute nelle diverse lingue con cui si è venuti a contatto, ma anche alla capacità di servirsi di tali lingue come se facessero parte di un sistema integrato.

Anche secondo Wei (2011: 1234) esiste un repertorio unitario dei parlanti bilingui, un “*translanguaging space*” in cui coesistono:

“different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment; their attitude, belief, and ideology; their cognitive and physical capacity, into one coordinated and meaningful performance and this *Translanguaging Space* has its own transformative power because it is forever evolving and combines and generates new identities, values and practices”.

Viene così introdotto il concetto di “bilinguismo dinamico”, secondo cui il repertorio linguistico del parlante plurilingue non è il frutto della somma di una o più lingue, ma, come detto precedentemente, un unico sistema linguistico individuale da cui il parlante attinge liberamente per comunicare in modo efficace (García e Wei, 2014: 8-20). Si espande quindi il concetto originario di *translanguaging* andando ad includere le pratiche comunicative del soggetto bilingue che usa le lingue quotidianamente.

Vogel e García sintetizzano i principi alla base della teoria *translanguaging* affermando che (Vogel e García, 2017: 4):

1. al fine di comunicare, gli individui selezionano e utilizzano elementi da un repertorio linguistico unitario;
2. si accetta una prospettiva sul bi/plurilinguismo che privilegia le pratiche linguistiche e semiotiche dinamiche proprie dei parlanti rispetto alle *named languages* – ovvero lingue di potere come inglese, francese, spagnolo ecc. – degli stati e delle nazioni;
3. si riconoscono gli effetti materiali delle *named languages* costruite socialmente e delle ideologie strutturaliste, specialmente sui parlanti delle lingue minoritarie.

Attualmente, quando si parla di *translanguaging* si fa riferimento a due diverse prospettive collegate fra loro (Flores e Schissel, 2014). Dal punto di vista sociolinguistico, il concetto si occupa di studiare le pratiche linguistiche delle comunità bilingui. Dal punto di vista educativo, si riferisce ad un approccio didattico in cui gli insegnanti mettono in relazione queste pratiche linguistiche con quelle richieste nei contesti scolastici formali. In altre parole, il concetto come pratica didattica si basa sull'idea che le lingue siano collegate fra loro e presenti nello stesso modo. Nel paragrafo successivo, si guarderà al *translanguaging* come un approccio innovativo che mira a promuovere una didattica linguistica inclusiva.

## **2.2 Il *translanguaging* a scuola come pratica quotidiana inclusiva**

La pluralità linguistica e culturale presente nell'attuale contesto educativo richiede di prendere atto di questo cambiamento attraverso il rinnovamento della tradizionale didattica monolingue. La divisione tra chi conosce o meno la lingua di scolarizzazione è da superare a favore di una visione più ampia e inclusiva. Il *translanguaging* costituisce, dunque, un terreno fertile intorno al quale costruire attività didattiche che mirino ad un'effettiva inclusione e valorizzazione della pluralità linguistica e culturale degli studenti. Infatti, il *translanguaging* invita gli studenti ad utilizzare il loro intero repertorio linguistico in classe con l'obiettivo di fornire loro l'opportunità di attingere alle conoscenze pregresse e, allo stesso tempo, crearne di nuove legate alle diverse materie scolastiche (Paulsrud et al., 2017: 15). Per questo motivo, il *translanguaging* è un approccio che persegue

l'obiettivo di costruire un ambiente educativo più democratico. È solo dando pari dignità al repertorio linguistico presente in classe che si promuove un atteggiamento di apertura e curiosità nei confronti della varietà linguistica che caratterizza il contesto educativo al giorno d'oggi. Inoltre, riconoscere il valore delle lingue e delle culture degli studenti ha come implicita conseguenza l'accettazione di coloro che le parlano favorendo quindi l'inclusione in classe (Cognigni, 2020: 85-86).

In conclusione, gli obiettivi che si pone il *translanguaging* non riguardano solo gli studenti che parlano una lingua diversa da quella di scolarizzazione, ma coinvolgono tutta la classe e sono riassumibili nei seguenti punti:

- il rafforzamento della consapevolezza linguistica e metalinguistica. Attraverso il *translanguaging* tutti gli studenti possono rendersi conto di come funzionano le lingue e secondo quali meccanismi entrano in contatto le une con le altre;
- il mantenimento e il consolidamento della lingua d'origine sia a scuola sia al di fuori;
- l'attuazione di strategie di *scaffolding*, cioè la costruzione da parte del docente di una sorta di impalcatura che favorisce l'accesso ai contenuti disciplinari e ai testi più complessi da parte di studenti con difficoltà nella lingua di scolarizzazione (García, Johnson e Seltzer, 2017);
- la de-gerarchizzazione delle lingue e delle culture presenti in classe a favore di una visione più democratica e inclusiva della diversità; secondo il *translanguaging* non esistono più lingue considerate più importanti di altre.

Il *translanguaging* sta cominciando ad essere messo in pratica nelle scuole di tutto il mondo, sia all'interno di classi con alto numero di immigrati e rifugiati sia in classi tradizionali con studenti che stanno imparando altre lingue (Vogel & García, 2017: 8-9). Infatti, i benefici di promuovere la pratica del *translanguaging* in classe sono numerosi e possono essere riassunti sulla base delle seguenti prospettive.

Dal punto di vista linguistico-cognitivo, gli studenti vengono incoraggiati a sfruttare a pieno le proprie potenzialità di apprendimento favorendo un approccio creativo e critico alla comunicazione e permettendo di comprendere il funzionamento dei fenomeni linguistici (García e Kleyn, 2016). In una prospettiva sociolinguistica, il *translanguaging* per sua natura pone l'accento sulla diversità linguistica e culturale. Questa pluralità è considerata un vero e proprio patrimonio da valorizzare. Un beneficio tra i più importanti risiede nella prospettiva emotiva in quanto il *translanguaging* mira a sviluppare un atteggiamento positivo nei confronti della diversità linguistica e culturale che caratterizza non solo la scuola ma anche la società al giorno d'oggi (De Pietro e Matthey, 2001). Favorire pratiche

di *translanguaging* a scuola consente quindi la creazione di un'istruzione socialmente più giusta nei confronti degli studenti e, più in generale, delle persone bi/plurilingui (García & Kleyn, 2016: 17). Infine, dal punto di vista motivazionale, la creazione di un atteggiamento positivo verso questa pluralità e la de-gerarchizzazione del repertorio linguistico sono fattori che giocano un ruolo decisivo nell'aumentare la consapevolezza dello studente verso l'esistenza di varietà linguistiche e culturali e la motivazione nei confronti dello studio delle lingue straniere. Infatti, è allargando i propri orizzonti linguistici e culturali ed aprendosi alla diversità che si possono vincere le sfide dei nostri giorni.

Nel paragrafo che segue si vedrà come il docente che utilizza il *translanguaging* è chiamato ad assumere una posizione di "transformer" (García & Kleyn, 2016: 20) basata sulla convinzione che l'uso dell'intero repertorio linguistico dello studente non sia solo temporanea, ma duratura nel tempo, in modo che nessuna lingua sia considerata superiore e che sia dato valore a tutte le lingue parlate dagli studenti. Questa prospettiva è un passo determinante verso il superamento del monolinguisimo in ambito educativo a favore di una maggiore garanzia di equità nei confronti degli studenti bilingui o plurilingui (García & Kleyn, 2016: 17-21).

### **2.3 Il ruolo del docente**

Con il suo ruolo essenziale e dominante, il docente è tradizionalmente una figura chiave all'interno della classe. Con la pratica del *translanguaging*, invece, avviene un ribaltamento del ruolo che comunemente siamo abituati a considerare. Il *translanguaging* non coinvolge solo le capacità del singolo docente, ma rimette al centro dell'attività didattica lo studente e il rapporto di scambio continuo all'interno della classe. Infatti, le attività sono incentrate *in primis* sullo studente, ma sono anche costruite sulla base di relazioni tra gli studenti e tra il docente e gli studenti. La figura del docente, quindi, perde della sua centralità e acquista caratteristiche nuove: egli diventa un facilitatore che genera opportunità d'uso di tutte le lingue presenti all'interno della classe.

García, Johnson e Seltzer (García & Kleyn, 2016: 20) identificano tre dimensioni del ruolo del docente per attuare una didattica basata sul *translanguaging*:

1. *The teacher's stance* (la postura dell'insegnante). Il docente, infatti, deve sviluppare la consapevolezza che il plurilinguismo sia una risorsa nel

processo di apprendimento e, di conseguenza, adottare un atteggiamento adeguato (*stance*). Solo così potrà progettare attività didattiche (*design*) e promuovere cambiamenti (*shifts*).

2. *The teacher's design* (la progettazione e la pianificazione di attività didattiche) in cui il docente costruisce una didattica calibrata sulla classe e capace di far emergere l'intero repertorio linguistico. Non esistono metodologie specifiche, ma il docente può scegliere quali adottare. Tuttavia, attività come il *cooperative learning* e il *peer-tutoring* si prestano in modo ottimale a far emergere tutte le competenze della classe. Infatti, attraverso queste tipologie di attività, gli studenti possono apprendere nuove funzionalità linguistiche dai loro coetanei e analizzare criticamente diversi punti di vista. Il docente può, quindi, usare numerose risorse quali la carta stampata, testi multilingue, ma anche video, film e Internet, al fine di mettere insieme le conoscenze e crearne di nuove per instaurare collegamenti linguistici, culturali e sociali (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 213).
3. *the teacher's shifts* (la promozione del cambiamento). Il docente è chiamato a cambiare mentalità, ad essere flessibile e preparato a rispondere alla diversità di repertori linguistici degli studenti accettando il valore sostanziale del *translanguaging*.

Sulla base di quanto precedentemente illustrato, attuare pratiche di *translanguaging* non implica necessariamente che il docente conosca tutte le lingue presenti nella classe. Richiede, invece, che egli diventi un *co-learner* e che faccia affidamento sugli studenti al fine di supportare l'apprendimento e sfruttare le risorse esistenti nella classe. Il docente partecipa attivamente alle attività e si pone come modello per i suoi studenti, in particolare, per coloro che non conoscono le lingue utilizzate. Non solo, egli può scegliere di affidarsi alle risorse linguistiche dei propri studenti ed eventualmente di altre figure di riferimento, quali i colleghi, i collaboratori o le famiglie. Così facendo, si dimostra aperto ad interagire con le varietà linguistiche della classe al fine di incoraggiare l'inclusione e la partecipazione attiva di tutti gli studenti. Il ruolo del docente viene così completamente rivoluzionato e rovesciato (Lasagabaster & García, 2014: 557-572).

Il modello CUNY-NYSIEB guidato da García e dal gruppo di ricerca dell'Università di New York e, recentemente, anche il modello italiano AltRoparlante dell'Università degli Stranieri di Siena individuano una serie di elementi specifici che aiutano il docente nella

progettazione di pratiche basate sul *translanguaging*. Questi elementi sono illustrati nel paragrafo successivo.

## 2.4 Due modelli di riferimento: il CUNY-NYSIEB e L'AltRoparlante

A livello internazionale, il CUNY-NYSIEB (City University of New York – New York State Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals) è il progetto più noto di applicazione del *translanguaging*. Guidato da García e dai colleghi del dipartimento dell'istruzione dello stato di New York, il progetto ha coinvolto ventiquattro scuole nei cinque quartieri della città. Il grande lavoro di ricerca e sperimentazione ha fatto sì che oggi sia diventato parte integrante del curriculum scolastico in queste scuole. Secondo García e Kleyn i principi del *translanguaging* si possono riassumere nei seguenti punti (2016: 44):

1. “il bilinguismo come risorsa per l'educazione: [...], qualsiasi pratica linguistica degli studenti bilingui emergenti non solo viene ammessa, ma viene anche sfruttata in quanto strumento cruciale per la didattica e, finché è possibile, promossa e sviluppata”;
2. “il supporto di un'ecologia plurilingue per tutta la scuola: l'intera gamma delle pratiche linguistiche di tutti i bambini e delle famiglie è evidente nello scenario testuale scolastico [...], come anche nelle interazioni fra tutti i membri della comunità scolastica. Anche nelle scuole bilingui, questa attenzione viene fornita a tutte le pratiche linguistiche di tutti gli studenti [...]”.

Da tali indicazioni, emerge chiaramente come lo studente giochi un ruolo centrale nella pratica di *translanguaging* nella misura in cui viene dato valore alle sue risorse e al suo repertorio linguistico in continuo sviluppo. Questa prospettiva si ripercuote conseguentemente all'interno della comunità scolastica che ne trae beneficio.<sup>3</sup>

La procedura didattica del modello CUNY-NYSIEB si articola in due momenti (García, 2017: 106-112) definiti il *Translanguaging Unit Design* e il *Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle*. Il *Translanguaging Unit Design* consiste in sei aspetti da tenere in considerazione per la pianificazione dell'attività:

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<sup>3</sup> Per approfondimenti ulteriori si rimanda al sito del progetto: <https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/>

1. *essential questions*, cioè obiettivi essenziali che l'insegnante si pone prima di iniziare la pianificazione dell'attività raggiungibili da tutti gli studenti indipendentemente dalle loro competenze linguistiche;
2. *content standards* forniti dalla normativa dello stato di New York e dalla normativa americana nazionale;
3. *content and language objectives*, cioè obiettivi disciplinari e linguistici che possono essere raggiunti usando l'intero repertorio linguistico della classe oppure solo l'inglese (ovvero la lingua ufficiale della scuola);
4. *translanguaging objectives* relativi alle strategie linguistiche che usano gli studenti in classe;
5. *assessments* che riguarda la valutazione che spesso si tratta di un'autovalutazione o una valutazione fra pari ed è relativa all'intero processo che ha portato alla realizzazione di un prodotto finale;
6. *texts* usati durante le attività che possono essere in lingua d'origine o in inglese.

Il *Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle* si articola in cinque tappe che riflettono il lavoro svolto in classe con il docente (García, 2017: 106-112):

- *explorar*, in cui il docente costruisce il contesto dal punto di vista disciplinare e introduce gli studenti ai contenuti che dovranno affrontare con lo scopo di far emergere le conoscenze pregresse e stimolare la loro motivazione attraverso testi in più lingue e di diverso tipo (per esempio, testi cartacei, audiovisivi o risorse da Internet);
- *evaluar*, cioè il coinvolgimento critico degli studenti durante il quale cominciano a fare delle attività per incoraggiare la consapevolezza metalinguistica (per esempio, attraverso lavori di gruppo e input diretti);
- *imaginar*, in cui gli studenti pianificano in modo collaborativo e creativo un prodotto finale attraverso l'uso strategico delle lingue presenti in classe (un cartellone, un testo scritto, un fumetto, un podcast, etc...);
- *presentar*, quando gli studenti, dopo aver rivisto il lavoro tra pari, preparano delle presentazioni plurilingui del prodotto che hanno appena realizzato. L'obiettivo è favorire lo scambio di competenze e risorse e supportare reciprocamente ogni studente incoraggiandolo ad esprimersi oralmente in più di una lingua;

- *implementar*, fase in cui il prodotto viene condiviso nella scuola e, in certi casi, anche nella comunità locale dando così maggiore risalto al lavoro svolto dagli studenti. Secondo García, infatti, l'obiettivo del *translanguaging* è anche quello di avere un impatto al di fuori delle rigide pareti della classe.

Al fine di implementare la pratica del *translanguaging* anche nel contesto italiano, è necessario tenere in considerazione sia la situazione sociolinguistica e migratoria presente in Italia sia le specificità a livello locale, più eterogenee rispetto alla realtà nord-americana. A partire dal 2016 due studiosi dell'Università per Stranieri di Siena, Carbonara e Scibetta, hanno riadattato il modello CUNY-NYSIEB sulla base delle specifiche caratteristiche del nostro Paese e hanno cominciato una sperimentazione in alcuni Istituti Comprensivi italiani nel 2018 e nel 2019. Il progetto denominato l'"AltRoparlante" ha una struttura operativa di pianificazione a due momenti: il Quadro generale dell'Unità e le Fasi di Sviluppo (Carbonara e Martini, 2019). Gli elementi del Quadro Generale dell'Unità derivano dalle *Nuove Competenze Chiave Europee sull'educazione plurilingue a scuola* (CE, 2018) e dagli Obiettivi di Apprendimento provenienti dalle *Indicazioni Nazionali per il curriculum della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo d'istruzione* (MIUR, 2012). Sono poi elencate le competenze e i saperi di tipo plurilingue documentati nel FREPA (CE, 2012). Come sottolineato per il modello americano, anche per l'AltRoparlante le metodologie didattiche non sono fisse e ogni docente è libero di usare quella che ritiene più adatta, favorendo il *cooperative learning* in un'ottica di scambio delle competenze linguistiche e contenutistiche degli studenti. C'è poi una ricerca degli strumenti e dei materiali e il ricorso alle risorse umane in quanto il docente non parla sempre le lingue della classe, ma anche in questo caso può attingere a risorse esterne quali colleghi, collaboratori o i familiari degli studenti. Infine, per quanto riguarda la valutazione, viene dato valore al processo, alle strategie translinguistiche e all'interazione fra pari (Carbonara e Scibetta, 2019).

La proposta italiana si realizza intorno all'Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento (UdLA), cioè una struttura operativa organizzata in fasi di sviluppo e caratterizzata da una doppia terminologia con lo scopo di considerare

"in un'unica istantanea tutti gli attori del processo di insegnamento/apprendimento: gli studenti apprendenti, l'oggetto dell'apprendimento e l'insegnante/facilitatore linguistico e il rapporto interazionale che necessariamente li lega l'uno agli altri." (Pona, Cencetti, Troiano 2018).



INSEGNANTI	STUDENTI
Motivazione	Riscaldiamoci!
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?

Figure 9 - Fasi di sviluppo dell'UdLA da Pona, Cencetti, Troiano (2018).

Nel sito del progetto AltRoparlante vengono citate alcune delle più note attività legate al *translanguaging*<sup>4</sup> tra le quali attività di:

1. *storytelling* bilingue o multilingue con il coinvolgimento dei genitori;
2. realizzazione di testi plurilingui utilizzando sulla base delle piattaforme digitali multilingui offerte da alcuni libri di testo in cui gli studenti sono chiamati a collaborare per la soluzione di attività di comprensione e identificazione lessicale;
3. rielaborazione in chiave plurilingue di tematiche di studio disciplinare tramite mappe concettuali o prodotti multimediali da parte degli studenti (power point, Prezi, e-books etc...).

Attualmente sono coinvolti circa 600 studenti e 70 docenti di diverse discipline, dalla scuola dell'infanzia fino alla scuola secondaria di primo grado. Numerosi sono i benefici riscontrati in questi anni, in particolare si nota una maggiore consapevolezza sulla diversità linguistica e il miglioramento delle relazioni tra gli studenti all'interno della classe e del rapporto degli studenti con il docente.

Nel capitolo successivo è illustrata un'esperienza didattica basata sull'approccio del *translanguaging* all'interno della classe terza di una scuola secondaria di primo grado con l'obiettivo mostrare la sua praticità nella valorizzazione della varietà linguistica e culturale degli studenti e trattare le criticità emerse.

<sup>4</sup> Per ulteriori approfondimenti si rimanda al sito [https://cluss.unistrasi.it/1/116/157/II\\_progetto.htm](https://cluss.unistrasi.it/1/116/157/II_progetto.htm)

## CHAPTER III: *Translanguaging*: a teaching experience

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This chapter deals with the operative part of the present work. The intention is to propose a teaching activity that benefits of *translanguaging* approach in line with the indications of the European institutions and the Italian Ministry of Education. We will comment on the teaching strategies and discuss in what way they represent an effective way to encourage a positive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity.

### 3.1 The context and activity objectives

The activity presented below was developed within the English and Geography programs and involved the third-year class at a private middle school (Istituto Canossiano Feltre) in the province of Belluno, an area characterized by a low immigration rate. The activity involves 25 students aged between 13 and 14 years. The class group consists of 6 second generation students who are literate in Italian and show different knowledge levels of their language of origin. These bi/plurilingual students have a high spoken competence in their native language, since they use it at home with their family or with their relatives abroad, but they show a limited competence in written communication in the same languages.

The languages involved are mainly Albanese, Chinese, English, French, Italian and Spanish, but other languages are also represented, such as Greek and Serbo-Croatian.

The activity has two specific educational objectives:

- 1) allowing emerging bi/plurilingual students to carry out meaningful tasks in their native language (linguistic mediation actions, written and oral production and cultural interaction).
- 2) Making all students aware of the linguistic and cultural diversity present both inside and outside of the school environment (metalinguistic and metacultural awareness).

The challenge is to involve students in a multilanguage project in which they are asked to express themselves using the language they feel comfortable with and learn new linguistic and cultural features different from the schooling ones.

An important aspect regarding the implementation of the activity is the transformation of the classroom space. Depending on the specific task, the seating setting is changed (desks in circle, “in islands” or moved next to the walls to create free space) in order to spread the language contamination and facilitate the linguistic exchange among students. The activity here presented is to be understood as a starting point for further developments.

### **3.2 Development of the teaching experience**

The teaching experience presented here adopts the *translanguaging* approach with some adaptations due to the specific context and target. The activity planning is based on the original North American model CUNY-NYSIEB created by García and her colleagues of the City University of New York, which is divided into two stages (see Chapter 2 for more details):

- the theoretical one, defined *Translanguaging Unit Design* which explains contents, objectives, and materials.
- The operational one, defined *Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle* divided into five phases of work - *explorar, evaluar, imaginar, presentar, and implementar* (García, Johnson, Seltzer, 2017).

The activity planning is adapted for the Italian context by Carbonara and Martini (2019), who propose an operative model based on the *General Framework of the Unit* and the *Development Stages* (Pona, Cencetti, Troiano, 2018). The *General Framework of the Unit* (Table 1) includes three essential competence levels taken from the “Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” (Council of the European Union, 2018), the learning goals described in the “National indications and new scenarios” (MIUR, 2012 and 2018) and the competences described in the “Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures” (FREPA / CARAP, Candelier et al. 2012). The activity planning also includes other elements such as methodologies, human resources, and evaluation, which are often used in teaching planning in the Italian context (Carbonara, Martini, 2019).

The *Development Stages* (Table 2), on the other hand, allow the teacher to provide useful stimuli for achieving the learning goals.

The *General Framework of the Unit* proposed here is represented in Table 1.

Title	<b>Multilingual Thankfulness tree</b>
Target	Third year students at middle school aged 13-14 years old
Subject(s) involved	English language and culture, Geography, Citizenship
“Key competences for lifelong learning” (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multilingual</li> <li>- Citizenship</li> <li>- Cultural awareness and expression</li> <li>- Personal, social and learning to learn</li> </ul>
“National indications and new scenarios” (2012, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify, by listening, terms and information relating to the study contents of other disciplines.</li> <li>- Interact with one or more interlocutors, understand the key points of a conversation and present their ideas in a clear and understandable way.</li> <li>- Report experiences in writing, expressing feelings and opinions in simple sentences.</li> <li>- Detect simple similarities or differences between behaviors and uses related to different languages.</li> <li>- Collaborate and participate by understanding the different points of view of people.</li> <li>- Intervene in a conversation or discussion, class or group, with relevance and coherence, respecting speaking times and turns and providing a positive personal contribution.</li> </ul>
“Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures” (FREPA, 2012): knowledge, abilities, skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- K 5.7 Is aware of the existence of situations of multilingualism / plurilingualism in one’s own environment and in other places, near or far.</li> <li>- K 7.3 Knows that one can learn better if one has a positive attitude towards linguistic differences.</li> <li>- K 8 Possesses knowledge about what cultures are / how they work.</li> <li>- K 8.2 Knows that a number of cultures, more or less different, exist.</li> <li>- A 2.2 Sensitivity to linguistic / cultural differences.</li> <li>- 3 Curiosity about / Interest in “foreign” languages /</li> </ul>

	<p>cultures / persons // pluricultural contexts // the linguistic / cultural / human diversity of the environment // linguistic / cultural / human diversity in general [as such].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A 4 Positive acceptance of linguistic / cultural diversity / of others / of what is different.</li> <li>- A 5 Openness to the diversity of languages / people / cultures° of the world / to diversity as such [to difference itself] [to alterity].</li> <li>- A 18.1 A positive attitude towards the learning of languages (and the speakers who speak them).</li> <li>- S 3 Can compare linguistic / cultural features of different languages / cultures.</li> <li>- S 3.10 Can compare cultural phenomena [perceive the cultural proximity / distance].</li> </ul>
Methodology	Translanguaging, brainstorming, peer-to-peer collaboration, learning by doing.
Tools and materials	Visual (video) and written (textbook) resources in English, whiteboard and interactive whiteboard with Internet access.
Human resources	Teachers, students and eventually parents at home.
Evaluation	Individual reflection and sharing through collaborative activity
Duration	3 hours

Table 1 - General Framework of the Unit

The *Development Stages* are organized according to Table 2.

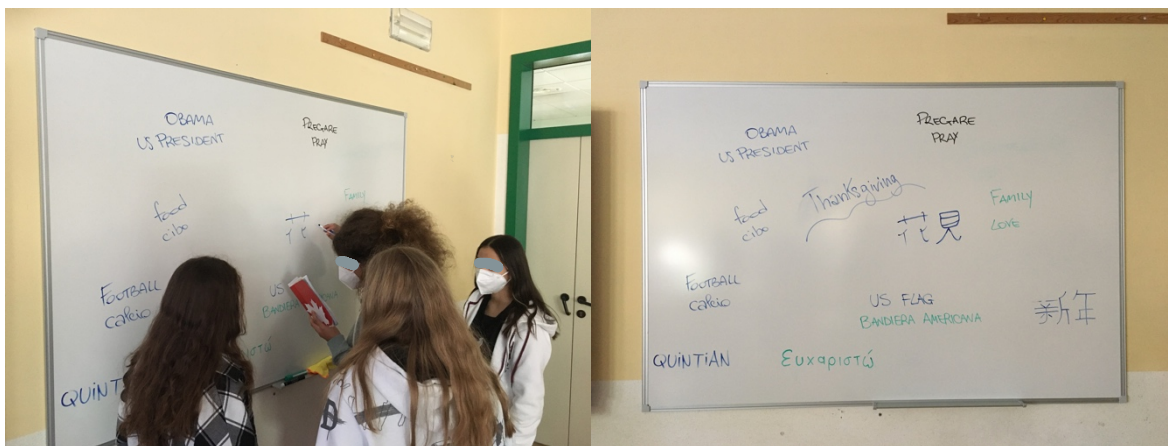
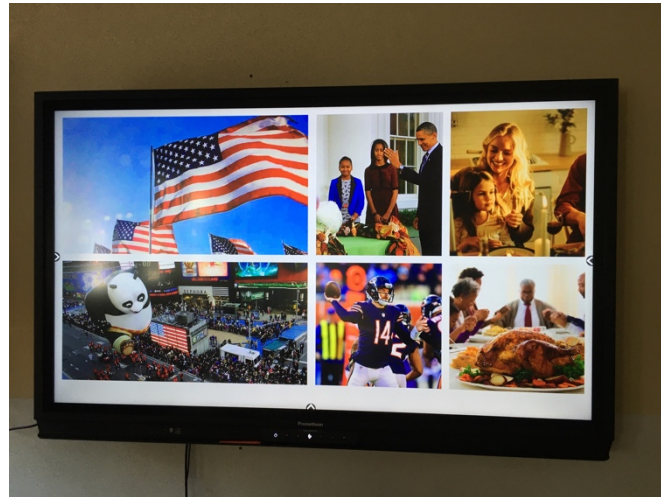
<b>Lesson 2 – 1:30 hour</b>	
Motivation (motivazione)	The teacher shows some pictures on the interactive whiteboard. <i>Brainstorming</i> on the whiteboard and then the teacher reveals the topic of the activity “Thanksgiving”.
Globality (globalità)	The teacher divides the students in mixed-language groups. The seating setting is flexible so students can gather easily. The teacher plays the video and asks the students to say what the video is about.  This is followed by a class discussion on it.
Analyses (analisi) Synthesis (sintesi)	The teacher plays the video again and asks the students to answer some Wh-questions within their group (Attachment A).

	They can also use their English and geography textbooks to extract information. No specific language needed, either English or others.
Reflection (riflessione)	<i>Peer-to-peer collaboration</i> : negotiation of meanings, students write the answers.
Reinforcement (rinorzo) Verification and Evaluation (verifica e valutazione)	Class discussion and comments.
Feedback	Wrap up: sharing the meaning of “thank you” and translation in different languages
<b>Lesson 2 – 1:30 hour</b>	
Motivation (motivazione)	Recap about Thanksgiving as a US tradition and about giving thanks in different languages
Globality (globalità)	Class discussion about personal experience in various countries (mainly Albany, China, France, Italy, Spain, UK based on the languages and culture present in class or known by the students)
Analyses (analisi) Synthesis (sintesi)	The teacher shows a cardboard tree and gives each student one or two paper leaves. Then the teacher asks the students to color it and subsequently to write a thought about the topic of the lesson (could be a word or a sentence) using the language he/she feels more confident with.
Reflection (riflessione)	Free movement of students around the classroom to encourage dissemination of ideas and linguistic exchange.
Reinforcement (rinforzo)	Each student shows his/her leaf to the class and explains the meaning. Each leaf is stucked on tree branches to create a “Multilingual Thankfulness Tree”.
Feedback	Tag cloud: the teacher invites the students to complete a tag cloud online (to do at home) as a reflective wrap up activity. All languages are welcome.

*Table 2 - Development Stages*

The purpose of the first *brainstorming* activity was to elicit background knowledge (linguistic and cultural), to introduce the topic, to stimulate their curiosity and, most

importantly, to start speaking English and other languages. The result was a multilingual map created by the students on the whiteboard where all languages were welcome.

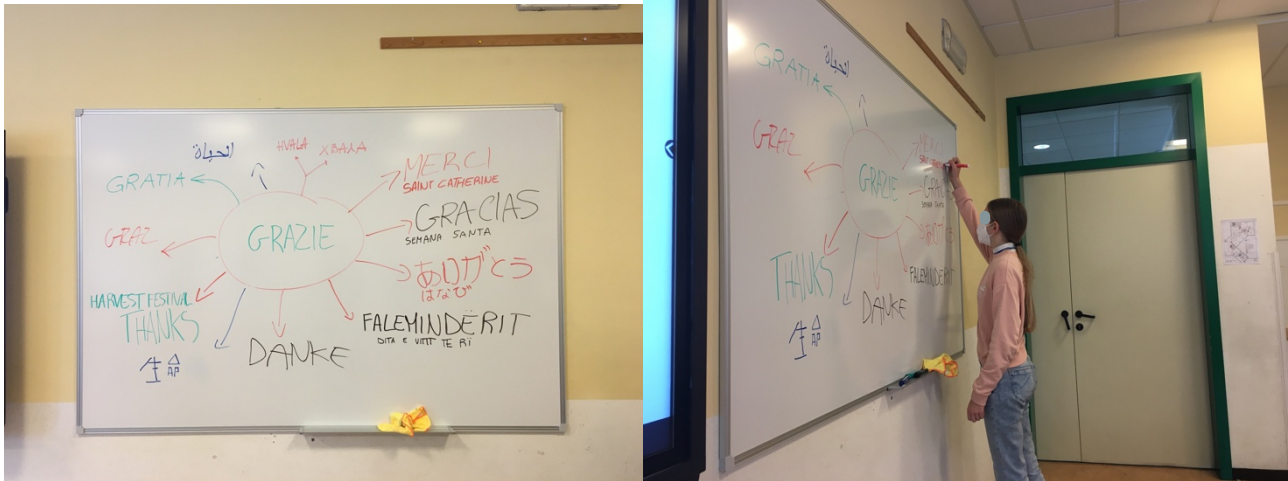


Picture 1 - Brainstorming activity.

I am fluent in Italian and English, but I acted as a facilitator by creating opportunities for the use of all the languages present in the classroom or known by the students without limiting students' active participation.

The following group activities allow students to learn more about the topic by watching a video and answering some *wh-* plurilingual questions (Attachment A). To carry out this task, they could use some texts taken from their English and geography textbooks. In this phase, students use their language to understand the contents and share their knowledge with classmates. In addition, they acquired awareness on the existence of other languages beside their own. This exchange led to a significant class discussion about the meaning of

“thank you” and the creation of a plurilingual board realized by the students on the interactive whiteboard.



Picture 2 - The multilingual map on the whiteboard.

The languages included were Albanese, Chinese, English, French, Italian and Spanish. Students decided to include other languages that they know such as Greek and Japanese. Students were able to compare the same word in various languages and, therefore, enhance metalinguistic awareness.

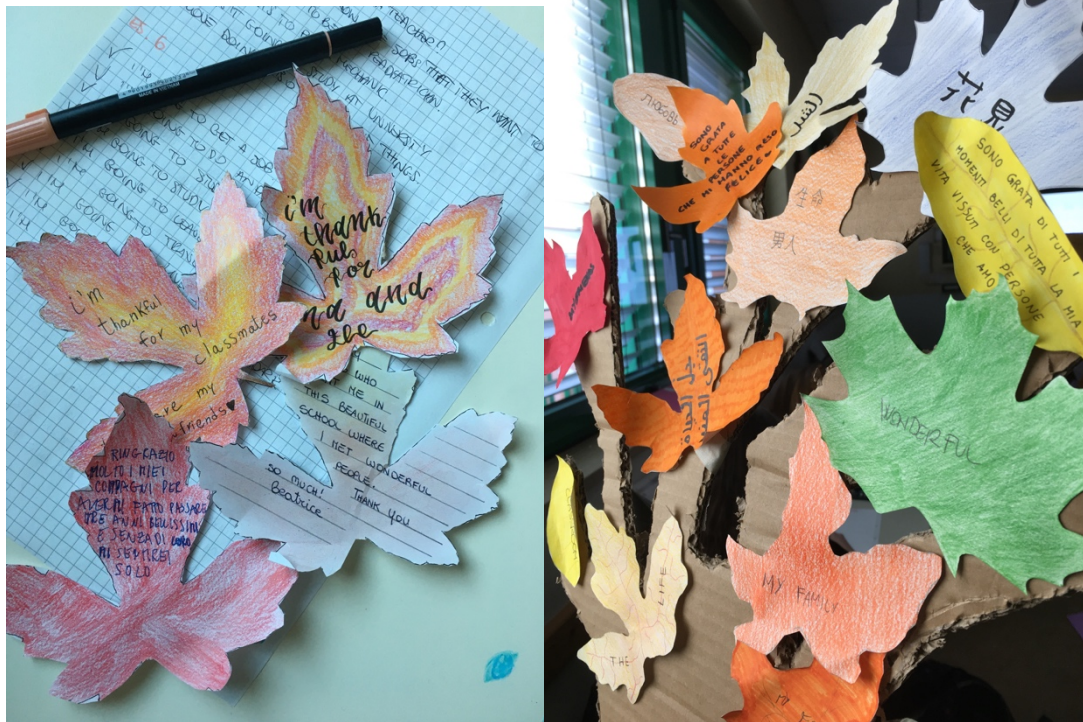
This activity inspired a multilingual discussion on traditions that was held as opening moment of the second lesson. This was an extremely engaging time: while foreign students had the opportunity to share their personal experiences about the celebration of national holidays in their countries of origin, the others were given the chance to acquire new words in the languages of the class and learn cultural aspects of the related countries. In the photo above, the name of the national holiday is written under the foreign word, for example “faleminderit” means “thank you” in Albanese and “Dita e vitit te ri” is one of the most important holidays celebrated in Albany.





*Picture 3 - My student telling popular traditions from his country of origin.*

The creation of the final product “Multilingual Thankfulness tree” represented a reflexive moment for every student. In fact, they were asked to think about the entire activity and write on a paper leaf what they were thankful for. Since no specific language was needed, bi-/plurilingual students felt more confident in writing in their language of origin but, at the same time, some Italian students challenged themselves by writing in a foreign language such as Chinese and Albanese. The multilingual tree was placed in the school hall and was visible to all students, teachers, parents, and anyone who passed by in order to have an impact even outside the classroom.



Picture 4 - Details of the final product realized by the students.

Then, an oral production moment with multilingual discussion was conducted between students and teacher. Besides explaining the content of their paper leaf to the class in their

language, students were invited to add some words in other linguistic forms previously shown. During this activity, I was able to fill in an observation grid useful for a general feedback for the final evaluation phase. In fact, given the class context and the project objectives, I decided not to include a proper individual grade, but to complete an observation grid (Attachment B) for each student considering some important parameters in order to understand whether the educational objectives previously listed had been reached. These parameters were:

- social interactions and communication.
- Linguistic and cultural awareness.
- Knowledge acquired.

The observation grid considers the indications of the European Key competences for lifelong learning (2018), the “Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures” (FREPA, 2012) and the “National indications and new scenarios” (2012, 2018) previously described in Table 2.

The final phase of the activity concerned student’s feedback which I decided to handle online by creating a multilingual tag cloud to be completed at home in autonomy. Students were asked to think of a word in any language that could summarise the entire activity. The advantages of this final task were twofold – on the one hand, students played an active role in their learning process by reflecting on the path undertaken so far and, on the other, the teacher could understand students’ interests and motivation and understand whether the teaching methods applied had been appropriate for them. Here below the result:



Picture 5 - Details of the final product realized by students.

It is interesting to note that the words chosen by students regarded diversity seen by multiple points of view: migration, travels, freedom and courage.

### 3.3 Conclusive reflections

The experience here described represents an example of an operative project that incorporates the methodology of *translanguaging* in an Italian middle school. For the design of the activity, various elements from national and European language and education policy documents were integrated. In fact, it is necessary for teachers who want to apply *translanguaging* in their everyday practice to reflect on the aspects listed in the *General Framework of the Unit*, which is considered a fundamental prerequisite to develop successful practices.

Figure 1 shows the results of the teacher's observation grid.

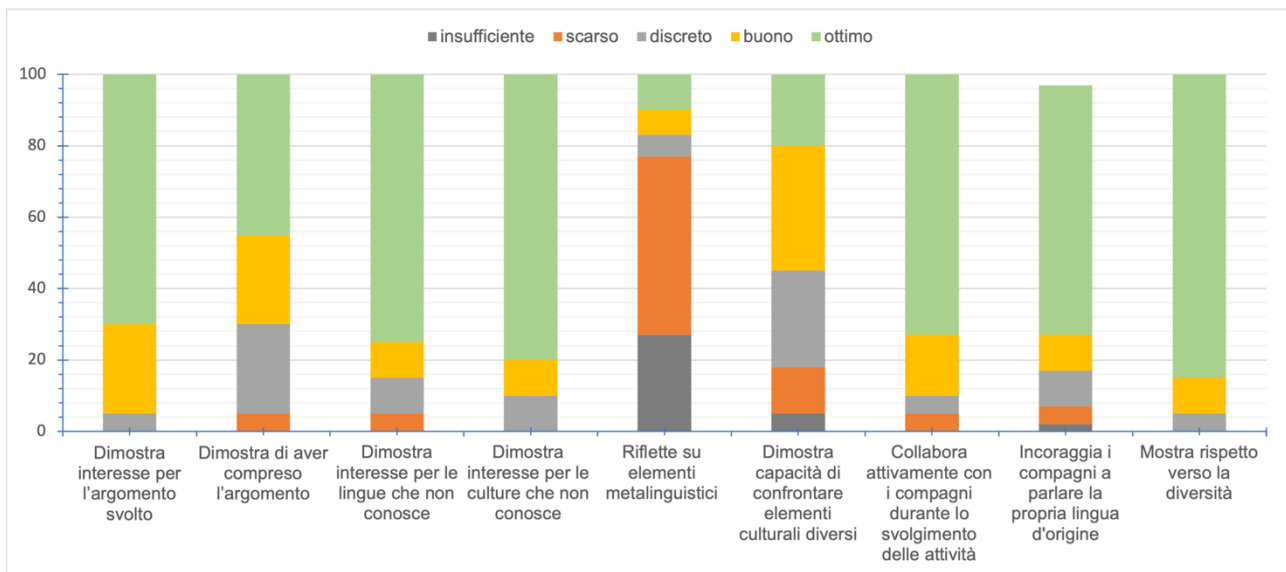


Figure 10 - Teacher's observation grid results

Overall, it is clear that students were deeply involved in the activity, in fact, they demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm and active participation. We can see that most of them actively collaborated with their classmates during the development of the activity and, most interestingly, on many occasions they encouraged them to speak their language of origin. They showed their openness to learn from other languages, to communicate with different cultures and to share their knowledge, thus developing socio-linguistic awareness. However, even if they increased the positive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity, their ability to reflect on metalinguistic elements was quite low. This is probably due to the fact that the mere linguistic aspect has taken a second place in favor of the cultural exchange.

Among the critical aspects that I faced, I recognize two main issues: the teacher's attitude to run this type of activity and the evaluation process. Regarding the first issue, the planning of activities based on *translanguaging* requires a renovation of the teacher's mindset who should be ready to undertake a theoretical and ideological preparation aimed at the enhancement of all the languages in the classroom. At a practical level, this process needs time, new measures, and efforts to adjust according to the class context.

The second issue is probably the most challenging and regards the difficulty in the evaluation process - what should teachers evaluate and how? Should teachers consider the competence in the languages of origin and/or the improvement of the foreign language? Should teachers examine the final project? Or should they consider students' participation?

As suggested by Carbonara and Martini (2019), a possible solution to all these issues could be the establishment of an effective and concrete collaboration between universities and schools, as happened in the context of the CUNY-NYSIEB and “L’AltRoparlante” projects (Carbonara and Martini, 2019: 36). In this way, the relationship could lay the foundation for the creation, on the one hand, of learning paths to assist teachers to carry out activities that support plurilingualism and multiculturalism in class and, on the other, of formal tools and tasks suitable to evaluate students and detect their progress.

## CONCLUSION

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Through my work on *translanguaging* I had the opportunity to reflect on this innovative approach that supports plurilingualism and multiculturalism in educational context. Despite the lack of investments, it is supported by European institutions and the Italian Ministry of Education through direct indications. Moreover, it is being carried out in various schools around the world, both within classes with a high number of immigrants and refugees and in classes with students who are learning foreign languages.

The teaching experience conducted in the third-year middle school class enabled me to consider *translanguaging* as a mean for the inclusion of emerging plurilingual students since it considers their entire linguistic repertoire and cultural knowledge. Giving value to diversity, the dialogue with different ways of being and thinking is encouraged. Consequently, this approach leads to the creation of a positive attitude that plays a decisive role in increasing student's awareness about the existence of different languages and cultures towards the creation of a more socially equal education.

Finally, in order to spread *translanguaging* approach in everyday practice at school, it is important to support a proper training path for teachers by establishing a concrete collaboration between universities and schools. It is by broadening students' linguistic and cultural horizons and opening to diversity that most challenges of our days can be overcome.

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# APPENDIX

## Attachment A - Wh- plurilingual questions inspired by Carbonara and Martini (2019)

<p>WHO? 谁? (Shèi?) من? (Man?) <b>CHI?</b> ვინ? (Vin?) ¿QUIEN? KUSH?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Who made Thanksgiving a national holiday?</li> <li>2) Who celebrate Thanksgiving today?</li> </ol>
<p>WHEN? 什么时候? (shénmēshíhòu?) متى? (Mataa?) <b>QUANDO?</b> როდის? (Rodis?) ¿CUANDO? KUR?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When did Thanksgiving become a national holiday?</li> <li>2) When is it celebrated today?</li> </ol>
<p>WHERE? 哪里? (Nǎlǐ?) إلى أين? (Ilā ayīn?) <b>DOVE?</b> სადა? (Sad?) ¿DONDE? KU?</p>	<p>Where is it celebrated?</p>
<p>WHAT? 什么? (shénme?) ماذا? (Madha?) <b>CHE COSA?</b> რა? (Ra?) ¿QUE? ÇFARË?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What do people do at Thanksgiving?</li> <li>2) What is the special dish on this day?</li> </ol>
<p>WHY? 为什么呢? (Wèishéme ne?) لماذا? (Limadha?) <b>PERCHÉ?</b> რატომ? (Rat'om?) ¿POR QUÉ? PSE?</p>	<p>Why do they celebrate Thanksgiving?</p>

**Attachment B** - Teacher's observation grid.

<b>NOME E COGNOME</b> _____	1 insufficiente	2 scarso	3 discreto	4 buono	5 ottimo
Dimostra interesse per l'argomento svolto					
Dimostra di aver compreso l'argomento					
Dimostra interesse per le lingue che non conosce					
Dimostra interesse per le culture che non conosce					
Riflette su elementi metalinguistici					
Dimostra capacità di confrontare elementi culturali diversi					
Collabora attivamente con i compagni durante lo svolgimento delle attività					
Incoraggia i compagni a parlare la propria lingua d'origine					
Mostra rispetto verso la diversità					
Commento dell'insegnante					