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Special Issue

**Learners' outcomes in early second language learning:
The key to developing effective strategies**

Guest Editors

Francesca Costa and Elisabet Pladevall-Ballester

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Introduction to the Special Issue: Learners' outcomes and effective strategies in early second language learning

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ABSTRACT

EN As early second language learning is increasingly considered fundamental in children's development and as early language learning programmes are encouraged both at institutional and societal levels, research has expanded in scope from a narrow focus on age to examine the interplay between variables affecting language learning. In this introductory article to the special issue, we first provide an overview of the field of early second and foreign language learning and how it has changed over the last few years. Next, we report challenges and strategies that should be tackled both in research and in pedagogical practices. These include teacher education and use of teaching strategies, the use of multilingual practices, bilingual and CLIL programmes and teachers', students' and parents' beliefs about language learning at an early age. We conclude with an overview of the articles and book reviews included in this special issue.

Key words: EARLY L2 LEARNING, YOUNG LEARNERS, CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES, CLASSROOM PRACTICE

ES A medida que se ha ido reconociendo el lugar central que ocupa la adquisición temprana de segundas lenguas en el desarrollo de los niños y los programas de aprendizaje temprano de lenguas han adquirido relevancia institucional y social, la investigación en este campo ha empezado a prestar atención a otros factores más allá de la edad. En esta introducción, ofrecemos una visión panorámica del campo y de cómo ha cambiado en los últimos años, para luego pasar a describir una serie de retos y estrategias que la investigación y las prácticas pedagógicas deberían abordar. Éstas incluyen la formación de los profesores y el uso de estrategias docentes, el uso de prácticas multilingües en el aula, los programas bilingües y CLIL y las creencias de los profesores, los estudiantes y los padres acerca del aprendizaje de lenguas en una edad temprana. Este artículo se cierra con una panorámica de los artículos y reseñas incluidos en este número especial.

Palabras clave: ADQUISICIÓN TEMPRANA DE L2, APRENDICES JÓVENES, RETOS, ESTRATEGIAS, PRÁCTICAS DOCENTES

IT Dato che l'apprendimento precoce di una lingua seconda è considerato fondamentale nello sviluppo dei bambini e i programmi di insegnamento precoce sono incoraggiati sia a livello istituzionale sia a livello sociale, la ricerca in questo senso si è spostata dall'età come unico fattore di analisi per andare verso la varietà di fattori che entrano in gioco e influenzano il processo di apprendimento delle lingue in questo contesto. In questo articolo introduttivo del volume offriamo una panoramica di studi sull'apprendimento precoce delle lingue per poi descrivere una serie di sfide e strategie che la ricerca e la pratica pedagogica dovrebbero dipanare. Tra queste vi sono: la formazione dei docenti e il loro uso di strategie didattiche, l'uso di pratiche multilingui in classe, i programmi bilingui e il CLIL e le opinioni dei professori, degli studenti e dei genitori in merito all'apprendimento delle lingue in età precoce. Questo articolo chiude con una panoramica degli articoli e recensioni inclusi in questo numero speciale.

Parole chiave: ACQUISIZIONE PRECOCE DI L2, GIOVANI APPRENDENTI, SFIDE, STRATEGIE, PRATICHE DIDATTICHE

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1. Early second and foreign language learning

The introduction of second or foreign language learning programmes in early education has become common practice worldwide despite children's little progress and modest quantifiable achievements, particularly in low exposure contexts (Bland, 2015; García Mayo, 2017; Garton & Copland, 2019; Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2011; Rokita-Jaśkow & Ellis, 2019). The introduction of additional or foreign languages (FL/L2), notably English, for young learners (YLS) in primary schools and very young learners (VYLs) in pre-schools is claimed to have entered "a global phase, thereby astronomically increasing the number of children involved" (Johnstone, 2019, p. 16). In the European context, most countries have established the mandatory starting age of FL learning at 7 years or less (Enever, 2011; Eurydice, 2017). This widespread implementation of early language teaching is encouraged in several policy documents, including the Conclusions of the Barcelona Presidency (2002), the reports from the Commission of the European Communities (2003) and the consecutive Eurydice reports (Eurydice, 2006, 2012, 2017). These documents are informed by a socioeconomic rationale, namely the necessity for the school curriculum to keep pace with the requirements of a globalised world, where knowing different languages, in particular English, offers a competitive advantage (Enever & Moon, 2009). Language acquisition studies in immersion or second language contexts provide a psycholinguistic justification, according to which an early start results in potentially better language learning outcomes. Yet age is just one of the factors at play and an early start alone does not guarantee any advantages if the learning context and the learning conditions are not favourable (Enever, 2015; Johnstone, 2009). Research should therefore focus on exploring those contexts that are indeed successful to determine which factors contribute to improving early language learning experiences among teachers and learners (Garton & Copland, 2019).

A number of advantages for early second language learning have been identified, namely the development of positive attitudes towards foreign languages (Johnstone, 2009), the development of language awareness strategies, children's natural tendency to communicate and play (Halliwell, 1992), more time to learn, the development of multicultural identities, and reduced anxiety (Johnstone, 2002; 2009). According to Pinter (2006), children in their first years of schooling understand meaningful messages but do not display analytic skills. They also have low awareness of themselves as language learners and of the language learning process, and their literacy skills are only emerging. With limited knowledge of the world, they enjoy fantasy, imagination and movement. Older children in the upper stages of primary school are more analytic, have well-developed literacy skills, are aware of others' viewpoints, and have knowledge of the world and an interest in real-life issues. Two of the earliest research reports on early second language learning outlined a number of conditions for success (Blondin et al. 1998; Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek, 2006), and subsequent research reviews contributed to an understanding of factors fostering early language learning (Enever, 2011; Enever & Lindgren, 2016; Garcia Mayo, 2017; Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2011). As these researchers noted, the amount of exposure inside and outside school should be increased, parental involvement should be guaranteed, class size should ideally be reduced, teachers should possess an advanced linguistic proficiency level, methodologically appropriate training should be provided, and continuity should be ensured from one educational level to the next. Additionally, YLS need to be provided with meaningful and enjoyable tasks, as well as opportunities to communicate through purposeful, real, here-and-now experiences (Cameron, 2001; Muñoz, 2007; Nunan, 2011; Pinter, 2011, 2014), all of which encourage motivation in language learning. Most importantly, the development of realistic objectives and the use of age-appropriate methodological tools are key to enhancing the potential benefits of an early start (Bland, 2015; García Mayo, 2017).

The growing number of early second and foreign language teaching programmes has been paralleled by an increase in research contributions, particularly over the past ten years. Edited volumes on research-informed practice (Bland, 2015; García Mayo, 2017; Moon & Nikolov, 2000; Mourão & Lourenço, 2015; Murphy & Evangelou, 2016; Nikolov, 2009; Philp, Oliver, & Mackey, 2008; Rokita-Jaśkow & Ellis, 2019; among others), research methods (Enever & Lindgren, 2017; Pinter & Zandian, 2014), assessment (Nikolov, 2017; Prosic-Santovac & Rixon, 2019), teacher education (Zein & Garton, 2017) and global policies (Enever & Moon, 2009), special issues on young learners (Enever & Lindgren, 2016; Copland & Garton, 2014), monographs (Murphy, 2014; Pinter, 2011) and handbooks (Garton & Copland, 2019) all contribute to expanding research on instructed early language learning. However, the teaching and learning strategies and the outcomes of early language teaching policies in pre-primary and primary school settings remain under-researched in comparison to other age groups (i.e., university learners or adolescent learners) and same age groups in

second language or immersion settings (Collins & Muñoz, 2016) and their findings from studies on the latter groups cannot be extended to YLs on account of age and/or context-related differences.

2. Challenges and strategies in early second and foreign language learning

There is a need for more research on the challenges and teaching and learning strategies in early second language learning contexts and further studies can contribute to bridging the gap between research, classroom pedagogy, and expected outcomes. One of the great challenges that research on YLs still faces is teacher education and the use of pedagogical strategies employed by instructors in their classroom discourse and practice. As Zein and Garton (2017) emphasize, research on teacher education is still limited and unfocused (Grenfell, 2014) and mostly generates small-scale descriptive studies. Language-related, methodological teacher training is crucial to the development of effective pedagogical strategies and L2 literacy skills. At the primary school level, teachers may justify their self-perceived inadequate proficiency in English by the fact that they are expected to equip young learners with basic vocabulary and grammatical structures as opposed to content. However, the communicative approach, which must certainly be used with young learners, requires high competence on the part of the teacher, who often represents the single source of input (Bondi, 2001; Jiménez Raya & Hewitt, 2001). Pronunciation should be given careful attention (Edelenbos et al., 2006) due to its importance in enhancing phonetic awareness in learners. Precisely because of doubts about their language competence, teachers at the early learning stage may rely on grammar as a dependable source of L2 knowledge: “[T]eachers who are less confident in their English proficiency, or who feel pressure to teach towards an examination, will tend to opt for more traditional instruction, even if this is not mandated by the syllabus itself” (Parker & Valente, 2019). However,

young learners need to be surrounded by and participate in meaningful discourse in the foreign language, and it would not be conceptually appropriate for grammar to be explicitly taught as formal, explicit rules in young learner classrooms to children under the age of 8 or 9 years. (Cameron, 2001, p. 110)

Nevertheless, as Cameron also acknowledges, it is desirable for teachers to be aware of grammar-based as well as of form-focused teaching tools so that they can make the most of the learners’ readiness to more formal language learning or to call young learners’ attention to grammatical features present in the different sources of input they are exposed to, such as songs or stories. An additional strategy to be reinforced with young learners is the development of L2 literacy skills. As Cameron notes (2001), “[F]rom their early infancy, children are involved in using writing and reading: for example, when they are helped to write their name on a birthday card to a friend or when they look at story books with adults” (p. 124). It is therefore natural and possible to focus on early literacy in a second language when the teacher is adequately trained and the children are ready to carry out this kind of activity.

The use of multilingual practices and instructional strategies in class is another crucial and challenging area of research to be explored. This includes the use of the L1 by children and teachers in second/foreign language learning and translanguaging strategies in early education. Multilingual practices seem to contribute to a positive and motivating learning environment while still developing the children’s L1 (Garrity, Aquino-Sterling & Day, 2015; Gort & Sembante, 2015; Schwartz & Gorbatt, 2018). A belief persists that multilingual pedagogies should be avoided in order to expose learners as much as possible to the target language. This vision, however, is linked to traditional monolingual ideologies (Cook, 2001; Lin, 2015; Prada & Nikula, 2018) that can make teachers sometimes feel uneasy when they use other languages for pedagogical purposes.

Bilingual education and CLIL programmes are also a source of concern in early language learning, since it is thought that young learners might not be prepared to learn and consolidate content through an L2 or a FL if their level of the target language is limited. However, linguistic development should proceed parallel to that of content and therefore, if content and language are properly integrated and one assists the other, the above-mentioned concern should not arise. More than anything else, the real problem concerns CLIL teacher training, especially in early learning contexts (Mair, forthcoming). At this stage, training can be advantageous (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2011) provided that certain success factors are considered (i.e., not neglecting pupils’ L1, preparing competent teachers with adequate training, having permanent teaching staff, involving parents, and developing suitable materials for this kind of methodological approach [Navés, 2009]). However, these considerations are often overlooked, which brings fewer advantages and limits tangible outcomes.

A further challenge to include in the research agenda is parents' and teachers' beliefs and misbeliefs about language learning in general and their children's language learning process. As Ellis and Rokita-Jaśkow (2019) observe, teachers' and parents' beliefs "have tremendous influence on their expectations of the aims of language learning, how languages should be taught and assessed, how much progress children should make and what achievements can be expected" (p. 242). Beliefs should be further explored as a tool to delve into how the stakeholders' affective stance may influence the process of early second language learning. These beliefs and misbeliefs need to be made explicit so that they can be explored, drawing on theoretical underpinnings and experimental data, and can inform the examination of what young learners can do with language and how their linguistic development proceeds.

Only through sound research and a continuous link between research and classroom practice can the aforementioned research challenges regarding early language learning be overcome. This is in part the aim of this special issue, which explores learners' outcomes and effective teaching strategies from a variety of perspectives and research methods, involving a range of L1s and target languages.

3. This special issue

Given the gaps in the literature and the unanswered questions concerning several of the challenges and teaching and learning strategies outlined above, this issue focuses mainly on two closely-related areas: the strategies to adopt in early second and foreign language learning and the extent to which those strategies lead to observable or verifiable outcomes. In this sense, we have aimed at investigating the efficiency and appropriateness of early second language teaching and the most effective teaching-learning strategies (as suggested by Enever & Lindgren, 2017; Murphy, 2014). We have simultaneously endeavoured to gain insights into approaches to and experiences of early language teaching and learning across contexts. We also aim to bridge the gap between research and school practice (as suggested by Zein, 2019) and to inform the development of effective educational practices and policies.

This special issue, which includes seven articles, therefore contributes to the growing body of research on early second language learning and teaching at pre-primary and primary school levels. In so doing, it seeks to shed light on teaching/learning strategies and related outcomes that remain under-researched. To this end, the contributions consider a variety of school contexts across the world, the range of approaches used within them, different onset ages, and different programme lengths and intensities. The issue also covers a range of target languages, L1s, and topics related to the various strategies and related outcomes: the importance of longitudinal or pseudolongitudinal studies in early language learning and assessment; effective strategies for the transition from pre-primary to primary language teaching and learning in bilingual schools in Spain; intercultural interactions and multilingual practices among preschool Arabic-Hebrew bilinguals in Israel; the use of the L1 in task-based interactions by Spanish/Basque bilingual elementary students studying English as a foreign language; the sound/spelling connection, pronunciation and literacy skills in L2 French in the UK; Maltese teachers' views on multilingual primary classrooms; and language learning motivation and literacy in primary school storytelling projects in Spain.

The articles are organized as follows (see the summary in Table 1): the issue begins with two conceptually-oriented articles (Lopriore; Fleta), one in Italian and one in Spanish, which reflect on how research and practice in early language learning are linked and provide an overview of assessment and teaching strategies. The next article (Krivosh & Schwartz) is written in English and examines pre-primary language education. The four articles that follow, also written in English, explore primary school contexts. Two of these articles (Martínez-Adrián; Porter) report quantitative research, whereas the last two (Panzavecchia & Little; Waddington) report on qualitative research. In what follows, each article is introduced in more detail.

The first article, "Valutare l'apprendimento precoce di una seconda lingua: rilevanza degli studi longitudinali," by Lucila Lopriore, examines the complexity of assessment and evaluation strategies in early language learning and discusses how these two aspects have been investigated in previous research studies. The author strongly stresses the significance of longitudinal research studies and their potential impact on teaching and learning practices and outcomes.

The second conceptually-oriented article, "Construyendo puentes entre Infantil y el aula de Primaria para la alfabetización temprana en inglés," by Teresa Fleta is a reflection on the *Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid* bilingual programmes and CLIL contexts. In particular, the article describes how both teachers and students can be better equipped in language learning. The author suggests practical communicative strategies that can be developed, particularly during the transition from preschool to primary school. These include the

development of phonological skills through storytelling, the exposure to input and interaction through the use of prefabricated language, and the development of early literacy skills.

The first empirical article, by Ludmila Krivosh and Mila Schwartz, “‘To be able to understand each other’: Intercultural interactions in the Arabic–Hebrew-speaking preschool in Israel,” explores the intercultural strategies used by L1 Arabic- and L1 Hebrew-speaking children during their first year of Arabic-Hebrew dual language education at pre-school in Israel. The authors also investigate how preschool teachers foster these intercultural strategies in the classroom environment and suggest how early bilingual education might contribute to outcomes in the acculturation process in the classroom. Observational and interview data with teachers (N = 2) and children (N = 29) were collected over one academic year and revealed several crucial teacher strategies to encourage intercultural interactions and a number of acculturation strategies of both L2 experts and novice L2 learners.

The contributions that follow are quantitative in nature. María Martínez Adrián’s article, “The use of previously known languages and target language English during task-based interaction: A pseudolongitudinal study of primary-school CLIL learners,” examines a very relevant strategy in early language learning: the use of Basque/Spanish (previously known languages) and English (target language) in primary school CLIL learners (N = 90) in year 5 and 6. The outcomes of the pseudolongitudinal study reveal that the use of previously known languages is greater in older students, but that both groups display similar use of the target language except for metalanguage. Martínez-Adrián’s article confirms how children make natural use of all their multilingual linguistic repertoires, but at the same time suggests a greater use of target language-based strategies.

“Learning French sound/spelling links in English primary school classrooms,” by Alison Porter, focuses on the combined use of systematic explicit phonics and communicative, meaning-based strategies in a 23-week French as a foreign language programme. The sample comprises 45 students (with a sub-sample of 23) who completed pre-, post- and delayed post-tests requiring them to read aloud in sentences. The multiple-source statistical analysis revealed that, in general, when reading a card with a familiar word aloud, the children made slow but statistically significant progress both during and immediately after the FL phonics teaching programme. They were unsurprisingly more successful reading familiar words than unfamiliar words. Porter highlights another very important observation, namely the fact that L1 literacy tends to correlate with FL literacy.

Teachers’ perspectives are addressed by Michelle Panzavecchia and Sabine Little in their article, “The Language of Learning – Maltese teachers’ views on bilingual and multilingual primary classrooms,” in which they focus on teachers’ multilingual perceptions and strategies at the primary level in Malta. Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews with 8 teachers who expressed interest in multilingual practices but at the same time felt the need for more training on how to use translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy. The pedagogical outcomes of this study shed light on the need to provide guidelines for the growing global multilingual society.

The final article, by Julie Waddington, “Motivating self and others through a whole-school storytelling project: authentic language & literacy development,” aims to explore the motivational effect and literacy development of storytelling teaching strategies on 27 learners in the upper cycle of primary school. This exploratory qualitative study was carried out over a period of three years and analysed data from field notes of classroom observations and video recorded sessions, questionnaires and interviews with students and teachers. The storytelling project included the use of authentic picture books and peer modelling. Outcomes suggest that the reading project promoted group collaboration, a positive attitude towards reading, and a growing awareness of how successful communication can be achieved. The author also highlights a discrepancy between students’ and teachers’ views on their performance and the students’ self-reported difficulties in using the foreign language.

In addition to the aforementioned research articles, this special issue also includes reviews of two recent publications in the field of early language learning. First, Andrea Huerta Bon provides a critical *reseña* in Spanish of Janet Enever and Eva Lindgren’s *Early Language Learning in School Contexts: Complexity and Mixed Methods* (2017). Then Alberta Novello offers a *recensione* in Italian of Subhan Zein and Sue Garton’s *Early Language Learning and Teacher Education* (2019).

Table 1

Summary of full-length articles in this special issue of E-JournALL

Author/s	Title	Context	Type of article	Language	Country
Lucilla Lopriore	Valutare l'apprendimento precoce di una seconda lingua: rilevanza degli studi longitudinali	Pre-primary and primary	Overview	Italian	International
Teresa Fleta	Construyendo puentes entre Educación Infantil y Primaria para la enseñanza bilingüe en inglés	Pre-primary and primary	Overview	Spanish	Spain
Ludmila Krivosh and Mila Schwartz	"To be able to understand each other": Intercultural interactions in the Arabic–Hebrew-speaking preschool in Israel	Pre-primary	Empirical/Qualitative	English	Israel
María Martínez-Adrián	The use of previously known languages and target language English during task-based interaction: A pseudolongitudinal study of primary-school CLIL learners	Primary	Empirical/Quantitative	English	Spain
Alison Porter	Learning French sound/spelling links in English primary school classrooms	Primary	Empirical/Quantitative	English	United Kingdom
Michelle Panzavecchia, Sabine Little	The Language of Learning: Maltese teachers' views on bilingual and multilingual primary classrooms.	Primary	Empirical/Qualitative	English	Malta
Julie Waddington	Motivating self and others through a whole-school storytelling project: authentic language & literacy development	Primary	Empirical/Qualitative	English	Spain

4. Concluding comments and future research

This issue addresses several of the most debated teaching/learning strategies in early language learning and their outcomes. Together, the articles in this volume clearly suggest that two of these strategies should be considered essential in early language learning contexts: the use of multilingual practices (in all their forms, from translanguaging at the micro level to bilingual education at the macro level) and the development of children's L2 literacy skills in reading (with particular attention to pronunciation) and writing.

The special issue sought to encompass both quantitative and qualitative research with a longitudinal or pseudolongitudinal design and including whenever possible all actors and educational levels (pre-primary and primary) in early second language learning. This objective was widely achieved since the papers focus on parents, students, teachers and institutions, often triangulating data to gain a more complete perspective. At the same time, the special issue intended to provide an overview of studies on different contexts, which was partly achieved, even though the studies mainly focused on the diverse European context (Spain, Italy, Malta, UK), with only one study examining on a non-European context (Israel).

All of the topics and strategies initially proposed in the call for papers—teacher discourse and its effects on language learning outcomes, effective teaching strategies with a focus on reading aloud and theater-based activities, systematic synthetic phonics outcomes, textbooks and materials analysis, diversity in teaching pedagogies according to different cultural contexts, strategies for special needs students, assessment (with a particular focus on assessment for learning and error correction), content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in early learning contexts, and bilingual education in early learning—have been addressed in some way by the articles in the issue, with two exceptions. None of the articles explore the use of drama as an effective teaching strategy and none explores strategies for special needs children, despite the fact that these represent important topics that remain underexplored. We hope that these and other topics in early language learning will be the subject of future research.

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Valutare l'apprendimento precoce di una seconda lingua: rilevanza degli studi longitudinali

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ABSTRACT

IT L'apprendimento precoce delle lingue straniere – in particolare nella scuola primaria – è un processo affascinante ma complesso, fortemente condizionato dall'età degli allievi, dal contesto, dagli obiettivi specifici del ciclo scolastico e dalla didattica proposta. La fascia d'età è di fatto una delle variabili che più incide sullo sviluppo e sul sostegno delle competenze linguistiche, e richiede da parte dei docenti l'adattamento degli approcci adottati, delle attività proposte e dei materiali utilizzati per rispondere allo sviluppo cognitivo e emotivo degli allievi. Valutare i risultati dell'apprendimento in uno scenario di questo tipo è un processo delicato che deve essere monitorato con strumenti idonei che consentano di utilizzare la valutazione sia per comprenderne il valore aggiunto sia per sostenere l'apprendimento nel tempo. Questo contributo introduce le implicazioni dei risultati di alcuni studi longitudinali che hanno monitorato e valutato lo sviluppo delle competenze degli allievi e offerto spunti di riflessione sui processi di apprendimento.

Parole chiave: APPRENDIMENTO PRECOCE DELLA LINGUA, STUDIO LONGITUDINALE, VALUTAZIONE AUTENTICA, FORMAZIONE DOCENTI

EN Early foreign language learning—particularly in elementary school—is a fascinating and complex process, shaped by the age of the students, the context, the school's specific academic objectives, and by the pedagogical approaches used. Age is one of the most influential variables in the development of linguistic competence, and instructors should attend to the cognitive and emotional development of students in choosing age-appropriate teaching approaches, activities, and materials. Assessing outcomes of early foreign language teaching is also a delicate process: teachers should use suitable instruments that permit an authentic understanding of both the added value of early language learning as well as that informs instructors on how to support learning over time. This article presents the implications of the results of several longitudinal studies that monitored and evaluated learners' competence development and offered points of reflection on their learning processes.

Key words: EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING, LONGITUDINAL STUDY, AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT, TEACHER EDUCATION

ES El aprendizaje precoz de los idiomas extranjeros –en particular en la escuela primaria– es un proceso tan fascinante como difícil, afectado considerablemente por la edad de los estudiantes, el contexto, los objetivos específicos del ciclo académico y la didáctica. El grupo de edad es una de las variables que más influyen sobre el desarrollo de las competencias lingüísticas y necesita que los enseñantes ajusten sus prácticas, las actividades y los materiales empleados para adaptarse al desarrollo cognitivo y emocional de los estudiantes. La evaluación de los resultados del aprendizaje en semejante contexto es un proceso delicado que los enseñantes necesitan observar con instrumentos idóneos que les permitan comprender el valor añadido y apoyar el aprendizaje con el paso del tiempo. Este artículo presenta las implicaciones de los resultados de algunos estudios longitudinales que han observado el desarrollo de las competencias de los estudiantes y han ofrecido elementos para reflexionar sobre los procesos de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: APRENDIZAJE PRECOZ, ESTUDIO LONGITUDINAL, EVALUACIÓN AUTÉNTICA, FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES

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1. L'apprendimento precoce di una lingua straniera

Negli ultimi trenta anni si è assistito in quasi tutto il mondo a una diffusione senza precedenti di iniziative mirate a favorire l'apprendimento precoce di una lingua straniera, iniziative che hanno introdotto in molti paesi, in particolare in quelli europei, nuove politiche linguistiche e modifiche nei curricoli scolastici per introdurre una lingua straniera – quasi sempre l'inglese – inizialmente tramite sperimentazioni e, successivamente, nei programmi ufficiali, dal primo anno della scuola primaria e, in molti casi, fin dalla scuola dell'infanzia. Come David Graddol (2006) aveva ben evidenziato nel suo secondo rapporto sullo stato della lingua inglese,

The age at which children start learning English has been lowering across the world. English has moved from the traditional 'foreign languages' slot in lower secondary school to primary school – even pre-school. The trend has gathered momentum only very recently and the intention is often to create a bilingual population. (p. 88)

Da quando l'insegnamento di una lingua straniera è stato introdotto nella scuola primaria, in particolare in diversi paesi europei fra i primi ad avere inserito la lingua straniera nel curricolo, numerosi studi ne hanno indagato: le diverse modalità di implementazione (Butler & Lee, 2006; Copland, Garton & Burns, 2011; Enever, 2011; Enever, Moon & Raman, 2009; Graddol, 2006; Lopriore, 2001, 2006; Moon & Nikolov, 2000; Nikolov, 2009; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011; Rixon, 2013), le implicazioni di tale introduzione sui giovani apprendenti (Hasselgren, 2000; Nikolov, 2009) e sulla loro motivazione (Lopriore & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011), il profilo professionale e la formazione dei docenti (Butler, 2009), nonché la ricaduta sull'apprendimento del tempo dedicato alla lingua straniera nel curricolo (Enever, 2011; Rixon, 2013).

Mentre alcuni studi hanno investigato l'ordine di acquisizione della seconda lingua da parte dei bambini e sugli effetti dell'apprendimento precoce sul loro sviluppo cognitivo (Cenoz & Hoffman, 2003), altri hanno analizzato le attività e le forme di valutazione più comunemente utilizzate in classe per la lingua straniera (Butler & Lee, 2010; Copland, Garton, & Burns 2011; Johnstone, 2000; McKay, 2006; Rea-Dickins, 2000; Rea-Dickins & Rixon, 1999; Rixon, 1999). Pochi sono stati invece gli studi che hanno monitorato i risultati di apprendimento dei giovani studenti nella transizione da un livello all'altro, oppure nel corso del tempo, con studi longitudinali (Benvenuto & Lopriore, 2000; Enever, 2011; Enever & Lopriore, 2014; Hill, 2010; Johnstone, 2000; Lopriore, 2001, 2014b; Roessing & Helgie, 2009).

2. Valutare gli apprendimenti

La classe della scuola primaria è un ambiente unico in cui l'apprendimento è organizzato in modo olistico tramite esperienze individuali e collettive, e dove i bambini sviluppano abilità di *literacy* o alfabetizzazione, conoscenze e abilità nella loro prima lingua mentre iniziano a apprendere una seconda, la lingua straniera (LS); è un ambiente in cui le attività fatte in LS sono sempre legate alle aree disciplinari del curricolo della primaria e sono quasi sempre condotte dalle stesse insegnanti.

Valutare gli apprendimenti nella scuola primaria è pertanto un caso molto speciale poiché richiede ai docenti di comprendere complessi processi cognitivi e affettivi sottesi all'apprendimento di una lingua seconda in una fascia d'età in rapida evoluzione e di scegliere gli strumenti più idonei e affidabili. La valutazione dovrebbe quindi essere fondata sia sulle attività svolte quotidianamente in classe e vissute in prima persona dal bambino sia su forme di accertamento con cui gli apprendenti hanno familiarità e che sono in grado di rappresentare la progressione dell'apprendimento. Si auspica quindi una valutazione che sia incorporata nella quotidianità dell'apprendimento in cui i docenti siano guidati dalla loro conoscenza dei bambini e dall'osservazione della loro partecipazione alle attività di classe.

Nel suo testo sulla valutazione dell'apprendimento precoce di una seconda lingua, Penny McKay aveva evidenziato la necessità di prestare molta attenzione nel momento in cui si sceglie una qualsiasi forma di valutazione in una fascia d'età così vulnerabile.

A special approach to the assessment of young language learners is needed because of the special characteristics of growth, literacy and vulnerability that children bring to language learning and assessment . . . Assessment has the power to change children's lives; the effect of assessment maybe positive or negative. . . Young learners are particularly vulnerable in their formative years to assessment that sends messages of worth and status and that thus perpetuates power relationships in society. (McKay, 2006, pp. 24-25)

Sempre a proposito di cosa e come misurare gli apprendimenti di giovani allievi di una LS in contesti tra loro molto diversi, Yuko Butler e Jiyon Lee (2010) nel loro contributo sugli effetti dell'autovalutazione nei bambini, sottolineano l'urgenza di formare i docenti alla valutazione, tenendo conto dell'assenza di chiare indicazioni in proposito:

Teachers also need to be able to assess the performance of individual students in order to improve their own instruction, given the substantial diversity in proficiency levels among their students. However, relatively little is known about assessment for young foreign language learners in general. . . . Despite the urgent practical need for 'appropriate' assessments for young learners of a foreign language, the lack of theoretical and empirical knowledge on this topic cannot be understated. (Butler & Lee, p. 5)

I docenti della scuola primaria devono quindi affrontare la sfida di misurare il progresso dei propri studenti nella LS così come in altre aree disciplinari con forme di valutazione che siano valide, affidabili e coerenti con l'approccio didattico adottato. Purtroppo, mancano in molti paesi misure atte a rispondere a questi bisogni e, il più delle volte, i programmi di formazione iniziale non prevedono corsi introduttivi alla valutazione degli apprendimenti di una LS; per non parlare di una parte specifica che dovrebbe essere dedicata alla valutazione di apprendenti multilingui che di fatto ormai stanno sempre più caratterizzando la popolazione scolastica delle scuole primarie e dell'infanzia e che invece richiedono interventi didattici e forme di valutazione appropriate, come sottolineato fin dall'inizio da uno dei pionieri dell'introduzione dell'apprendimento precoce in Scozia, Richard Johnstone:

At present there is little evidence to suggest that primary school teachers, not only in Scotland, but also in many other countries of the European Union possess a good working knowledge of how pupils' emerging competence in a modern language might be assessed. (2000, p. 131)

Nel loro testo sulla valutazione nell'istruzione plurilingue e interculturale, Lenz e Berthele (2010) sottolineano l'importanza di prestare una specifica attenzione alle forme di valutazione adottate:

The explorations into the assessment of plurilingual and intercultural competences undertaken in this study, have shown that, at this point, many possible assessments are well-suited for formative purposes, especially when they involve the learners as self-assessors and allow for some imprecision and goodwill. With regard to standardized, high-stakes assessment, the possibilities are much more limited. In some cases, these limitations seem to be due to the nature of the object, in some others it seems that reliable high-stakes assessments could actually be devised as soon as reliable reference frameworks and testing instruments have been developed. What is needed most at this time, however, is actual practice: plurilingual and intercultural learning, teaching and assessment should be put in place in innovative ways, and then be evaluated critically in order to make progress. (p. 29)

La valutazione degli apprendimenti in contesti in cui parte della popolazione scolastica è multilingue, è di fatto compromessa da una visione fortemente monolingue del sistema educativo e formativo che non valorizza la ricchezza che invece i soggetti bi- o multilingui offrono. Le lingue non sono viste come sistemi separati dal soggetto multilingue, e per chi le usa non ci sono chiari confini tra loro. Accettare e incoraggiare fenomeni come il *translanguaging* (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Garcia & Li, 2014; Prada & Nikula, 2018), ovvero il passare degli allievi con naturalezza da un sistema all'altro tra diverse lingue e dialetti, è ancora vissuto come un impedimento alla comunicazione, anziché una risorsa sulla quale lavorare e considerare nuove forme di valutazione che misurino l'abilità dell'allievo di muoversi tra le lingue, di fare ricorso a diverse risorse linguistiche e culturali da una varietà di contesti, e che si focalizzino su chi usa queste competenze multilingui e non sulla lingua come sistema astratto.

La vibrata presa di posizione di Elana Shohamy nel suo contributo del 2011, ben riassume l'urgenza di affrontare soprattutto la misurazione degli apprendimenti linguistici di apprendenti in ambienti plurilingui.

All assessment policies and practices are based on monolingual constructs whereby test-takers are expected to demonstrate their language proficiency in one language at a time. Thus, the construct underlying these assessment approaches and/or scales (e.g., the CEFR) is of language as a closed and finite system that does not enable other languages to "smuggle

in.” This view is in stark contrast to the current understanding of multilingual competencies for which various languages and aspects “bleed” into one another in creative ways as manifested by a growing number of users, especially immigrants, who are born into one language and acquire additional language(s), resulting in multilingual competencies. This is manifested in codeswitching and in the simultaneous use of different language functions (e.g., reading in one and speaking in another in the process of academic functioning). Yet, this multilingual functioning receives no attention in language testing practices. Further, multilingual users who rarely reach language proficiency in each of the languages that is identical to that of their monolingual counterparts are always being compared to them and thus receive lower scores. Consequently, they are penalized for their multilingual competencies, sending a message that multilingual knowledge is a liability. (p. 418)

Nella seconda indagine internazionale sulle forme di implementazione degli apprendimenti precoci di una seconda lingua, svolta dal British Council in 64 paesi, Shelagh Rixon (2013) commenta a proposito della misurazione e della valutazione degli apprendimenti di una LS:

a greater interest in assessing children’s attainment is considered by many as a sign of ‘coming of age’ of English teaching at primary level. In many contexts in the early days of the introduction of English at primary school level, assessment was neglected or deliberately avoided since the projects went under the banner of pilots or experiments and assessment was felt to be premature or, more negatively, an inhibiting factor. (p. 10)

Proprio in questa prospettiva occorrerebbe valorizzare la valutazione basata su quanto si fa in classe, ovvero il *classroom based assessment (CBA)* (Hill, 2010) e privilegiare una valutazione formativa nella scuola primaria dove molto più chiaramente che in altri tipi di scuola emerge quanto i maestri ben conoscano i processi di apprendimento degli studenti e quali siano le forme appropriate di valutazione per le diverse fasce di età. Purtroppo, anche in questo campo poche sono state le ricerche svolte (Butler, 2009, 2016; Davison, 2013; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2016; Nikolov, 2016; Papp, Chambers, Galaczi, & Howden, 2011), e “the manner in which classroom-based assessment of Young Learners English is carried out is seen as a crucial factor for children’s success in learning. It is a field in which there has not been a great deal of research” (Rixon, 2013, p. 35).

Altro importante aspetto di cui tenere conto in questi contesti è quello già introdotto dal *Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento delle lingue moderne (QCER)* e implementato con l’introduzione del Portfolio delle Lingue, ovvero l’*autovalutazione* degli studenti dei propri apprendimenti, una forma necessaria sia per attivare una maggiore riflessione sull’apprendimento sia per complementare la valutazione del docente con le opinioni espresse dallo studente. Nella nuova versione del QCER, il *Companion volume* pubblicato nel 2018, questo concetto viene ulteriormente sottolineato nella illustrazione delle funzioni dei nuovi descrittori, che “can also be useful as a starting point for providing transparent criteria for assessment” (North, 2018, p. 43).

L’autovalutazione, quella forma di valutazione delle conoscenze e delle competenze svolta direttamente dall’allievo, spesso a supporto della valutazione del docente, è di solito fatta sulla base di specifici criteri e griglie redatte in modo da consentire allo studente il riconoscimento delle singole conoscenze in vari contesti d’uso e di individuare i propri punti di forza e di debolezza.

L’autovalutazione può focalizzarsi su capacità extralinguistiche e configurarsi sotto forma di questionari, diari, interviste, schede di osservazione, ecc., strumenti adattabili al profilo di un giovane apprendente. L’autovalutazione è la diretta conseguenza dell’enfasi posta sulla centralità dello studente nel processo di apprendimento e sul riconoscimento delle strategie utilizzate dagli apprendenti. Utilizzarla con giovanissimi apprendenti con l’uso di *focus group* o di brevi simulazioni che facilitino da parte del bambino il riconoscimento di quel che ritiene di sapere o non sapere ancora fare in una LS può costituire un ottimo strumento per facilitare la riflessione di questi sul gradimento di determinate attività e per rendere espliciti aspetti del proprio processo di apprendimento che rischierebbero altrimenti di rimanere invisibili al docente. Questa forma di valutazione consente all’allievo di rivedere, descrivere e valorizzare la propria esperienza di apprendimento; inoltre, utilizzare forme di autovalutazione ripetute nel tempo consente di monitorare il suo cambio di prospettiva e stimola la sua capacità di riflettere su esperienze già fatte mettendole a confronto con quelle che sta acquisendo. In tale senso alcuni studi longitudinali hanno consentito l’acquisizione di dati qualitativi a complemento di quelli quantitativi come è stato dimostrato nel progetto ELLiE (*Early Language Learning in Europe*) (Enever, 2011). Tale forma di valutazione è particolarmente adatta alla didattica della LS

nella scuola primaria, e rientra nel *performance assessment*, ovvero l'accertamento delle prestazioni degli allievi in situazioni reali, abituali o quotidiane di classe come, ad esempio, sapere effettuare o formulare un progetto, risolvere un problema, svolgere una breve ricerca, partecipare a progetti di scambio con altre classi ecc. Quasi tutte le forme di valutazione precedentemente indicate, fanno parte di quella che è stata definita la *valutazione autentica*, ovvero la valutazione delle competenze acquisite tramite prove più funzionali di quelle tradizionalmente utilizzate. L'accertamento definito autentico infatti:

- si riferisce al programma d'istruzione condotto in classe; agli allievi vengono poste domande significative e problemi rilevanti per le loro esperienze di apprendimento;
- ha a disposizione testimonianze provenienti da una molteplicità di attività e prestazioni;
- è legato ad attività motivanti e stimola, tramite l'autovalutazione e l'auto-riflessione, sia allievi sia docenti a migliorare;
- riflette gli standard di una classe e non si riferisce a una norma.

C'è comunque bisogno di valutare anche in forma sommativa al fine di raccogliere informazioni affidabili e accurate che servano alle ricerche sui risultati di apprendimento nel tempo. In tal senso, valutazione autentica e valutazione con prove strutturate o semi-strutturate sono approcci validi e complementari che rientrano in quello che è un *mixed-method approach* alla ricerca (Dörnyei, 2007); la scelta dell'uno o dell'altro o il ricorso a entrambi dipende unicamente da ciò che si vuole misurare.

Negli ultimi due decenni diversi sono stati gli studi svolti sugli apprendimenti dei giovani allievi, in alcuni casi si è trattato di ricognizioni internazionali, spesso comparative, su vasta scala che hanno indagato sull'introduzione dello studio precoce di una LS nei sistemi scolastici, in altri casi tali studi hanno indagato gli apprendimenti in una delle fasce di transizione all'interno dell'istruzione primaria o in uscita, e hanno avuto come oggetto sia i risultati degli allievi nelle singole abilità sia lo sviluppo della motivazione ad apprendere (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2016; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Pižorn, 2009).

3. Gli studi longitudinali: un valore aggiunto nella ricerca sugli apprendimenti linguistici

Valutare l'apprendimento precoce di una LS può essere fatto all'interno della quotidianità dell'esperienza didattica e essere svolto dal docente, ma sappiamo che l'apprendimento tra i 6 e gli undici anni di età si modifica e prende forme diverse nel passaggio da un anno all'altro. Questa fascia d'età è caratterizzata da rapidi cambiamenti evolutivi sia cognitivi sia emotivi che, per essere osservati, studiati e valutati, richiedono forme di monitoraggio dell'apprendimento che sappiano adattarsi alle specificità di ciascun livello (Ding, 2009; Huber & Van de Ven, 1995; Neale, 2019; Ortega & Iberry-Shea, 2005). L'introduzione delle lingue straniere nei curricula delle scuole primarie, e in alcuni casi della scuola dell'infanzia, ha richiesto da parte di alcuni paesi una accurata valutazione dell'opportunità e della validità di questa innovazione curricolare in termini di ricaduta sugli apprendimenti di una LS anche negli anni successivi, ovvero nelle scuole secondarie, e in termini di forme di didattica più appropriata, di materiali da utilizzare, di sviluppo della motivazione ad apprendere, e delle conseguenze su altri ambiti di apprendimento.

Negli ultimi 40 anni pochi studi sono stati commissionati o dalle autorità educative dei singoli paesi o da gruppi di ricerca con l'intento di accertare se effettivamente l'introduzione precoce di una LS nella scuola primaria avesse o meno risposto agli obiettivi di fornire ai bambini non solo un livello di competenza in una seconda lingua, ma anche una consapevolezza sia di culture altre e, di conseguenza, anche della propria, sia delle differenti realizzazioni linguistiche. Oggetto di valutazione sono state le modalità con cui questi apprendimenti sono realizzati, sono graditi e rispondono ai bisogni degli allievi, come, ad esempio, nel caso della ricerca sull'introduzione della lingua straniera nella scuola primaria commissionata dal Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione all'Università Sapienza dopo la Riforma della scuola elementare del 1985 (Benvenuto & Lopriore, 2000; Lopriore, 2001, 2014b)¹.

¹ Il progetto, uno dei primi in questo campo, è stato condotto negli anni 1999 - 2000 per conto della Università di Roma Sapienza. Il progetto è stato coordinato da Guido Benvenuto e il gruppo di lavoro – composto da docenti esperte di lingue straniere – era condotto da Lucilla Lopriore. Il comitato scientifico era composto da: Maria Corda Costa, Paola Giunchi, Rita Balbi, Pauline Rea-Dickins. Il progetto si è venuto a inserire nel più ampio quadro di definizione degli standard di apprendimento nella scuola italiana e nella prospettiva di un loro monitoraggio. Il progetto ha rappresentato la prima rilevazione degli aspetti cognitivi e dello sviluppo educativo degli alunni della scuola elementare relativamente all'insegnamento della lingua straniera. L'indagine ha rilevato i livelli di competenza raggiunti dagli studenti

L'impianto di ricerca utilizzato per questa rilevazione ha fornito utili riferimenti in merito a tutte le variabili considerate dall'indagine, purtroppo, come in altri casi, la mancata diffusione ufficiale dei risultati non ha consentito la restituzione al mondo della scuola e della formazione dei docenti di informazioni utili a intervenire con miglioramenti sia nella didattica sia nella formazione dei docenti.

Alcuni degli studi sull'apprendimento precoce di una LS sono stati successivamente impostati come studi longitudinali (Enever, 2011; Lopriore, 2015b; Nikolov & Szabó, 2012; Pižorn, 2009) perché la valutazione di un'innovazione come questa può essere valida solo se i dati vengono raccolti longitudinalmente con diversi tipi di strumenti, e non misurati con rapide istantanee prese con un unico strumento, di solito utilizzato per misurare le sole competenze linguistiche. L'apprendimento in questa fascia di età deve essere considerato nel complesso di tutti i fattori che intervengono; in tal senso, la raccolta di dati nelle classi di LS nel corso di alcuni anni consente di osservare come i bambini rispondano nel tempo alle innovazioni e di notare eventuali cambiamenti nella motivazione e negli interessi degli allievi, nell'esposizione alla LS fuori dell'ambito scolastico, nonché l'impatto di altri fattori esterni che possono condizionare i risultati ottenuti alla fine del ciclo della scuola primaria.

Tra le sfide poste da questo tipo di studi ci sono innanzitutto l'identificazione del metodo, la scelta e la costruzione degli strumenti di ricerca più appropriati e del loro adattamento nel passaggio degli anni, l'inevitabile mortalità del campione e la difficoltà di assicurarsi che i risultati di queste ricerche possano effettivamente essere utilizzati per influire sulle scelte educative. Studi di ricerca così lunghi e approfonditi hanno la potenzialità di fornire alle autorità educative quelle testimonianze che possano assisterle nel meglio definire le politiche linguistiche e il *language planning*, e migliorare la definizione e l'implementazione del curriculum di lingua straniera nonché i programmi di formazione dei docenti destinati a insegnare a questo livello. Spesso però il collegamento tra quanto emerge dalla ricerca e la prassi manca e questo può rappresentare un grave danno per gli apprendimenti degli allievi e per la preparazione dei docenti, mentre uno studio longitudinale ha un potenziale enorme in termini di ricerca in campi quali l'acquisizione di una seconda lingua.

Un approccio longitudinale consente a chi svolge una ricerca di "descrivere modelli di cambiamento, di stabilire la direzione (positiva o negativa) e la grandezza misurata in termini di tempo cronologico o età" (Menard, 2002, p. 3). E questo rende la scuola primaria il luogo più idoneo ad essere studiato nel tempo con un approccio longitudinale. Gli studi longitudinali sono molto spesso commissionati da agenzie nazionali o internazionali, quali i programmi europei, e condotti a livello nazionale su campioni di coorti di allievi statisticamente selezionati (Benvenuto & Lopriore, 2001; Enever, 2011; Kristen, Rommer, Muller, & Kalter, 2005).

Uno dei problemi degli studi commissionati a livello nazionale è la modalità di presentazione dei risultati, presentazione che spesso finisce per non fornire reali approfondimenti mortificando la qualità degli studi e riducendo le implicazioni dei risultati. Potenzialmente, questo è un fattore negativo sia per le scuole sia per gli insegnanti che finiscono per respingere tali risultati in quanto poco assomigliano alla loro vita quotidiana nella realtà scolastica. Occorre invece fare condurre questi studi da un piccolo gruppo di ricercatori che operi in stretto contatto con un gruppo di scuole e per un determinato periodo di anni. Secondo Kristen (2005, p. 74) tre sono i punti di forza che un modello longitudinale può offrire:

- facilitare la descrizione di stati e condizioni, le loro rispettive durate e la loro distribuzione e i cambiamenti nel tempo;
- facilitare lo studio multivariato dello sviluppo individuale e della società e dei processi di cambiamento;
- facilitare la ricostruzione causale degli eventi e dei processi.

I pochi studi longitudinali sull'apprendimento precoce della LS si sono dimostrati in grado di cogliere la progressione degli apprendimenti e la correlazione tra lo sviluppo cognitivo e emotivo degli allievi, le attività didattiche e l'intervento dei docenti nel corso di processi triennali o quinquennali, determinando scelte sui curricula, sui sillabi, sui materiali, sugli obiettivi e sulla preparazione dei docenti.

alla fine della quinta elementare in inglese e in francese. L'indagine, di natura campionaria a livello nazionale, ha raggiunto circa 2500 studenti di lingua inglese di 150 scuole, e quasi 500 studenti di lingua francese di 27 scuole. Sono state costruite e somministrate prove strutturate per valutare la comprensione orale, la lettura e la competenza lessicale, sono state utilizzate prove di competenza metalinguistica nella lingua madre (la prova TAM 2, Pinto, 1995; Pinto & Titone, 1989), un questionario rivolto agli studenti sulla loro percezione dell'esperienza di studio e la conoscenza di altre culture, e un questionario rivolto ai docenti sulle pratiche didattiche.

Il progetto ELLiE (Enever, 2011) è, nell'ambito delle indagini longitudinali sulla LS nella scuola primaria, uno degli studi più citati sia per la lunghezza del periodo di indagine sia per i risultati; è uno studio longitudinale che, tra il 2006 e il 2010, ha investigato gli apprendimenti delle lingue straniere da parte degli allievi delle scuole primarie in sette paesi europei che avevano introdotto da tempo la LS nei rispettivi curricula: Croazia, Inghilterra, Italia, Olanda, Polonia, Spagna e Svezia.

Il campione di allievi monitorato per quattro anni è stato di circa 1200 bambini, 180 per nazione, con un sottogruppo che contava intorno ai 48 allievi per nazione (*focal learners*) che hanno svolto tutte le prove e sono stati intervistati ogni anno; il campione è stato scelto su base regionale. In Italia, lo studio è stato condotto nel Lazio su 186 allievi e otto classi, in cui erano stati selezionati 48 *focal learners*, seguendoli dai 6 ai 9 anni e mezzo, dall'inizio della prima alla fine del quarto anno della scuola primaria. In uno studio successivo, un campione di un terzo dei 186 studenti originariamente coinvolti è stato ricontattato alla fine del ciclo della scuola secondaria e ha svolto una serie di prove di inglese e risposto a questionari sul proprio apprendimento (Lopriore, 2014b, 2015b).

Specifiche prove di lingua inglese sono state somministrate ogni anno per l'accertamento della comprensione orale, scritta e di interazione orale. I dati emersi sono stati incrociati con interviste, con questionari ai docenti, dirigenti e allievi, e con i materiali didattici. Particolare attenzione è stata data alle pratiche valutative usate in classe e ai risultati ottenuti nelle prove di comprensione orale in lingua inglese, somministrate ogni anno con formati lievemente modificati rispetto a quello originale.

Lo scopo principale del progetto era studiare l'apprendimento di giovani allievi e comprendere i fattori che influenzano sia le percezioni che gli allievi hanno dell'apprendimento di una LS sia i fattori che maggiormente influiscono sul loro apprendimento. Obiettivo specifico dello studio era determinare cosa fosse realistico realizzare nell'ambito dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere nelle scuole primarie sulla base di un numero limitato di ore di istruzione (Figura 1).

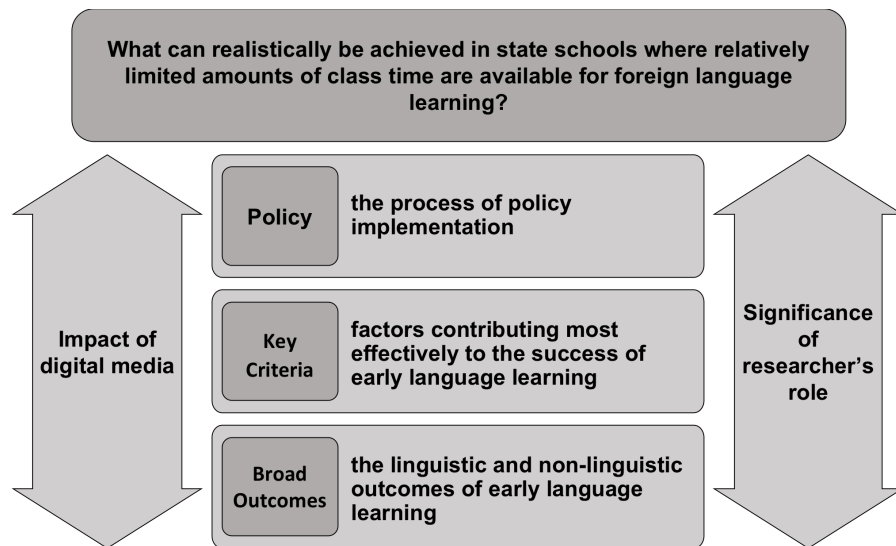


Figura 1. Punti focali della ricerca ELLiE (Adattato da Enever & Lopriore, 2014, p. 190)

La scelta di uno studio longitudinale e transnazionale richiedeva un costrutto alla base dell'intero progetto che tenesse conto delle specificità dei singoli paesi e non risultasse in una mera comparazione tra nazioni:

The main aim of the ELLiE transnational study was not to set up comparative research in order to establish differences or similarities among countries, rather to investigate how early language learning was being implemented and what could realistically be achieved across countries. With this in mind, the research team first identified common core areas that would offer specific information and data likely to provide reliable findings and valid conclusions. The varied factors to be taken into account in this transnational study created several challenges for the study: conceptual, methodological, operational and interpretative. These challenges highlighted the importance of establishing a homogeneous research design,

adopting systematic and consistent procedures for areas of investigation, planning time for data collection while synchronising across all seven countries and taking into account each country context specificity. All these features have proved to be crucial parts of the research design. (Enever & Lopriore, 2014, p. 190)

La ricerca ha adottato un approccio misto, avvalendosi di strumenti di tipo qualitativo (osservazione delle lezioni almeno tre volte l'anno; interviste individuali con un sottocampione di studenti, i *focal learners*, e con i docenti; questionari sugli atteggiamenti, documentazione scolastica, ecc.) e quantitativo (prove d'ascolto, di lettura e prove di lessico per l'intera classe e di interazione orale per il solo sottocampione) somministrati ogni anno e, in alcuni casi, più volte nel corso dell'anno. Un test di comprensione della lettura è stato usato alla fine del quarto anno; nel caso dell'ascolto, alla fine di ogni anno sono state somministrate all'intero campione due prove di ascolto, ma solo nel primo anno pilota la prova è consistita soltanto in un questionario a risposta multipla. Prove di interazione orale sono state somministrate due volte in quattro anni insieme a un test lessicale. Griglie per l'osservazione delle classi, questionari sugli atteggiamenti (all'inizio composti da *Smileys* e successivamente da domande specifiche), interviste con i *focal learners* e i docenti su atteggiamenti e convinzioni, e colloqui con i dirigenti scolastici sono state regolarmente utilizzate durante l'intero studio.

I risultati dello studio ELLiE sono stati particolarmente ricchi di implicazioni, alcuni di questi sono stati riassunti nella Tabella 1, tratta dal rapporto ELLiE (Enever, 2011) e scandita su diverse sezioni: politiche linguistiche, l'apprendente, la scuola, l'insegnante, la casa e i livelli linguistici, ognuna accompagnata dalla sintesi dei commenti del gruppo ELLiE sulle implicazioni didattiche e politiche derivanti dallo studio longitudinale condotto.

4. Conclusioni

Sia i risultati dello studio ELLiE sia la natura del suo disegno di ricerca sembra abbiano generato nuovi modi di guardare all'apprendimento precoce di una LS, almeno in base alle richieste di consulenze ai membri ELLiE promosse da diversi paesi, e hanno generato maggiore consapevolezza dell'importanza del contesto socioculturale come contributo chiave per l'esperienza di apprendimento dei bambini. Il progetto ELLiE è stato in molti paesi preso a riferimento per l'introduzione dello studio di una LS, e diversi membri del team di ELLiE sono stati invitati in America Latina, in Medio Oriente e in Cina per istruire progetti di introduzione dell'insegnamento di una LS nei sistemi scolastici locali e per monitorarne le ricadute sugli apprendimenti. In definitiva, la prospettiva longitudinale appare fondamentale per la definizione di un modello di efficacia scolastica strutturato sui progressi degli studenti, che necessariamente deve riferirsi a più anni; occorre tuttavia considerare le problematiche che il modello comporta, per predisporre nuove prospettive sin dalla fase di definizione del disegno stesso della ricerca. Il valore aggiunto di uno studio longitudinale sta nel costruito che deve prevedere la restituzione dei risultati a chi opera nella scuola e l'elaborazione di proposte di cambiamenti.

Come giustamente notato da Ortega e da Ibarra-Shea (2005) nel loro contributo sull'uso degli studi longitudinali nella ricerca sull'acquisizione di una seconda lingua, solo uno studio longitudinale può offrire una visione interna al processo perché in tutti i processi di apprendimento il fattore tempo è centrale per comprenderne lo sviluppo. Non è solo una questione di *a quale età* i bambini apprendono meglio, ma quando e quanto dura il processo di apprendimento e cosa contribuisce a sostenerlo nel tempo. È proprio in tal senso che ci si chiede quanto debba essere lungo uno studio longitudinale. E questo è proprio il caso dell'apprendimento di una LS per i bambini dove il fattore dell'evoluzione biologica determina le variabili temporali su cui articolare lo studio. Infine, intraprendere uno studio longitudinale è un'impresa complessa, ma sicuramente ricca di risultati – e di sorprese – in cui le domande di ricerca rischiano di dovere essere riformulate nel corso del tempo. Purtroppo, questo è un tipo di studio nel quale i docenti hanno difficoltà a partecipare attivamente in quanto il loro status è passibile di modificazioni nel tempo. Sulle potenzialità degli studi longitudinali, Bren Neale (2019), afferma che essi offrono:

exciting possibilities for generating new research agendas and refining empirical enquiry [...] The longitudinal frame, in itself, offers abundant scope for methodological innovation [...] qualitative longitudinal research does more than investigate dynamic processes; it responds to changes in the environments under study. (p. 125)

Sarebbe opportuno istituire una pratica di studi longitudinali nel sistema scolastico cui possano partecipare studenti, docenti e famiglie anche ai fini di una valutazione autentica degli apprendimenti. E la scuola dell'infanzia e quella primaria offrono un ottimo bacino di ricerca e di reale e valido sviluppo professionale sul campo.

Tabella 1

ELLiE sintesi delle conclusioni (adattate da Enever, 2011, pp. 5-7)

La politica

- La maggior parte dei paesi europei ha introdotto la lingua straniera nella scuola primaria, anche se a diverse età. Al fine di garantire il successo di questa innovazione, ciascun paese ha dovuto disegnare programmi di formazione pre- e in servizio per i docenti coinvolti.
- I docenti di una FL (quasi sempre l'inglese) hanno bisogno di un alto livello di fluenza e conoscere e sapere utilizzare una metodologia didattica appropriata all'età degli apprendenti. Purtroppo, non tutti i paesi europei si sono uniformati in tal senso.
- Il ricorso ai descrittori del QCER ha rivelato alcune difformità in quanto il QCER non era stato tarato sui giovani apprendenti, ma su giovani adulti. Questo ha ovviamente condizionato una riflessione critica sugli approcci da seguire.

L'apprendente

- La maggior parte dei bambini hanno fin dall'inizio un atteggiamento positivo verso la lingua straniera, anche se differenze in termini di atteggiamenti, motivazione e auto consapevolezza sono riscontrabili e i docenti ne devono essere consapevoli.
- Le caratteristiche dell'apprendente hanno un impatto sui risultati di apprendimento, in particolare tra i 10 e gli 11 anni.

La scuola

- Lo status della LS nel contesto scolastico e nel curriculum può fare la differenza. Particolare attenzione all'orario delle lezioni di LS e la cura data alla lingua di scolarizzazione possono contribuire al successo.
- La progressione nell'apprendimento nel tempo in termini di continuità tramite lo scambio di informazioni sui risultati e sulle forme di valutazione utilizzate deve essere sostenuta. I progetti e gli scambi internazionali dovrebbero essere incentivati così come l'utilizzo della LS fuori della scuola e lo sviluppo di competenze interculturali.
- Maggior comunicazione scuola - famiglia è fortemente raccomandata.

Il docente

- Il successo dell'apprendimento è determinato dagli atteggiamenti positivi dei docenti nel creare un ambiente di supporto e di stimoli, nel piacere che essi hanno nell'insegnare, nel sostenere le esperienze di apprendimento degli allievi, nel mantenerli impegnati sui compiti che svolgono e nell'incoraggiarli a riportare in classe le esperienze di L2 fatte fuori dalla scuola.
- Questi indicati sopra sono gli aspetti di cui tenere conto nelle programmazioni e nell'organizzazione della didattica. I docenti dovrebbero incoraggiare gli apprendenti a riportare in classe le esperienze di LS fatte fuori della scuola.

La casa

- L'esposizione alla LS fuori di scuola, soprattutto tramite TV e film sottotitolati, ha un impatto significativo sull'apprendimento dei bambini. Si rende necessario un processo di cambiamento culturale, almeno in Europa, che consenta di apprezzare i vantaggi di un'ulteriore esposizione alla LS.
- La conoscenza professionale e l'uso della LS da parte dei genitori ha un significativo impatto sull'apprendimento dei figli.

I risultati

- Gli apprendenti del progetto ELLiE hanno raggiunto in media, dopo 4 anni, il livello A1 così come descritto dal QCER sia nell'ascolto sia nel parlato. Un significativo miglioramento sia nel lessico sia nella comprensione della struttura in LS.
 - In genere le 3 abilità (ascolto, parlato e lettura) hanno uno sviluppo pressoché parallelo fino al quarto anno, anche se lo studio ha dimostrato esempi di apprendenti più competenti solo in alcune abilità.
 - Molti sono i fattori che condizionano l'apprendimento, tra cui la motivazione, i docenti, i genitori e l'esposizione alla LS. Questi sono gli aspetti sui quali i docenti devono maggiormente concentrarsi e programmare interventi adeguati con forme di sviluppo professionale.
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Construyendo puentes entre Educación Infantil y Primaria para la enseñanza bilingüe en inglés

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ABSTRACT

ES El presente artículo ofrece una visión general del funcionamiento de la enseñanza del inglés en educación Infantil en el contexto español y presenta sugerencias de buenas prácticas. Para garantizar el éxito de la educación bilingüe en Primaria, en la que asignaturas no lingüísticas se estudian a través del inglés, es necesario equipar a alumnos y a docentes con los instrumentos y técnicas pedagógicas necesarias para acometer las habilidades lingüísticas y conceptuales cuanto antes. Basándose en estudios de adquisición del inglés, en las reflexiones de los propios docentes, en el enfoque metodológico AICLE, y con el foco puesto en la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, este artículo explica la situación de la enseñanza del inglés en educación Infantil y presenta intervenciones pedagógicas creativas para construir puentes entre Infantil y el aula bilingüe de Primaria. Tras justificar la conveniencia del aprendizaje temprano del inglés, se presentan prácticas útiles para equipar mejor al alumnado en Infantil y ayudarle a enfrentarse al reto que supone la educación bilingüe en Primaria.

Palabras clave: INFANTIL, PRIMARIA, INGLÉS, APRENDIZAJE TEMPRANO, METODOLOGÍAS.

EN This article offers an overview of English language teaching in early childhood education contexts in Spain and offers suggestions for good practices. In order to guarantee successful bilingual education in primary school, when content classes are offered in English, it is necessary for students and teachers to possess the tools and skills that will allow them to tackle conceptual and linguistics abilities as soon as possible. In this article, based on previous studies on English learning as well as on teacher reflection and CLIL methodology, and focusing on the Spanish region of Madrid, I present the current state-of-affairs of English language teaching at primary schools and discuss creative pedagogical interventions to bridge pre-K and bilingual primary education. I begin by justifying the need for early English language learning, then describe some useful teaching practices to better prepare pre-K students and help them be successful in bilingual primary education.

Key words: PRE-K, PRIMARY SCHOOL, ENGLISH, EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING, METHODOLOGIES.

IT Il presente articolo offre una rassegna generale del funzionamento dell'insegnamento dell'inglese nella scuola materna nel contesto spagnolo e fornisce dei suggerimenti pratici per le lezioni. Per garantire il buon esito della formazione bilingue nella scuola primaria, in cui le materie non linguistiche si studiano in inglese, è necessario fornire agli alunni e ai docenti gli strumenti e le tecniche pedagogiche necessarie per sollecitare le abilità linguistiche e concettuali il prima possibile. Sulla base degli studi sull'acquisizione dell'inglese, delle riflessioni degli stessi docenti, dell'impostazione metodologica CLIL, e con il focus sulla Comunità Autonoma di Madrid, questo articolo illustra la situazione dell'insegnamento dell'inglese nella scuola materna e presenta degli interventi pedagogici creativi per costruire dei ponti tra la scuola materna e l'aula bilingue della primaria. Dopo aver giustificato la convenienza dell'apprendimento precoce dell'inglese, si espongono delle pratiche utili per meglio attrezzare gli studenti della materna ed aiutarli ad affrontare con successo la sfida della formazione bilingue nella primaria.

Parole chiave: SCUOLA MATERNA, SCUOLA PRIMARIA, INGLESE, APPRENDIMENTO PRECOCE, METODOLOGIE.

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1. Introducción

La enseñanza del inglés a hablantes de otras lenguas se ha ido consolidando en las últimas décadas de manera progresiva en muchos países (Murphy & Evangelou, 2016). Esto ocurre en Primaria no solo bajo el enfoque pedagógico de Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (en adelante AICLE), o con programas de inmersión temprana (Baker & Wright, 2017; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Cummins, 1979; Genesee, 2008); sino también en la esfera de la educación superior (Dearden, 2015). En todos los casos, el inglés se viene utilizando de manera creciente como medio de instrucción de asignaturas no lingüísticas en todos los niveles académicos.

Dentro del panorama actual de enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras, España se sitúa en una posición destacada. Como ya apuntaba Coyle en 2010, España lidera un papel protagonista en la implantación de programas educativos bilingües: *"Spain is rapidly becoming one of the European leaders in CLIL practice and research"* (Coyle, 2010, p. viii). La enseñanza de lenguas extrajeras empezó a cambiar en España de manera generalizada a finales del siglo XX cuando se elaboró el *White Paper* de la Comisión Europea (Comisión Europea, 1995). Los dos objetivos principales de este documento incluían la adquisición y mejora de por vida de las competencias comunicativas, y del dominio de tres lenguas comunitarias a través de la Fórmula 1 + 2 (lengua materna + 2) desde una edad temprana. Esta fórmula especifica que, durante la etapa escolar, todos los niños de la Unión Europea deben tener la oportunidad de aprender al menos tres lenguas a un nivel funcionalmente adecuado. Basándose en la propuesta del libro Blanco, muchas escuelas españolas desarrollaron programas bilingües, la mayoría adoptando AICLE como enfoque para enseñar materias no lingüísticas a través del inglés (Coyle et al., 2010, p.1). Desde 1996, los programas bilingües inglés-español se han venido implantado en colegios públicos de educación Primaria impulsados por las políticas educativas nacionales y autonómicas.

En las últimas décadas, la demanda del inglés como lengua extranjera/adicional/segunda (en adelante L2) ha sido impulsada no solo por la proliferación de programas de enseñanza bilingüe en educación Primaria y Secundaria; sino también por la incorporación de secciones bilingües al ámbito universitario, y por la potenciación de cursos de formación de profesorado. Este giro pedagógico hacia un mayor incremento de los programas de enseñanza bilingüe se inicia de manera progresiva en Primaria, lo cual conlleva numerosos cambios no solo en las políticas educativas sino también en los enfoques metodológicos. Factores tales como la edad de inicio de los alumnos, el entorno de aprendizaje, o el tiempo y grado de exposición al inglés (en adelante *input*), inciden directamente en la calidad de la enseñanza.

El impulso de programas bilingües no solo es considerable en España, sino también en otros países con una mayor o menor tradición de educación bilingüe (Kersten, Rohde, Schelletter & Steinlen, 2010; Mourão, 2019; Mourão & Lourenço, 2015; Murphy & Evangelou, 2016; Rokita-Jaśkow, 2015). A pesar de ello, en estudios recientes queda reflejado que los docentes de lengua extranjera que trabajan en educación Infantil carecen de la formación metodológica necesaria para abordar la enseñanza en este nivel educativo (Mourão & Ferreira, 2016; Rokita-Jaśkow & Pamula-Behrens, 2019).

Para ayudar a docentes y a alumnos a acometer con éxito la educación bilingüe en Primaria donde los alumnos estudian asignaturas del currículo en inglés, es fundamental construir antes los andamios de inglés en Infantil. Para abordar estas cuestiones, el presente artículo se divide en tres partes. En la primera, se revisan los fundamentos teóricos en los que se enmarca el aprendizaje temprano de lengua y contenidos a través de una L2. En la segunda parte, se analiza el funcionamiento de la enseñanza del inglés en educación Infantil y se presentan algunas reflexiones de docentes de Infantil de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid. En la última parte, se presentan propuestas de mejora para crear puentes entre Infantil y Primaria.

2. Soporte teórico

2.1. El aprendizaje temprano de una L2

La finalidad de esta sección es presentar un marco teórico que sustente el aprendizaje temprano del inglés L2 basado en las habilidades lingüísticas desarrolladas ya por los alumnos en su lengua materna (L1 en adelante). Existen numerosos factores que influyen en el proceso de desarrollo de una L2 en la escuela: unos están relacionados con la edad y el desarrollo psicológico-social de los aprendices o incluso con el grado de desarrollo de su L1, y otros son variables que están relacionadas con el entorno de aprendizaje y el tipo de instrucción (Blondin et al., 1998; Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006; Myles, 2017; Singleton & Pfenninger, 2019).

El factor edad en el aprendizaje de lenguas ha sido objeto de estudio y de debate durante décadas (DeKeyser, 2000; Johnstone, 2002; Singleton & Muñoz, 2011). Numerosos estudios llevados a cabo con niños apuntan a que tanto los monolingües como los bilingües que adquieren el inglés de forma simultánea o sucesivo/secuencial en contextos naturales y de instrucción formal exhiben un orden natural de adquisición de la gramática inglesa (Fleta, 2019; Haznedar, 2013; Lakshmanan, 1994; Radford, 1990). En todos los casos, el aprendizaje de la lengua meta se lleva a cabo siguiendo etapas de desarrollo gramatical tanto para las estructuras morfológicas como para las sintácticas. Estas fases de desarrollo de la L2 se corresponden con las propuestas por Tabors (1997) para la adquisición de L2:

- uso de la L1;
- periodo de silencio;
- discurso formulaico y telegráfico,
- uso productivo de L2.

Meisel (2011) distingue entre la adquisición simultánea de lenguas y la adquisición sucesivo/secuencial del bilingüismo. La primera emerge si la exposición a dos (o más) lenguas se lleva a cabo dentro de una semana después del nacimiento; la segunda surge cuando los niños comienzan una L2 antes de los cinco años. En ambos casos, tanto en la adquisición simultánea de lenguas como en la adquisición sucesivo/secuencial del bilingüismo, los niños adquieren la/s lengua/s objeto a través de la interacción comunicativa, escuchando, hablando y entendiendo los mensajes de los hablantes con los que interaccionan (Fleta, 2015; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2007). En este sentido, parece que existen estrechos vínculos entre la adquisición de una L1 en casa y el aprendizaje de una L2 en la escuela, cuando este se acomete a una edad temprana, ya que en ambos casos las lenguas se presentan sin instrucción formal y se practican oralmente con niños de corta edad (Cameron, 2001). Como explica Meisel (2011): “The suspicion thus is that whatever enables the child to acquire the mother tongue might not be lost forever, rather that it could be hidden somewhere among or underneath our other cognitive faculties” (p. 1). A este respecto, parece que existe una estrecha relación entre la adquisición simultánea y el aprendizaje sucesivo/secuencial de la/s lengua/s en la escuela, ya que en ambos casos los mecanismos psicolingüísticos que utilizan los niños para procesar el lenguaje son los mismos, tanto en contextos naturalistas como en situaciones de aula (Cutler, 2012; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

En lo que respecta a las variables relacionadas con el entorno de aprendizaje, hay que señalar que existe una gran diferencia entre el tiempo de exposición a los datos lingüísticos del entorno de una L1 y una L2. Lightbown y Spada (2013) consideran que la cantidad de tiempo que los niños monolingües están expuestos a su L1 antes de escolarizarse es aproximadamente 20.000 horas. Por el contrario, el número de horas de exposición a una L2 varía de un entorno de aprendizaje a otro. Esto implica que tener una menor cantidad de horas de contacto con la L2 conlleva necesariamente una menor cantidad de horas de interacción comunicativa y de exposición al *input* y, por este motivo, la calidad y la intensidad de la instrucción en estos entornos de aprendizaje debería ser mayor (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Además del número de horas de contacto con la L2, hay que tener en consideración que el contexto y las circunstancias de aprendizaje sean favorables y que la calidad y la cantidad de la exposición a la nueva lengua sean suficientes. Así mismo, hay que tener presente que las conversaciones en el aula son de naturaleza distinta a la del habla en casa porque las primeras son de índole pedagógica y están dirigidas a crear condiciones que fomenten el desarrollo del lenguaje (Gibbons, 2015). En consecuencia, la naturaleza de las conversaciones en la escuela difiere sustancialmente de la comunicación en contextos naturalistas ya que los alumnos no están inmersos en una interacción comunicativa continua de manera natural (Cameron, 2001). A esto hay que añadir que como las conversaciones entre profesores y alumnos tienen un matiz pedagógico, la utilización de la lengua y de los conceptos debe integrarse de manera equilibrada de tal manera que se les facilite el aprendizaje de ambos a los alumnos (Lyster, 2007).

La Comisión Europea (2011) recomienda que se exponga a los niños a la L2 en distintos entornos significativos, tales como, por ejemplo, durante las rutinas diarias, los juegos o la lectura compartida de cuentos, para que entiendan mejor el sentido de los mensajes, para que el aprendizaje sea lo más natural y espontáneo posible, y para que así tengan la oportunidad de usar la L2 cuanto antes. Por tanto, estar inmerso en la L2, entender el significado de los mensajes y tener oportunidades para usarla lengua lo antes posible son algunos de los requisitos necesarios para llevar a cabo el aprendizaje temprano de una L2 con éxito.

2.2. El enfoque metodológico AICLE

El enfoque AICLE, en inglés CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*), surgió en Europa a mediados de los años 90 como una solución pragmática a una necesidad europea (Marsh, 2002). Se trata de un enfoque educativo en el que la L2 se utiliza para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje tanto de la lengua meta, como del contenido de asignaturas (Coyle et al., 2010). De modo que en los contextos donde se aplica AICLE, la L2 es a la vez la lengua de comunicación y la de instrucción (Bonnet, 2012; Coyle, 2010; Dalton-Puffer & Smit 2007; Lyster 2007; Mephisto 2007). Por esta razón, en la preparación de docentes para la educación bilingüe de AICLE, es necesario llevar a cabo cambios pedagógicos, no solo en los temas relacionados con las habilidades lingüísticas, sino también en los relacionados con el conocimiento de metodologías de instrucción basado en contenidos.

La metodología AICLE tiene su fundamentación, por una parte, en el enfoque constructivista del aprendizaje como proceso social y dinámico por el que los alumnos aprenden cuando interactúan entre sí (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978), y, por otra parte, en las teorías de adquisición de L2 (Cummins, 1979; Genesee, 2008; Krashen, 1982). Además, esta metodología también se sustenta en el concepto de andamiaje (*scaffolding*) propuesto por Wood, Bruner y Ross (1976) y en el concepto de la Zona del Desarrollo Próximo propuesto por Vygotsky (1978). Se trata, en suma, de involucrar al alumnado en interacciones comunicativas y que participen tanto en los procesos del aprendizaje de la lengua meta, como en la adquisición de conceptos relacionados con las distintas asignaturas del currículo. En cuanto a esto último, no es lo mismo enseñar los conceptos de una asignatura en la L1 del profesor y de los alumnos que en la L2 del profesor y de los alumnos. Por ello, impartir clase en una L2 supone en algunos casos un reto para los profesores, ya que la falta de dominio de la lengua puede limitar su habilidad para explicar los conceptos. Por esta razón y para garantizar la calidad y la cantidad de *input* del docente, es necesario que su competencia lingüística y su preparación metodológica curricular y de enseñanza de lenguas sean meticulosas (Ball, Kell & Clegg, 2015). De igual manera, aprender a través de una L2 supone un reto para los alumnos ya que no solo se espera de ellos que al estudiar una asignatura en la L2 desarrollen habilidades relacionadas con el contenido de la asignatura, sino también que hagan uso de ese conocimiento utilizando la L2. Es decir, se trata de que utilicen la lengua con un doble objetivo, como vehículo para aprender el contenido de las distintas materias y, a la vez, aprender la lengua para poder comprender y comunicarse.

Un valor añadido de la metodología AICLE es la integración pedagógica de contenido, cognición, comunicación y cultura (Coyle et al., 2010); y es precisamente en este marco de las 4Cs, y en el de los tres tipos de lenguaje (*of-for-through*) donde se sustenta la metodología AICLE. Por una parte, se trata de que los alumnos tengan suficiente conocimiento de la lengua para acceder al conocimiento relacionado con los diferentes temas de las asignaturas (*of*), que conozcan el tipo de lenguaje que se utiliza en distintos contextos (*for*), y que reciclen y desarrollen la lengua que están aprendiendo durante la interacción comunicativa (*through*).

Otra de las características propias del enfoque metodológico de AICLE es la relevancia del trabajo colaborativo entre profesores. Como cada área curricular tiene su propio lenguaje, se requiere un mayor grado de colaboración entre los especialistas de lenguas extranjeras y los profesores que utilizan la L2 para impartir contenidos académicos en áreas curriculares no lingüísticas (Coyle et al., 2010). En consecuencia, la colaboración sistemática entre ambos grupos de docentes influye positivamente tanto en la planificación de las unidades didácticas de AICLE como en su implementación. Además, al trabajar en colaboración, se crean contextos de aprendizaje en los que los docentes se pueden comunicar en la L2 y poner en práctica sus habilidades comunicativas.

De lo anteriormente expuesto se desprende que, con la vista puesta en la educación bilingüe, las primeras etapas de escolarización del niño son cruciales, tanto para el aprendizaje en general como para el aprendizaje de una L2 en particular (Cameron, 2001; Kuhl, 2010). Por esta razón, los conocimientos y habilidades que se adquieren en los primeros años escolares sientan los cimientos para profundizar posteriormente en las diferentes áreas de conocimiento a lo largo de la escolarización. Por tanto, al comienzo del proceso de aprendizaje de una L2, es necesario construir una sólida base oral donde habilidades tales como escuchar, hablar y entender sean el apoyo para el posterior aprendizaje de la lectura y escritura, y, a su vez, sirvan para expresar conceptos e ideas en la L2 (Fleta, 2015; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2007). En suma, la finalidad última del aprendizaje temprano de la L2 es incrementar las capacidades lingüísticas e intelectuales de los alumnos y prepararlos para cursar educación bilingüe en Primaria.

3. La L2 en educación Infantil

Según establece la Ley Orgánica 8/2013 para la mejora de la calidad educativa (LOMCE, 2013), la educación en España se compone de diez años de escolarización obligatoria y gratuita para alumnos de entre seis y dieciséis años. Del mismo modo, dentro del panorama educativo español, la Educación Infantil actualmente no es obligatoria. Esta etapa educativa, se divide en dos ciclos: el primer ciclo acoge a niños de cero a tres años y, por lo general, este tipo de escuelas suelen estar dirigidas por las administraciones locales y autónomas o por centros educativos de titularidad privada. Por su parte, el segundo ciclo engloba a niños de tres a seis años, y a excepción de las instituciones privadas, la enseñanza en los centros públicos está subvencionada para todos aquellos niños que se matriculen.

Como apuntábamos en la Sección 1, la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en España empezó a cambiar de manera generalizada con la puesta en marcha del plan de acción basado en el *White Paper* de la Comisión Europea (1995). En este plan, el Consejo de Europa proponía que los ciudadanos europeos deben hablar dos lenguas además de la lengua materna, y empezar su aprendizaje a una edad temprana porque, como se especifica en el documento, las competencias lingüísticas son el centro de las destrezas que cada ciudadano necesita para su desarrollo personal y cultural. Como se apunta en el informe, una de las prioridades de los Estados miembros es garantizar que el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras se lleve a cabo en las escuelas infantiles y primarias, porque es ahí donde se fraguan actitudes fundamentales hacia otras lenguas y culturas y, al mismo tiempo, porque es donde se sientan las bases para el aprendizaje posterior de idiomas.

Los programas de educación bilingüe inglés-español se empezaron a implantar en España en 1996, producto del convenio del Ministerio de Educación y el Consejo Británico (*British Council*). Este proyecto bilingüe se implementó en centros públicos de diferentes comunidades autónomas en educación Infantil y Primaria y desde entonces ha sido renovado en varias ocasiones. El objetivo principal de este proyecto, en curso hoy en día, es aumentar el nivel de inglés de los alumnos y a la vez, ofrecerles la oportunidad de seguir un currículo oficial bilingüe y bicultural a través de un currículo integrado, basado en los programas nacionales y británicos. En la actualidad se lleva a cabo en 87 colegios públicos en diez comunidades autónomas y en las ciudades de Ceuta y Melilla. Las escuelas que forman parte de este proyecto contemplan la enseñanza del 40% del tiempo del período semanal en inglés (Dobson, Johnstone & Pérez Murillo, 2010; Reilly & Medrano, 2009).

Paralelamente a este proyecto, tanto las autonomías monolingües como las bilingües han adoptado medidas para gestionar la educación bilingüe de acuerdo con sus necesidades e idiosincrasias. A este respecto varios autores han estudiado los factores que influyen en el éxito de los programas de enseñanza bilingües en las distintas comunidades autónomas (Baker & Wright, 2017; Lorenzo, Trujillo & Vez, 2011; Madrid & Hughes, 2011; Pérez Cañado, 2016). Según el informe 2018 del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional sobre el estado del sistema educativo en España durante el curso escolar 2016-2017, el 85,6 % de los alumnos de entre tres y seis años tuvieron una aproximación a una lengua extranjera en el segundo ciclo de Educación Infantil; siendo el inglés la lengua más ofertada (84,6%), seguida del francés (0,6%) y de otras lenguas (0,3%).

Tomando como muestra la situación actual de la educación bilingüe en la Comunidad de Madrid, existen dos programas en curso: el proyecto fruto del acuerdo entre el Ministerio de Educación y el Consejo Británico desde 1996 que se implanta en 10 centros; y el programa de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid en vigor desde 2004.

El programa bilingüe de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid que comenzó su andadura en colegios públicos durante el curso 2004/2005, se amplió a los colegios concertados en el curso 2008-2009, a los Institutos de Educación Secundaria en el curso 2010/2011, a los centros de Formación Profesional en el curso 2016-2017 y, por último, más recientemente en el curso 2017/2018 se inició en el segundo ciclo de Educación Infantil. Según datos de la Consejería de Educación e Investigación (2018/2019), el número de escuelas estatales del programa bilingüe de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid ha crecido considerablemente con los años. Para ilustrar este dato, en la Tabla 1 se presenta el incremento del número de escuelas de Primaria y número de estudiantes que han recibido educación bilingüe desde 2005 en Madrid.

Tabla 1

Escuelas Primarias y alumnos que recibieron educación bilingüe entre 2005 y 2018

	2005	2008	2010	2014	2018
<i>Escuelas Primarias</i>	26	147	206	336	369
<i>Número de alumnos</i>	1,481	27,248	48,689	86,670	114,096

Durante el curso escolar 2018/2019, la educación bilingüe inglés-español ha llegado a 379 colegios públicos de Primaria, a 166 Institutos de Educación Secundaria, a 218 colegios concertados y también a 5 centros de Formación Profesional. Además de estas instituciones bilingües, existen un total de 15 secciones lingüísticas de francés y 4 de alemán en Educación Secundaria que forman parte del programa bilingüe de Madrid. Los alumnos de Primaria de los colegios públicos y concertados de este programa bilingüe reciben al menos un tercio del horario lectivo semanal en inglés y, a excepción de la lengua española y las matemáticas, cualquier asignatura se puede impartir en la L2.

En un principio, la enseñanza de la L2 en la Comunidad de Madrid se iniciaba en el segundo ciclo de Educación Infantil con niños de 3 a 6 años y en sesiones de una hora o una hora y media con una frecuencia semanal (Boletín Oficial de la Comunidad de Madrid, 2004). La Tabla 2 presenta el promedio de sesiones de inglés en infantil hasta la modificación de la ley en el curso escolar 2017/2018 (BOCM, 2017, p.158).

Tabla 2

Promedio de sesiones de inglés en escuelas infantiles

Edad alumnos	Sesiones semanales	Duración sesiones
3	2	45 minutos
4	2	45 minutos
5	3	45 minutos

El programa bilingüe AICLE de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid comienza en primero de Primaria y se extiende durante 6 años. La elección de las asignaturas que se enseñan a través del inglés viene determinada por la habilitación del profesorado y por los recursos disponibles en cada centro. A excepción de las Matemáticas y la Lengua Española, se pueden estudiar en inglés asignaturas como Ciencias de la Naturaleza, Ciencias Sociales, Educación Física, Educación Artística, y Religión/Valores Sociales y Cívicos. La Tabla 3 ilustra el número de sesiones de las asignaturas que normalmente se enseñan en inglés en primero de Primaria bilingüe. Además de la asignatura de lengua inglesa (4 horas por semana, 1 hora por día), las escuelas primarias bilingües imparten una carga lectiva mínima en inglés del 30% del currículo (7,5 horas por semana) y se puede llegar hasta un máximo de 50%.

Tabla 3

Asignaturas y horas lectivas en primero de Primaria bilingüe en Madrid

Asignatura	Sesiones semanales
Lengua Inglesa	4
Ciencias de la Naturaleza y Sociales	3
Educación Plástica	1
Educación Física	1
Música	1

Como se desprende de las Tablas 2 y 3, existe un gran contraste entre el número de horas de exposición al inglés en Infantil y en Primaria, donde el enfoque AICLE se viene implantando desde hace años. Como muestra la Tabla 2, el número de horas de inglés en Infantil es por término medio de unas 2 horas semanales; mientras que el número de horas lectivas de asignaturas que se imparten en inglés en primero de Primaria bilingüe puede alcanzar por término medio las 10 horas semanales.

Más recientemente, en el curso escolar 2017-2018 se implantó la enseñanza bilingüe español-inglés en el segundo ciclo de Educación Infantil en 35 escuelas de Comunidad de Madrid (BOCM, 2017, p. 158). En el curso 2018-2019 se ha introducido en 62 colegios públicos y se ha ampliado a colegios concertados. Además,

la normativa prevé que todos los centros de nueva creación sean considerados bilingües desde Educación Infantil. La implantación de este nuevo programa en Infantil busca sentar las bases para la educación bilingüe en Primaria. Según el documento Datos y Cifras de la Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid (2018-2019), este novedoso programa bilingüe debe incluir en el horario escolar un mínimo de sesiones de 45 minutos de duración impartidas en inglés: tres sesiones en primero, cuatro en segundo y cinco en tercero. La Tabla 4 presenta el número mínimo de sesiones en inglés propuesto para el segundo ciclo de educación Infantil.

Tabla 4
Número mínimo de sesiones en inglés en el segundo ciclo de educación infantil bilingüe

Edad alumnos	Sesiones semanales	Duración sesiones
3	3	45 minutos
4	4	45 minutos
5	5	45 minutos

Un requisito indispensable para impartir la docencia en centros de educación bilingüe es contar con un número suficiente de docentes que hayan obtenido el certificado lingüístico requerido para la enseñanza bilingüe. Según el *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas (MCER)*, el nivel lingüístico mínimo que se requiere para impartir docencia en la región de Madrid es un C1. Además, para poder enseñar en centros bilingües de Infantil y Primaria, los docentes deben haber obtenido la habilitación lingüística y metodológica, de lo contrario, solo pueden enseñar inglés como materia lingüística (Boletín Oficial de la Comunidad de Madrid, 2017, p. 159).

En definitiva, parece que las autoridades educativas de la Comunidad de Madrid son sensibles a la importancia que tiene incrementar la docencia del inglés en Infantil para garantizar un tránsito óptimo de Infantil a la educación bilingüe en Primaria, y así asegurar el éxito en esta fase de la educación. Este período de transición a la enseñanza bilingüe supone un desafío y un cambio significativo en la docencia que conlleva tiempo y especialización porque los cambios en políticas educativas no siempre van acompañados de cambios comparables en la promoción de cursos de formación inicial y continua del profesorado (Enever & Lindgren, 2016).

A este respecto, de un estudio realizado en 80 centros educativos públicos, concertados y privados de la Comunidad de Madrid se desprende que los docentes subrayan la necesidad de adquirir un buen conocimiento del inglés y de conocer las prácticas metodológicas adecuadas para la educación en Infantil (Fleta, 2015). Unos se centran en la importancia de introducir cursos de especialización en la formación inicial del profesorado y otros, demandan más cursos de formación continua, intercambio de recursos e información con otros docentes en las mismas o diferentes escuelas, y la posibilidad de llevar a cabo intercambios en el extranjero.

En resumen, para cimentar bien el inglés en Infantil y sentar las bases para la enseñanza bilingüe en Primaria dentro del enfoque AICLE, las autoridades educativas y los docentes deben tomar en consideración los enfoques teóricos sobre cómo aprenden nuevas lenguas los niños de corta edad y cuáles son las metodologías que mejor se adaptan a alumnos de corta edad en distintos contextos de aprendizaje. De acuerdo con esto, y basado en trabajos de investigación de adquisición del lenguaje en Infantil (Fleta 1999, 2001, 2003) y también en la experiencia docente del aula, a continuación, se presentan propuestas para fomentar las cuatro destrezas en inglés en Infantil.

4. Prácticas para construir puentes entre Infantil y Primaria

Dado que la educación bilingüe es muy exigente para docentes y alumnos, es preciso dar un enfoque al currículo de Infantil distinto al que se centre solo en el aprendizaje de inglés como asignatura escolar. Por ejemplo, según el currículo integrado bilingüe hispano-británico para educación Infantil, el objetivo del nuevo enfoque docente debe centrarse en diseñar e implementar prácticas adaptadas a la edad de los alumnos de Infantil, que promuevan la adquisición y el aprendizaje de la L1 y la L2 a través de temas (*topics*). Se trata de un enfoque transversal, en el que se pueden estudiar todas las áreas dentro de un tema determinado (Centro Nacional de Innovación e Investigación Educativa, 2013).

En este sentido, para que se lleve a cabo el aprendizaje temprano de una L2 con éxito es imprescindible entender el significado de los mensajes y tener oportunidad de usar la lengua (Kersten &

Rohde, 2013). Dado que a una edad temprana (antes de los 6 años), los niños todavía están desarrollando su L1 y se encuentran en una etapa de pre-lecto-escritura, el aprendizaje no debe separarse de los centros y temas de interés, sino que debe basarse en lo que ya saben, a pesar de que, a estas edades, su conocimiento conceptual sobre el mundo sea restringido.

Como se apunta en la sección 2.1, los niños acometen el aprendizaje del inglés en la escuela de manera natural y sin instrucción explícita de su gramática; utilizando las mismas estrategias de aprendizaje que las que utilizan los niños para el aprendizaje de la L1; es decir, escuchando, entendiendo los mensajes y hablando (Cameron, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Moon, 2000). Por esta razón, es importante que algunos contenidos curriculares se enseñen en inglés y que la metodología no se centre solo en memorizar canciones o en aprender palabras de vocabulario por separado. Más bien, se debe basar en la idea de que a una edad temprana el aprendizaje de la L2 se lleva a cabo en paralelo con el aprendizaje de contenidos (Cameron, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Moon, 2000). De acuerdo con esto, se debe dar más importancia a la comprensión y a la fluidez oral, que a la corrección gramatical (Lightbown & Spada, 2013); por lo que las mejores prácticas para el aprendizaje de lenguas en la escuela serán las que fomenten la interacción comunicativa.

En esta sección se presentan prácticas consolidadas que se consideran útiles y que van encaminadas a fomentar los entornos significativos (Comisión Europea, 2011), y a equipar y capacitar al alumnado de Infantil para la comunicación oral y escrita en inglés. Se trata de actividades creativas que se utilizan en centros bilingües de Infantil y presentan una amplia gama de recursos, que se pueden adaptar fácilmente a la edad de los alumnos y a su nivel psico-lingüístico. Han sido utilizadas en el aula y surgen de la investigación en Infantil (Fleta, 2019; Kersten et al., 2010). Si se planifican de antemano, se pueden incluir en el currículo de Infantil e integrar en todas las áreas de aprendizaje de acuerdo con los diferentes niveles madurativos y desarrollo lingüístico de los niños. Todas las prácticas promueven la interacción personal, emocional, lingüística y social a través de experiencias de aprendizaje multisensorial.

4.1. Prácticas para desarrollar la destreza auditiva

Como los niños de corta edad aprenden inglés L2 en la escuela de manera implícita y sin instrucción explícita de la gramática, las habilidades receptivas tales como escuchar y comprender los mensajes son primordiales (Fleta, 2015; Krashen, 1982; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2007). En este entorno de aprendizaje y con el fin de entender las conversaciones, los niños deben prestar atención a los fonemas ingleses que componen las sílabas, las palabras y las oraciones ya que buena parte del lenguaje está impulsado por el sonido más que por el significado (Cook, 1997). Para que los niños aprendan los fonemas y la prosodia del inglés, los maestros necesitan conocer qué habilidades fonológicas que han sido ya adquiridas por los niños para su L1 se pueden transferir al inglés, y cuáles deben ser aprendidas porque no son equivalentes en ambos idiomas (Fleta, 2017).

A fin de promover las habilidades auditivas y el aprendizaje de contenidos, se debe fomentar la interacción comunicativa a través de prácticas que mejor se adapten a los niños de diferentes edades, capacidades y necesidades. Como los niños de corta edad se distraen fácilmente y su capacidad de concentración y su memoria están en proceso de desarrollo (Merry, 2006), se pueden utilizar juegos (Cooper, 2010) tales como explorar los sonidos ambientales, escuchar sonidos hechos con objetos comunes, prestar atención a los sonidos de instrumentos musicales, emparejar sonidos con objetos, escuchar rimas, canciones, cuentos (Fleta, 2015). Para este cometido, una de las prácticas más efectivas que favorece la comunicación entre maestros y niños es la lectura compartida de álbumes ilustrados (Fleta 2015; Mourão, 2015). Las conversaciones que se llevan a cabo en torno a la lectura de cuentos mientras se miran las ilustraciones fomentan el desarrollo lingüístico y el conceptual. A través de la lectura compartida de cuentos se pueden practicar los elementos acústicos del inglés. Hay cuentos que se centran específicamente en los fonemas ingleses y que se pueden utilizar para elevar la conciencia fonológica; otros, se centran en las rimas o refranes rítmicos, en sonidos onomatopéyicos, en aliteración, homónimos y homófonos (Fleta, 2017). Para facilitar la comprensión y el significado de palabras y estructuras de los cuentos, durante la lectura compartida se pueden utilizar señales verbales y no verbales tales como señalar con el dedo las ilustraciones, añadir expresiones faciales, gestos, lenguaje corporal, sinónimos, comentarios, cantar canciones o recitar.

4.2. Prácticas para desarrollar la destreza oral

Como los niños desde que nacen tienen la capacidad de detectar y procesar información sofisticada sobre las propiedades de las lenguas a las que tienen acceso (Kuhl, 2010), los maestros pueden presentar vocabulario, pronunciación, entonación y las estructuras gramaticales del inglés durante las conversaciones; y con ello darles a los niños la oportunidad de utilizar el inglés. En suma, para fomentar el habla, los maestros deben ofrecer a los niños múltiples oportunidades para escuchar y para usar el lenguaje.

Estudios llevados a cabo en entornos bilingües formales indican que, durante la interacción comunicativa, el discurso entre maestros y niños se centra más en la comprensión de los mensajes que en la forma (Fleta, 2015; Lyster, 2007; Mackey, 2007). Es decir, que los maestros se inclinan más porque los niños entiendan los mensajes y que hablen, que por corregir su producción lingüística (Fleta, 2018). También se desprende que, durante las conversaciones, los maestros fomentan la interacción comunicativa por medio de preguntas, utilizando técnicas de elicitación, retroalimentación, expansión, o utilizando sinónimos, en lugar de hacer correcciones explícitas. De esta manera, por medio de estrategias discursivas, los maestros promueven la comunicación y sientan los cimientos del inglés. Con el fin de acelerar el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés en Infantil y preparar a los niños para la enseñanza bilingüe en Primaria, una de las prioridades de los maestros debería ser conocer cuáles son las estrategias discursivas que fomentan la comprensión y las habilidades orales y así poder diseñar y programar prácticas de conversación apropiadas.

Una manera de presentar lenguaje significativo y útil es valiéndose del lenguaje prefabricado o de las fórmulas, que favorecen que los niños utilicen el inglés durante las rutinas diarias en todas las estancias de la escuela (aula, pasillos, recreo, comedor) consiguiendo que poco a poco vayan incorporando este lenguaje a su propia rutina. “Las rutinas diarias permiten empezar a familiarizar a los niños con la lengua de una forma natural” (Centro Nacional de Innovación e Investigación Educativa, 2013, p. 17). Las fórmulas tienen un papel importante en el desarrollo del lenguaje porque proporcionan a los niños herramientas lingüísticas básicas para la comunicación cotidiana lo que les permite comunicarse en la L2 desde el primer día, que es realmente uno de los objetivos del maestro y también de los padres de los niños. Las fórmulas para saludar, despedirse (*Good morning; Good bye*), o para pedir permiso (*Can I...?, May I...?*) fomentan la participación e interacción comunicativa y equipan a los niños con herramientas lingüísticas básicas para practicar inglés muy desde temprano.

Durante las primeras etapas, las fórmulas permiten que los niños interactúen en inglés en situaciones comunicativas básicas. Por ejemplo, cuando los niños piden permiso para ir al baño, pueden usar una fórmula corta como: *Toilet, please?* entre otras cosas porque los niños a los 3 años son incapaces de procesar estructuras gramaticales largas, incluso en su lengua materna. Más adelante, se puede introducir una fórmula larga como: *Can I go to the toilet, please?* De esta manera, los niños acceden al nuevo vocabulario, fonología o estructuras gramaticales del inglés y al mismo tiempo aprenden contenidos durante las rutinas en la escuela y durante las transiciones entre actividades (Fleta, 2006). Otra manera de promover el habla en inglés es a través de las conversaciones en torno a la lectura de cuentos, las dramatizaciones, a través del juego imaginario, con juegos de acción o también durante sesiones para cantar o recitar en grupo.

4.3. Prácticas para desarrollar la lecto-escritura

La adquisición de la lengua oral está directamente relacionada con el aprendizaje de la lecto-escritura y ambas son necesarias para aprender los conceptos de las distintas asignaturas cuando los alumnos las aprenden en la L2. A diferencia de las destrezas auditivas y orales, las capacidades de leer y escribir no se adquieren de manera natural y sin instrucción, sino que para su aprendizaje es necesaria la instrucción formal (Pinnel & Fountas, 2011). Por tanto, aprender a leer y escribir requiere tener una buena base oral y un sólido conocimiento general (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013).

Para familiarizar a los niños con la representación gráfica de la lengua oral se puede empezar por poner énfasis en los nombres de los niños. Por ejemplo, los maestros pueden escribir los nombres en tarjetas y colocarlos en la pared o en un tablón y hacer referencia a ellos durante las rutinas diarias tales como pasar lista, o asignar tareas a los monitores (María: *gives out the papers*; Juan: *waters the plants*; Ana: *helps children to keep in line*). Se pueden colocar tarjetas con los nombres de los niños en las perchas donde cuelgan su abrigo, en los cajones donde guardan sus pertenencias. Las tarjetas con los nombres de los niños son también útiles durante las transiciones entre actividades. Por ejemplo, el maestro señala el nombre de cada niño para ponerse en fila, ponerse el abrigo o salir al recreo. En una etapa posterior, cuando los niños se han familiarizado con sus nombres escritos, se pueden colocar las tarjetas en las mesas de manera aleatoria y

pedir a los niños que cada uno encuentre su nombre. Más adelante, se puede jugar al Bingo con letras o al juego del ahorcado.

Para practicar la lectura de izquierda a derecha y de arriba abajo, al principio, se pueden utilizar símbolos en vez de letras y palabras. Por ejemplo, se pueden utilizar solo secuencias de figuras geométricas (*triangle, triangle, circle, square, square, rectangle*). Más adelante, se puede asignar un movimiento a cada figura geométrica (*triangle*: dar una palmada; cuadrado: dar un salto; *rectangle*: hacer clic con los dedos; *circle*: girar sobre sí mismo). Los niños deben leer los símbolos siguiendo el patrón y, al mismo tiempo, hacer los sonidos o movimientos que representan las figuras geométricas.

Los sistemas fonéticos del español y el inglés difieren en cuanto a los fonemas y a la prosodia (Fleta, 2017). Los niños que aprenden inglés en la escuela deben prestar atención a los fonemas que componen sílabas, las palabras, así como a la entonación de las oraciones inglesas con el fin de entender el flujo continuo de sonidos del habla de los maestros. El enfoque más utilizado para acelerar el aprendizaje de la lecto-escritura, originalmente concebido para inglés L1, es el método sintético *phonics* basado en la Teoría de la Inteligencia Múltiples (Gardner, 1983) y en el método *Total Physical Response* (Asher, 1969), por el que la lengua se aprende a través del juego y de las acciones. Entre los detractores de la aplicación de este método para el aprendizaje de la L2 figura Krashen (2002). Este autor critica deficiencias del método fundamentalmente en la comprensión lectora debido a la calidad y cantidad de la exposición a la nueva lengua, lo cual, según este autor, conlleva problemas y desencadena *en filtros afectivos negativos* que al parecer no favorecen el aprendizaje natural de la lengua (Krashen, 2002). A pesar de los argumentos en contra, el método sintético *phonics* es un método efectivo y atractivo porque las actividades son variadas y las técnicas multisensoriales que se utilizan les permiten a los alumnos aprender los fonemas y los grafemas a través de: canciones y rimas (inteligencia musical); acciones asociadas a cada sonido (inteligencia kinestésica); imágenes (inteligencia visual); historias (inteligencia lingüística); trabajando individualmente en los cuadernos de fonética (inteligencia interpersonal); y debatiendo en parejas o en grupo sobre las historias (inteligencia intrapersonal). Investigaciones realizadas con aprendices de inglés L2 en Primaria relacionan la conciencia fonológica con la comprensión lectora y concluyen que la utilización del método *Phonics* facilita el proceso de aprendizaje de la lectura (Lázaro Ibarrola, 2007). Primero se presentan los fonemas (sonidos) asociados a determinados grafemas (letras) de manera sistemática y los alumnos trabajan con letras separadas; después, juntan los fonemas para construir sílabas y más tarde palabras. En definitiva, con el método sintético de lecto-escritura los niños aprenden escuchando, hablando, leyendo y escribiendo.

Como un paso previo al desarrollo de la escritura es dibujar, para practicar el lenguaje escrito e interaccionar oralmente con los niños, se les puede pedir que dibujen en su cuaderno y que “lean” las imágenes que han dibujado; el maestro a su vez escribirá en el cuaderno palabras o frases relacionadas con el dibujo. En este contexto, las conversaciones entre el maestro y el niño sobre los dibujos o sobre garabatos, se parezcan estos o no a la escritura, sirven de apoyo tanto para practicar lengua oral y escrita como para explicar contenidos. Con el paso del tiempo, los niños pueden escribir palabras o frases sobre sus dibujos. Si se guarda un registro de los dibujos y de la escritura emergente, se podrá observar la evolución del proceso de desarrollo de la escritura a lo largo del curso.

Para aprender a leer y a escribir los niños pasan por diferentes fases que incluyen dibujos, garabatos y letras con o sin correspondencia con los sonidos. Para practicar la lecto-escritura, los niños pueden tener un cuaderno para escribir un diario de vocabulario donde anoten palabras nuevas e interesantes que aprenden durante el año escolar. El maestro puede llevar un registro de este diario y corregir errores. Con este diario, los niños van construyendo su vocabulario y mejorando sus habilidades lingüísticas. Los niños pueden trabajar en parejas o en grupos y pueden elegir y compartir todas las palabras que van a escribir en sus diarios.

5. Conclusión

Después de examinar cómo se acomete el aprendizaje temprano de lenguas y de revisar el funcionamiento de la enseñanza del inglés en la Comunidad de Madrid, se hace evidente que, para dar respuesta a la nueva situación actual educativa, es necesaria una revisión de la formación inicial y continua de los docentes. Tanto las titulaciones universitarias de los futuros maestros, como las metodologías de los docentes en ejercicio deben ir enfocadas no solo a mejorar su conocimiento del inglés, sino también a mejorar su formación metodológica. Para impartir inglés en Infantil, las titulaciones en los Grados universitarios deben garantizar un nivel adecuado de competencia lingüística y metodológica de los futuros maestros.

Como la transición de la educación Infantil a Primaria bilingüe supone un reto para los alumnos, los docentes deben asegurarse de que los niños entienden los mensajes para que así puedan aprender el contenido de las distintas asignaturas. Por tanto, para sentar los cimientos de la educación bilingüe y construir puentes entre Infantil y Primaria, las prácticas de andamiaje deben apuntar a fomentar la comprensión de los mensajes orales. Aunque al principio los niños no dominen las estructuras gramaticales, son capaces de vincular significado a expresiones relacionadas con las rutinas diarias, canciones, rimas, ilustraciones, cuentos, gestos, acciones, movimientos y demás.

A continuación, se muestran una serie de sugerencias para contribuir a una transición fluida de Infantil a la educación bilingüe Primaria:

- Incrementar el horario lectivo de inglés en Infantil;
- Establecer una mayor comunicación, coordinación y colaboración entre los docentes de ambas etapas educativas para mejorar con ello la calidad de la enseñanza;
- Poner énfasis en el dominio del inglés del profesorado y en la formación metodológica tanto en formación inicial como continua;
- Crear guías, materiales y recursos educativos adaptados al contexto y necesidades específicas de los niños;
- Fomentar las habilidades auditivas y orales de los alumnos al principio para, más adelante, facilitar las habilidades de lecto-escritura en inglés,
- Conocer estrategias metodológicas y discursivas para la enseñanza/aprendizaje de lengua y contenidos.

En suma, los niños tardarán menos en adaptarse a la enseñanza bilingüe en Primaria si la calidad y la cantidad de exposición al inglés en la escuela es óptima, si el *input* está contextualizado y si es rico, variado, y siempre adecuado a la edad y necesidades de los niños. Más aún, si a lo largo del día escolar se suscitan situaciones en las que los niños tengan oportunidades para utilizar el inglés. Sería deseable que las implicaciones extraídas de este artículo arrojen luz sobre la situación de la enseñanza del inglés en Infantil y que proporcionen información a educadores y encargados de las políticas educativas a la hora de desarrollar sus programas.

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"To be able to understand each other": Intercultural interactions in the Arabic-Hebrew-speaking preschool in Israel

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ABSTRACT

EN This ethnographic study expands prior understanding of the intercultural encounter process by focusing on 29 Jewish and Arab children attending bilingual preschool and two preschool teachers during 16 class sessions. The findings shed light on a developmental stage at which the seeds of intercultural interaction begin to appear along the separation between Arab and Jewish children in terms of their social preferences. The presence of second language (L2) experts in the classroom prompted the formation of two groups based on children's bilingual competence, an experts' group and a novice one. On the one hand, some experts positioned themselves as competent bilinguals and teachers, willing to assume the role of L2 mediators and interpreters. On the other hand, the relative L2 competence prompted novice learners to be flexible and go beyond their ethnic identity in order to establish new social relationships. The data show that the process of L2 acquisition might play a catalytic role in activating a social mechanism for intercultural interaction and that, despite differences in the patterns of social adaptation, all children showed developmental intercultural changes.

Key words: EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING, INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS, BILINGUALISM, INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCIES

ES Este estudio etnográfico profundiza en la comprensión del proceso de encuentro intercultural y se enfoca en 29 niños judíos y árabes en una escuela infantil bilingüe y dos docentes durante 16 sesiones de clase. Los resultados muestran un estadio de desarrollo en el que aparecen las semillas de la interacción intercultural junto con la separación entre niños árabes y judíos en función de sus preferencias. La presencia de dos expertos de segundas lenguas (L2) en el aula determinó la creación de dos grupos según la competencia lingüística de los niños, un grupo de expertos y un grupo de principiantes. Por una parte, algunos expertos se posicionaron como hablantes e instructores bilingües competentes, asumiendo el rol de mediadores e intérpretes. Por otra parte, la competencia lingüística limitada de los principiantes les empujó a ser más flexibles e ir más allá de su identidad étnica para establecer nuevas relaciones sociales. Los datos muestran que el proceso de adquisición de la L2 puede facilitar la activación de mecanismos sociales de interacción intercultural y que, a pesar de las diferencias en los patrones de adaptación social, todos los niños experimentaron cambios interculturales.

Palabras clave: APRENDIZAJE TEMPRANO DE UNA LENGUA, INTERACCIÓN INTERCULTURAL, BILINGÜISMO, COMPETENCIAS INTERACCIONALES

IT Questo studio etnografico approfondisce la comprensione del processo di incontro interculturale e si concentra su 29 bambini ebrei e arabi che frequentano la scuola materna bilingue e due insegnanti nel corso di 16 lezioni. I risultati fanno luce su una fase di sviluppo in cui i semi dell'interazione interculturale iniziano a comparire insieme alla separazione tra bambini arabi ed ebrei in termini di preferenze sociali. La presenza di esperti di seconda lingua (L2) in classe ha indotto alla formazione di due gruppi basati sulla competenza bilingue dei bambini, un gruppo di esperti e uno di principianti. Da un lato, alcuni esperti si sono affermati come bilingui e insegnanti competenti, disposti ad assumere il ruolo di mediatori e interpreti L2. Dall'altro, la competenza linguistica limitata ha spinto i principianti ad essere flessibili e andare oltre la propria identità etnica al fine di stabilire nuove relazioni sociali. I dati mostrano che il processo di acquisizione di L2 potrebbe svolgere un ruolo catalizzatore nell'attivazione di un meccanismo sociale per l'interazione interculturale e che, nonostante le differenze nei modelli di adattamento sociale, tutti i bambini hanno mostrato cambiamenti dello sviluppo interculturali.

Parole chiave: APPRENDIMENTO INIZIALE DELLA LINGUA, INTERAZIONE INTERCULTURALE, BILINGUISMO, COMPETENZE INTERAZIONALI

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1. Early childhood bilingual education and intercultural interaction: Introduction

Early childhood bilingual education has a central role in promoting a child's life-long love of language and bilingual proficiency (European Commission, 2011), and the cognitive and linguistic benefits of early bilingual development and education have been widely researched during recent years (e.g., Barnett, Lambert, & Fry, 2008; Hamann, Rinke, & Genevska-Hanke 2019; Hoff, 2017; Montrul, 2018; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2008). Early language learning has enormous potential for the development not only of children's cognitive and linguistic skills but also of their identity, values, empathy, and respect. Children's encounters in bilingual early education settings "can shape the way they develop their attitudes towards other languages and cultures by raising awareness of diversity and of cultural variety, hence fostering understanding and respect" (European Commission, 2011, p. 7).

Since bilingual classrooms are also bicultural due to the impact of both the children's and teachers' home and community values (e.g., Baker, 2006; Saxena, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008), policy makers consider this diversity as a resource. The bicultural nature of bilingual schools might then be established purposefully in locations where two or more cultural-ethnic groups are living in a state of tension, in an attempt to initiate peace, work for the sake of humanity, live cooperatively, and maintain respect for each other's cultures and languages (Gundara & Portera, 2008). This need for intercultural communicative skills is particularly relevant for the Jewish and Arab communities in Israel. Similar to the English and French context in Canada, in Israel, Hebrew and Arabic are host-community languages (as opposed to immigrant languages) with an official status. However, living in the same country does not necessarily mean coexistence. Unlike in other host communities, Arabs and Jews live in separate communities and can at times experience tension. Bearing in mind that living together in mutual acceptance and respect is not an innate characteristic, children need to be taught coexistence, and schools serve as the primary institutions for this purpose.

Recent studies revealed that, in intercultural communications, children can display a strong orientation towards the majority group's language, while marginalizing others who are not proficient enough (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2013; Drury, 2000; Puskas & Björk-Willén, 2017), for example, by pretending not to understand L2 novices' talk (Bernstein, 2016). However, these challenges were documented mostly in monolingual preschool settings and the question of how the intercultural interactions between children are built in a bilingual preschool context remains under-researched. The current research focuses on peers' intercultural interactions in a bilingual preschool with a high number of children with immigrant background. The aim of this study is to explore the main aspects of intercultural interaction during the first year in an Arabic-Hebrew-speaking preschool classroom in Israel. Our focus was on the dual-language program that, as a model of bilingual education, has a *language as a resource* orientation, viewing languages other than the majority language as resources to be developed (Ruiz, 1984).

Bilingual, bicultural societies develop shared values and increase their democratic interactions through intercultural education (Gundara, 2008). In contrast, separate schooling in a bi- or multicultural society hinders social cohesion (Gundara, 2008). Thus, in the case at hand, bilingual education may give the Israeli population the opportunity of exposure to the other official, but less familiar, language and culture. Knowledge of each other's languages and cultures may lead to mutual recognition. In this study, we sought to explore the onset of this knowledge development by drawing on the theoretical perspectives presented in the following section.

2. Intercultural communication in early childhood under personal and external forces: The theoretical models of the study

The unique value of this study lies in the examination of social interaction between the majority and minority language speakers, who were preschool children and representatives of two population groups that, in most cases, live separately. In this study, we examined the behavior and interactions of children in the Arabic-Hebrew-speaking preschool from a multidisciplinary perspective, enabling a comprehensive and simultaneous analysis of various aspects of the phenomenon. For this purpose, we drew on theoretical models from different research disciplines (psychology, sociology, and child development), based on a common conceptual idea of shaping human behavior and interactions under the influence of personal and external forces.

First, we drew on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), which sees individuals' behavior and development as dynamic and changing in accordance with the way in which they understand and relate to their environment and according to their ability to control their environment. The

theory holds that the interactions between children and their environment are expressed in the circles surrounding them. On the micro level, these interactions take place in interpersonal relationships, and on the macro level, in relation to ethnic groups, either people living in a particular region or any other type of a broad social structure.

In addition, we utilized Berry's theory of acculturation (Berry, 2005), according to which, individuals' behavior in a multicultural society is dependent on four acculturation strategies, which are based on the distinction between orientations toward one's own group and toward other groups. The theory holds that a continuous cultural encounter between people of diverse cultural origins leads to cultural and psychological change of these strategies, among representatives of both the minority and the majority group.

Finally, our study was inspired by Robinson's theory of intercultural development (Robinson, 2007) that claims the intercultural behavior of representatives of diverse cultures is determined by education and choice and is characterized by the ability to change, reflected on all levels of the child's development: emotional, cultural and social.

Based on these theories, in this study, we analyzed interactions between the L1 Arabic- and L1 Hebrew-speaking children in the bilingual classroom with regard to the following three factors: their innate inclination to learning and connecting, their parents' educational environment tendencies, and their willingness to become familiar with another culture. We conducted this analysis in accordance with the level of the children's intercultural communication and development, including their degree of social suitability to the new educational framework. In the following subsection, we briefly address the existing data on intercultural communication in dual language education from a sociological perspective.

2.1. The sociological context of the study: Intercultural communication and bilingual education

In recent years, an increasing number of studies in the field of L2 learning are shifting their focus from linguistic and cognitive aspects towards cultural and social aspects (Brown 2007; Norton, 2000). With growing awareness in the education field that learning and cognition are fundamentally social in nature, sociocultural interactions in the classroom may be examined in this context. This social type of learning was theorized in the concept *community of practice* (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 2006), and defined as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2006, p. 1). Wenger (2006) noted that a CoP can vary in terms of group size, location, status of the individuals involved and format for interaction. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), in CoPs, less experienced members learn from interacting with more experienced members (experts) and with each other. To illustrate this, in an ethnographic study, Angelova, Gunawardena, and Volk (2006) addressed intercultural interactions by examining peer mediation in L2 by young L2 experts in a bilingual classroom, in a dual Spanish–English language program in the United States. Angelova et al. (2006) found that, through their interaction with L2 experts, the novices develop linguistic, cultural and social competence in L2. Thus, in addition to their role as language *teachers*, the experts might also play the role of social mediators in the bilingual classroom. Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) also defined language learning classrooms as CoPs, referring to children learning the L2, who are more competent in L2 than their peers and can play the role of L2 teachers, as language experts.

Current research points to many possible effects that L2 learning in classroom as a potential CoP may have on individuals' development, from changes in worldview and ways of thinking to how they communicate with others on personal, cultural, and social levels (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Razmeh & Davoodi, 2015). Furthermore, L2 learning enables a reexamination of people's original culture, as well as of their roles in the group and in the social hierarchy of the larger community in which they live (Pishghadam & Ordoubody, 2011; Ricento 2005). These findings underscore the importance of intercultural and social interactions provided by bilingual education during the early years of children's intensive social development in multicultural societies.

Nonetheless, only few studies to date have addressed the intercultural aspects of early dual language education. One example is Freeman (1996) who, in her comprehensive ethnographic study, described how the minority and majority language groups in a Spanish–English-speaking bilingual school in the United States "collaborate in their efforts to define linguistic and cultural differences not as problems to be overcome but as resources to be developed" (Freeman, 1996, p. 564). Freeman showed that, by means of thorough planning of curriculum and social interactions in cooperation with policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents and children, the school promoted collaboration between the majority and minority language groups toward bilingualism and cultural pluralism.

In light of the limited data on intercultural interactions between young majority- and minority-language speaking children in dual language programs, this study sought to broaden our understanding of the phenomenon through children's ecological contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), acculturation strategies, encouragement of their cultural environment (Berry, 2005) and characteristics of their intercultural development (Robinson, 2007). Bearing in mind that one widely-recognized benefit of CoPs is their members' ability to comprise a community by means of building relationships and regularly interacting and learning together by shared practice (Wenger, 2006), we sought to explore how the young L1 Arabic- and L1 Hebrew-speaking children build their CoP through intercultural relations and with the support of their teachers.

2.2. Arabic-Hebrew-speaking bilingual education in Israel

When this study was conducted, the official state language policy in Israel acknowledged two official languages (Hebrew and Arabic). Yet, while Arabic was recognized as the second official language in Israel by force of legislation in 1948, it is not a competing partner in a dyadic bilingual state because Hebrew is the dominant language in Israeli public spheres. Arabic is a minority language and is the main language for most Arabs (including Muslims, Christians and Druze), who comprise 20% of the population. Israel has separate Hebrew-speaking and Arabic-speaking education systems, and Arab and Jewish children are, therefore, educated in different schools. Hebrew is studied as a second language in Arab schools and is part of their curriculum from first or second to twelfth grade. Most Arab-Israelis understand and speak Hebrew and use it at work and in other settings. At the same time, the level of Jewish children's competence in Arabic is relatively low, even though the study of Arabic is obligatory in the Jewish secular-school curriculum from fifth grade on.

In 1997, the Center for Bilingual Education was established to promote bilingual and bicultural education and the development of both Jewish and Arab ethnic communities. The Center believes in equal representation of both language groups in schools on all levels. From the outset, the Center's policymakers have consistently chosen a teaching and management staff that represents both groups equally, with each class having two homeroom teachers—one Arab and one Jewish.

Several studies on bilingual schools in Israel have revealed their main objectives (e.g., Bekerman & Tatar, 2009; Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2008). The first is to help the Arab and Jewish children develop a high level of mutual tolerance, respect and acknowledgment, taking into consideration that these children belong to two groups with a longstanding history of mutual intolerance. The second is to provide the children with a setting that offers the two cultures an opportunity to meet, in contrast to what happens in the external society. The third objective is to provide the children with both Arabic and Hebrew—the languages they need to live in Israel. The fourth is to help familiarize the children with customs and cultural traditions of a second ethnic group. The fifth objective is to strengthen their self-identity, as well as their pride and loyalty regarding their own culture.

2.3. The sociolinguistic context of the study: bilingual communication and identity

In addition to the sociological and developmental context of CoP, the present study dealt with the sociolinguistic context of a community of bilingual kindergarten children. According to Cooley (1922) and Mead (1934), socialization is a process whereby individuals shape their identities, develop their personalities, and learn to be members of society, in our case, in bilingual kindergarten communities. In this process, the children adopt values, norms, and skills that enable them to integrate socially through interaction with the teacher and the other kindergarten children, through interpersonal communication with them and the social learning that ensues. Interaction, or mutual influence, among children, comparison with the other and test of belonging, are described in the theory as expressed in a variety of ways, reproduced in the children's thoughts when choosing a relevant response. Thus, interpersonal communication—discussion—is created with other children and with the teacher in the kindergarten and is essential for an intact socialization process. Interpersonal communication is made possible through signs, symbols and other symbolic systems, including language.

Sociolinguistics perceives language as social activity and a key instrument of socialization (Paulston & Tucker, 2003). Language characterizes both the society's culture and the individuals within it—their status, gender, values, and their ethnic, social and religious identities (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). The choice of one language or another as a socialization tool within the community of practice of the bilingual kindergarten constitutes a choice of a system of accepted codes for thinking, expression and interpersonal communication. The bilingual speaker's choice of a specific language derives from a

combination of socialization components such as identity, interaction, interpersonal communication, learning and their social and cultural context (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

2.4. Research questions

The main research question of this study was as follows: How are the intercultural interactions between bilingual children built during the first year of dual language education? To answer the main research question, we formulated three secondary questions: (1) How are intercultural relations formed between the L1 Arabic- and the L1 Hebrew-speaking children? (2) How do preschool teachers support the intercultural relations in the classroom? (3) How does early bilingual education contribute to the acculturation process in the classroom?

3. Method

This longitudinal ethnographic study was part of a large-scale project aimed at examining early bilingual Arabic-Hebrew education in Israel with a focus on teacher-children and peer interactions and their role in L2 acquisition.

3.1. The target bilingual preschool

The setting for this study is a bilingual preschool, established in 2004 as an integral part of a bilingual Arabic-Hebrew-speaking school located in central Israel. The preschool has a dual language program incorporating classroom instruction in the majority (Hebrew) and minority (Arabic) languages. The teachers coordinate their daily instructional practices and share responsibilities. They share the same classroom space and teach both languages together. Time is not allocated separately for each individual language. Even though each teacher acts as a language model for her designated languages and is responsible for delivery in this language as a medium of instruction, both teachers sometimes use Hebrew and Arabic and apply flexible language practices. During their co-teaching, the teachers do not build on translating each other, but on elaborating, extending and continuing each other's speech in their designated language (Schwartz & Asli, 2014).

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Children

The children were 5-to-6-year-olds who had entered the target preschool at age 5 (one year before entry into elementary school at age 6) and were observed by the researchers during one year (for details, see the Procedure section). There were 29 children in the class, of whom 19 were L1 Arabic-speaking and 10 were L1 Hebrew-speaking. We noticed six L1 Arabic-speaking children, three girls and three boys, who spoke Hebrew well and could be defined as L2 experts. The three girls had entered the preschool with a relatively high level of competence in spoken L2 Hebrew (speech understanding and production) (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004). Two of them, who were cousins, had spent two years at a monolingual Hebrew-speaking kindergarten before entering the target setting. As reported by the L1 Arabic-speaking teacher, Lillian, the other four experts had received early exposure to L2 Hebrew through TV and radio at home. The presence of the L2 experts in this classroom was a phenomenon that could be attributed partly to their (Arab) parents' language policy of taking practical steps to promote their children's exposure to L2. Some of their family language policy might be attributed to their belief that their children's competence in Hebrew is a primary predictor of their future academic and economic success in Israel (Bekerman & Tatar, 2009).

In addition, one boy in this classroom was from an ethnically mixed family, in which the mother was an L1 Hebrew speaker and the father was an L1 Arabic speaker. Since the dominant language of communication in this family was Hebrew, the child self-identified as an L1 Hebrew speaker and at the beginning of the academic year, his Arabic understanding skills were much better than his Arabic speaking skills. In the course of time, he showed willingness to communicate in Arabic with his Arabic-speaking peers and teacher, and, as will be presented later, excelled in his L2-expert role.

3.2.2. Teachers

The study participants were two preschool teachers: one L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher, Dina, and one L1 Arabic-speaking teacher, Lillian. The teachers expressed their willingness to participate in the study. Dina was a novice teacher, who had joined the preschool in September 2013, and did not have any previous knowledge of Arabic. Prior to entering the preschool, Dina had obtained a bachelor's degree in preschool

education, and then gained rich pedagogical and bilingual teaching experience as an L2 Hebrew teacher for adults and as a teacher in a monolingual preschool. Lillian was an Arabic-speaking teacher, who had a bachelor's degree in preschool and first-grade teaching. She had been teaching in the preschool since its establishment in 2004, had more than 10 years of professional experience, and spoke fluent Hebrew.

3.3. Procedure

Data were collected during one academic year, from October 2013 through June 2014. Throughout the research period, 16 observational sessions were conducted (two to three times each month for seven months) including six sessions of field note taking from October 2013 to January 2014 and 10 sessions of video recording from February to June 2014. Interviews with the children were held between October 2013 and May 2014. Interviews with the teachers took place in November 2013 and in March 2014. We chose observation as a method in order to see the children in their natural setting, while interacting in situations of language acquisition and play, since it has been shown that the urge to create interpersonal relationships and the need to share emotionally with other children encourages acquisition of another language (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004).

Each observation session lasted about four hours, from early morning to midday. The process of data collection included selected focus of the video recordings on a) group interactions between the experts and the novices while engaged in joint play in various areas of the classroom, and b) expert-novice-teacher interactions during classroom activities and spontaneous communications.

3.4. Instrumentation, data generation, transcription, and analysis

To investigate the phenomenon of L2 experts' mediation, we used multiple sources of data (video-recorded observations, field notes and semi-structured interviews with the children and teachers). We applied methodological triangulation, which entails a comparison of the findings derived from different data sources to interpret the phenomenon under study and to reduce observer or interviewer bias. In addition, the methodological triangulation increased the scope, the validity and the consistency of our data (Shenton, 2004).

3.4.1. Field notes and video recordings and their transcriptions

We received permission to perform video recordings in the preschool from the Israeli Ministry of Education. We informed the teachers that the purpose of the cross-cultural project was to examine characteristics of the children's intercultural interactions within everyday preschool situations. They were asked to allocate a suitable time-point for observation that included diverse daily planned activities (e.g., circle time) and unplanned activities (e.g., free play).

The video-recorded observations were transcribed in detail, in table form, which allowed for the inclusion of nonverbal information from the videos. Each transcription was made by two transcribers, a native Hebrew speaker and a native Arabic speaker. A second transcription was made, following conversation analysis transcription conventions, to permit a detailed microanalysis of the transcriptions. This served as the basis for our understanding and interpretation of the observed interactions (Hamo, Blum-Kulka, & Hacoheh, 2004).

3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews with the L2 experts and their teachers

During the research project, we conducted semi-structured interviews with each child and each teacher individually. The interviews with the children were held in a quiet area of the classroom. They were conducted by the second author and a research assistant in Hebrew and in Arabic. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. Our goal was to examine the children's social preferences (who their friends were and which languages they spoke) and their awareness of their social role in the classroom. In addition, we asked them about the advantages of learning languages, the similarities and differences between the use of Arabic at home and in the environment, and about the children's ideas on the best way to teach L2. In the case of the language experts, we sought to obtain their reflections on the sociolinguistic behavior patterns observed during the study and, in particular, on how they acted as L2 mediators for their novice peers.

The second author conducted two interviews in Hebrew with the teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the interviewees' consent. Regarding our study aims, the teachers were asked to reflect on their role of encouraging intercultural interaction in the classroom and specifically on their strategies observed by the researchers.

3.4.3. Data generation and analysis

Based on Braun and Clarke (2006), we applied a theoretical thematic analysis of the collected data. We analyzed the classroom observations and the interviews with the children and the teachers using the following thematic analysis steps:

- 1) Transcribing the data corpus (all observations and interviews collected for the study), which comprised a first transcription version.
- 2) Familiarizing ourselves with the data by reading and rereading the classroom observation transcriptions and interviews and discussing them between the researchers. During the discussion meetings, we began to search for the data set that addresses the topic of the current study.
- 3) Identifying teachers' strategies aimed at encouraging the intercultural interactions and patterns of intercultural behavior.
- 4) Coding teachers' possible strategies and children's behavior patterns and organizing all relevant extracts of the entire data set into a table.
- 5) Reviewing the coding and the relevant extracts through an interrater to enhance the analysis by defining and naming the thematic categories.

The thematic tree (Figure 1) presents the defined categories and subcategories for the analysis:

- Educational environment
- Teachers' mediation in construction of intercultural interactions
- Teachers' behavioral modeling
- Encouraging intercultural interaction
- Acculturation strategies of the L2 experts
- Acculturation strategies of the language novices

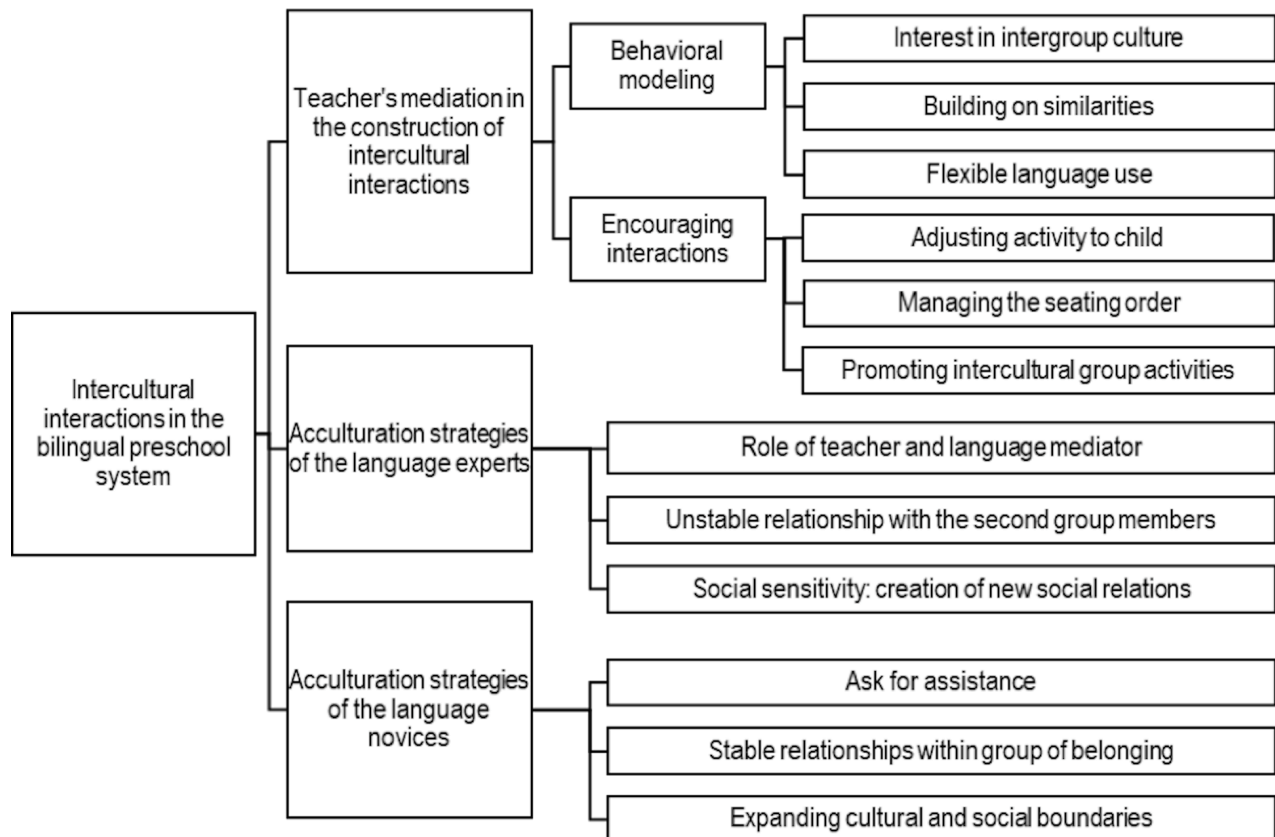


Figure 1. Thematic tree with categories and subcategories for the analysis

4. Results

4.1. Educational environment: Teachers' mediation in constructing intercultural interactions

In this study, we observed the first stage, an emergent process of intercultural interactions between the L1 Arabic- and the L1 Hebrew-speaking children. At this stage, the children's familiarity with another culture and language occurred in parallel to the identification of their social preferences and, as a result, contributed to their rejection of involvement with peers from another ethnic group (Barkan, 2003; Berry, 2005; Wright, Stetson, Rourke, & Zubernis, 2003). However, after nearly a year of encounters between two ethnic groups of children, we found some initial signs of intercultural interaction between the Arab and the Jewish children. During this emergent process, the teachers considered themselves as representatives of the bilingual educational environment (Schwartz, Mor-Sommerfeld, & Leikin, 2010), who should facilitate a process for the children's acculturation. Two main types of support emerged from the findings: behavioral modeling and encouraging intercultural interaction.

4.1.1. Teachers' behavioral modeling

The study showed that the teachers strove to be personal examples for the children in terms of their intercultural and bilingual behavior. They were interested in the other language, used both languages, and sought similar and common features in the languages and cultures. More specifically, from the interviews with the teachers, it appeared that both of them conveyed the message of L2 significance to the children and, in the case of Dina, the willingness for L2 acquisition, as illustrated by the testimony by Lillian in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

Look, we also serve as a model for the children. For example, Dina serves as a kind of model for the Jewish children [...] and if she speaks Arabic and shows them that she is learning just like them, they will start thinking that it is good, which is encouraging.

In Dina's view, this message motivated children's L2 learning, despite the inevitable mistakes, and helped them to understand the rules of the social system for the present and for the future, as shown in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2. (Dina, L1 Hebrew speaking teacher)

The goal of the society is that they will grow up and be good citizens. So how do you show [the children] that you are learning the language, show the Jewish children that you are interested in Arabic? And they see me asking Lillian how to write in Arabic [...] The message [to the children] is that it is OK to make mistakes, that it is OK to learn, that the teacher does not say "I know everything." On the contrary, she is saying: "I want to you to know that I still don't know what you already know." [...] It gives them a terrific boost.

The observational findings show how interaction among children, who spoke different native languages, was characterized by the linguistic behavior that they learned from their teachers. Thus, in a spontaneous conversation as Situation 1, when sitting out on the terrace, the children offered to help each other with learning both languages:

Situation 1. Free play outside the classroom.

Ofra (L1 Hebrew-speaking girl):	[speaking in Hebrew] You will teach me; you will teach me Arabic, and I will teach you Hebrew.
Bassal (L1 Arabic-speaking boy):	[speaking in Hebrew] But I know Hebrew.
Ofra:	[speaking in Hebrew] Yes, but you don't know everything.

Through her desire to learn Arabic, Dina expressed her deep interest in the Arabic culture and language. Indeed, our observations attested to the effect of this modeling on the L1 Hebrew-speaking children's openness to the novel language, Arabic. For example, we frequently observed evidence of Dina's efforts to understand Lillian based on the context and gestures, when she addressed Dina in Arabic. The fruitfulness of these efforts was manifest through the children's reactions to Dina's modeling and their imitation of her behavior, demonstrating their significant efforts to understand Arabic. Thus, it appeared that the L1 Hebrew-speaking children were accustomed to word-for-word repetition of Dina's slogan: "I did not understand but I think that you said that..." This modeling behavior reflected Vygotsky's (1978) concept of

the adult as children's mental development mediator, not only as a source of knowledge but also as a model for children's linguistic behavior.

This idea is reflected in many observations of interactions among the children. Throughout the day, the children not only imitated the teachers' behavior, but also felt proud that they succeeded in understanding what was said in both languages and that they were able negotiate the novice learners' comprehension by translating. Both teachers emphasized that the dynamics between them also characterized mutual intercultural familiarity (Excerpt 3).

Excerpt 3. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

Dina worked in Jewish kindergartens, so she wants to bring in everything she knows and everything she used to do. For example, now, during Passover she wanted to make wine for them. I told her: "Sorry, but wine is forbidden here." The good thing about her is that she is interested in culture. For example, she learns about every holiday.

The dialogue in Excerpt 3 between Dina and Lillian regarding the different cultures was pleasant and friendly, indicating willingness to learn about and accept another culture, without relinquishing their original culture. This set an example to the children, as shown in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4. (Dina, L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher)

It is fantastic how we work with Lillian simultaneously on the material. It makes the child and me—me first of all—learn about patience and tolerance. It means taking a deep breath, working on delaying gratification—which is, in fact, what we are educating here.

As behavioral models, the teachers used both languages, Hebrew and Arabic, both of which were heard regularly in the preschool during the learning sessions and during the day (Excerpt 5).

Excerpt 5. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

[The children] are interested in the language. They hear the language and constantly think about the language.

The children cooperated with the use of both languages and tried to help each other, both with pronunciation and with understanding either unclear words or sentences in the other language. For example, in Situation 2, Nur (L1 Arabic-speaking girl) took the initiative to teach Oded (L1 Hebrew-speaking boy) some Arabic words.

Situation 2. Free play, Nur teaches Oded the words in Arabic.

Nur:	[gesturing with her hands while learning to say the word <i>heart</i> in Arabic]
	[speaking Hebrew] Lev, Lev [speaking Arabic] قلب that is Lev in Arabic.
Oded:	[repeats after Nur in Arabic] قلب

In addition, the teachers looked for shared features in the target languages and cultures to show the children. Some of the two target cultures' traditions and religious narratives have similarities, and there is considerable linguistic proximity (semantic and grammatical) between the two Semitic languages. The teachers believed that they brought the two groups of children closer together by highlighting these similarities.

Excerpt 6. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

If there are similar words, we keep on saying: "Like in Hebrew [...] like in Arabic." We keep repeating it. This is common. We are constantly looking for the common ground because through the common we can learn everything and bring the cultures together. They [the children] talked about the common stories we heard about the holidays, that Muhammad was a shepherd like Moses, that the Prophet Muhammad was also persecuted and unwanted at first when he brought the religion.

This finding is consistent with the *Hand in Hand* educational model, which advocates for bilingualism as a means of introducing and respecting another culture, while preserving the original one. According to this model, L2 is a tool for breaking cultural and linguistic barriers between the two ethnic groups (Amara, Azaiza, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Mor-Sommerfeld, 2009).

Finally, the observed teachers' behavioral modeling and its role in the children's intercultural development is in line with findings of developmental psychology studies, stressing the importance of the educational environment and the impact of teachers' modeling behavior on the development of preschool children's social abilities (Dehart, 2004; Solberg, 2012).

4.1.2. Encouraging interactions

The findings show that the teachers actively supported intercultural communication and that supporting intercultural interactions among children required special attention to their individual and cultural differences. They encouraged interactions between the children of the two ethnic groups by adjusting activities to each child, managing the seating order and promoting intercultural group activities.

4.1.2.1. Adjusting activities to each child

The teachers arranged activities while considering the differences in the children's individual developmental and adaptation patterns (Excerpts 7 and 8) and paid attention to gender differences in the intercultural communication patterns (Excerpt 9).

Excerpt 7. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

This year, the children are very special. Both the Arabs and the Jews. They need a lot of help, a lot of mediation, a lot of attention. There are children with social problems, there are children with emotional problems, and these things take a lot of time.

Excerpt 8. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

This year, many of the children who came to us, both Arabic speakers and Hebrew speakers, studied in bilingual frameworks or in a Jewish kindergarten, especially the Arab children. So, this really brings the Jewish and Arab children very, very close together.

Excerpt 9. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

It is hard for the boys [to create intercultural interactions]. For the girls, not so much. Not for all of them.

In addition, they were aware of the cultural differences between the Jewish and Arab children with respect to adults and acceptance of authority (Excerpts 10 and 11), and regarding boundaries, discipline and order (Excerpt 12).

Excerpt 10. (Dina, L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher)

Arab children address me as "mualema" [teacher]. The Jewish children address me as: "Dinahhhh!" They don't call me "teacher" or anything else. "Dinahhhh! Come here now!"

Excerpt 11. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

An [Arab] child would not come to me and say: "You cannot decide for me." Among the Arab children, there is less impudence.

Excerpt 12. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

For the Arab children, discipline is a clearer concept, displayed more, as well as respect, and, I would say, a little order. Because we raise children to be organized, with better organization, with respect for adults. For instance, food or appearance. Children are always neat and tidy, the food is always presented in an orderly way; with Jews, it's less orderly.

Moreover, the teachers reflected on differences between the groups regarding how they made requests and expressed their feelings (Excerpt 13) and addressed the differences between the Arabs and the Jews in their manner of play (Excerpt 14).

Excerpt 13. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

The Jewish children come and say everything. With a sort of confidence. They know what they need. They know what they want. They know what to ask for. Among Arab children, shyness is also a matter of honor. Do not talk about your feelings too much; do not express yourself. It's something cultural.

Excerpt 14. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

They play in a completely different way. With the Arab children, the play is always accompanied by a physical game, for example, running, soccer. It requires more physical activity. With the Jewish children, there is dialogue, a lot of tabletop games, assembly games, construction.

4.1.2.2. Managing the seating order

The findings show that considering the differences in the children's intercultural development, the teachers elaborated on diverse strategies to increase, in Lillian's words: "the opportunity for more interaction between the Arab and the Jewish children." For example, during the academic year, they reorganized the seating arrangements by placing the Jewish and Arab children together at the dining table or during the small-group table activities. The results of this reorganization were intriguing and not unambiguous. On one hand, mixed-seating initiated bridging between the speakers, via children who understood the instructions and translating them into the other language for children who did not, as in Situation 3.

Situation 3. Classroom table painting activity run by Dina.

Dina (L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher):	[in Hebrew] Rolla, would you like to take some paints?
Rolla (L1 Arabic-speaking girl):	[Nods her head]
Dina:	[in Hebrew] Wash your hands very, very well, and then come to Dina.
Rolla:	[Does not move and stares at Dina]
Zohar (L1 Hebrew-speaking boy):	[realizes that Rolla has not understood Dina and translates into Arabic] Wash your hands very, very well.
Rolla:	[Goes wash her hands]

On the other hand, we noticed in our observations that during a mixed seating arrangement, the children who had been separated from their friends from the same ethnic group continued to interact with them across the tables, by moving the tables closer together to facilitate communication. The children also began to eat more quickly, to reduce the amount of time in which they were separated from their friends, and then went out to the yard, where they were free to choose their activities and whom to play with. These findings were consistent with developmental psychology research, stressing the importance of belonging to the peer group. This belonging develops a sense of high self-esteem (Barkan, 2003; Wright et al., 2003). However, over time, the observations also showed initial signs of intercultural interaction in Hebrew between the Arab children, as novice Hebrew speakers and the Jewish children.

4.1.2.3. Promoting intercultural group activities

The observations showed that the teachers applied a strategy aimed at promoting intercultural integration and socialization by engaging the children in certain activities. For example, in Excerpt 15 they tried to forge a connection between the children, based on a common hobby or activity of shared interest.

Excerpt 15. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

We try to find out what two children have in common. A type of game, kind of [...] it can be anything; either a hobby, or a child who has not really found his niche and this is also an opportunity to find him or her a friend. Whether through a game, a joint activity, a task; when it happens, it keeps going, it keeps happening. Meanwhile, the goal is to connect them more, to get them to play with each other more, to enjoy each other's company.

As found in the developmental research, at the age of 5 or 6, children understand the rules of play, adhere to them, and even explain them to others (Lawhon & Lawhon, 2000). As shown in Situation 4, during language acquisition, the children made rules that enabled learning and understanding both languages. In

Situation 4, the teachers' efforts to encourage L2 use was supported by Ahmed, the simultaneous bilingual child, who through his clear claim about language choice, searched to establish classroom language policy concerning languages' use.

Situation 4. Circle time (teachers worked as a team to promote the use of the Arabic language by the L1 Hebrew-speaking children)

Ahmed, (Arabic- and Hebrew-speaking boy):	[in Hebrew] Arabic speakers will say it in Hebrew and Hebrew speakers will say it in Arabic.
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In addition, it has been found that shared interests and play activities create an opportunity for interpersonal communication and accumulation of new social and, in our case, intercultural experiences (Ding & Littleton, 2005). This leads to openness to a novel language through a social partnership. In other words, listening to the otherness leads to an interest in learning the language because it brings a social reward, as in Situation 5.

Situation 5. Circle time (the language instruction topic was Israeli flora; teachers discuss protected flowers in Israel with the children)

Abed (L1 Arabic-speaking boy):	[in Arabic] These are protected flowers. We are not allowed to pick them.
Lillian (L1 Arabic-speaking teacher):	[in Arabic] Excellent, Abed, say that again.
Dina (L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher):	[in Hebrew] Abed, I didn't understand everything, can you maybe tell me a little in Hebrew?
Abed:	[in Hebrew] The flowers, the flowers that we're not allowed to pick.
Dina:	[in Hebrew] Oh, thank you! I thought I understood, but now I understand much better. Did you [all] hear?
Jewish children:	[in Hebrew] We're not allowed to pick them!

Notably, the findings of our study are inconsistent with Bernstein's (2016) data regarding misunderstandings or erroneous interpretations in intercultural interactions, which may be an outcome of either political or social power relations. This is apparently due to the uniqueness of the present study population, in which majority-minority relations differ from in the external reality. Even though the kindergarten is in Israel, where Arabs are a minority, within the kindergarten, the Arab children are the majority, and both these facts are clear to the participants. Thus, the study findings support those of Bernstein's (2016) research, which claim that all participants in the sociocultural interaction are required to make an effort to bring the sides closer together and to prevent misunderstandings.

Hence, the findings point to the existence of three main actors, who interact in the intercultural process in this bilingual preschool: teachers as representatives of the educational environment and two groups of children as representatives of two ethnic groups in society. Keeping in mind the sociocultural and linguistic distance between these ethnic groups, through their agentic behavior, the teachers encouraged the intercultural interactions between the children by applying diverse and creative strategies. Within the field of social theory, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) defined agency as "the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). This implies that agency occurs within a social framework (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015). Biesta et al. (2015) argue that people's agentic behavior needs to be linked to a particular situation and that agency is achieved in a particular ecology (Biesta et al., 2015). Our study revealed that the teachers' observable partnership and a keen interest in each other's language and culture created an ecological condition for shared thinking and promotion of the children's intercultural interactions.

4.2. Acculturation strategies of the L2 experts

As mentioned above, the presence of the L2 experts in the classroom indicated the formation of two groups based on the children's bilingual competence; namely, the L2 experts' group, comprising 11 bilingual L1 Arabic-speaking children, and the novice group, comprising 18 children without prior L2 knowledge. We found that some of the L2 experts not only positioned themselves as competent bilinguals but also as

teachers, who were willing to assume the role of L2 teachers, mediators and interpreters, and as a result, became leaders in the classroom (Excerpts 16, 17, and 18).

Excerpt 16. (Dina, L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher)

Ahmad took on the role of a teacher, a leader. This kid is a real leader, I would say. He always has to have the last word. We always have to listen to him.

Excerpt 17. (Nur, L1 Arabic-speaking and L2 expert girl)

I taught Lynn to sing the song [Shana Tova – Happy New Year] in Arabic, and she sang... After Lynn, I taught Amira Hebrew.

Excerpt 18. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

These children are mediating. They are very helpful because they manage to speak both Arabic and Hebrew, telling some children what he (she) is saying and telling others what he (she) means... Ahmad helps in the sessions when I speak, and he translates. He helps children. He connects them all together. This is amazing. He is amazing.

These findings are consistent with the descriptions of the experts' social role in the research on the "others," emphasizing the importance of the experts as leading classroom mediators, their readiness to help peers, as well as the model they provide for other children (Langman, Hansen-Thomas, & Bayley 2005; Nehm & Ridgway, 2011). In this study, Lillian recognized that the experts' modeling presented bilingualism as a social advantage and helped the teachers to encourage the novices to use L2 (Excerpt 19).

Excerpt 19. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

Children who speak both languages demonstrate this to the [other] children. This is modeling. And that sparks the other children's motivation to speak the language as well. I say this because the place where this [modeling] really helps . . . This really triggers the other children's interest in the language.

Indeed, the novice L2 learners asked the experts for help, both in terms of negotiating meanings in L2 and improving their social competence, as shown in Excerpts 20 and 21.

Excerpt 20. (Abed, L1 Arabic-speaking expert boy)

Once, Joseph [the novice L2 learner] did not know how to speak Hebrew, so I taught him.

Excerpt 21. (Mary, L1 Arabic-speaking expert girl)

Once they [the novice L2 learners] asked me how they say, for example, if someone is playing on the swing and Somia [L1 Arabic speaking novice girl] is counting for him, and Dina [L1 Hebrew speaking teacher] comes and calls her, so I tell Somia how to say [in Hebrew] "I'm sorry" or "I want to stay longer."

Regarding unstable social contacts between the children of the two ethnic groups compared to the relatively stable social contacts inside the groups, our findings show that, in general, the experts were more open to new social experiences (Excerpt 22).

Excerpt 22. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

Nur [L1 Arabic-speaking expert girl] has an excellent knowledge of Hebrew and she did not go to a Jewish kindergarten. She learned from the television. And she does a great job, this girl. She plays as if it's something normal, as if she's always done it. She plays with both the Jewish and the Arab children and connects them, and they plan and construct. Amazing to see it! Really!

At the same time, despite some experts' declarations that they were friends with all children, their reflections on relationships with the second ethnic group showed some ambiguity. Thus, in parallel to their openness to initiating intergroup communication, such as playing together, all experts except one (Situation 6) reported, in their interviews, facing challenges in developing friendships with the members of the other ethnic group.

Situation 6. (Interview)

Interviewer: [in Arabic] Do you have friends who speak Hebrew?
 Malek (L1 Arabic-speaking expert boy): [in Arabic] No.
 Interviewer: [in Arabic] So, you speak Hebrew to Ofra, Hila and Lynn, but they are not your friends?
 Malek: [in Arabic] Yes.
 Interviewer: [in Arabic] I understand; why are they not your friends?
 Malek: [in Arabic] They do not always play with me.

4.3. Acculturation strategies of the novice L2 learners

Our observations showed that, like the L2 experts, the novice children had stable relationships within their ethnic group of belonging. In Excerpt 23, Lillian reflected on these social preferences.

Excerpt 23. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

They are a group of boys [the Hebrew speaking group], who came together. They do not wish to accept others into the group; they are occupied among themselves.

Similar to what was presented above about the L2 experts, novice L2 speakers reported having a preference for friendships with the children from their own ethnic group (Situation 7).

Situation 7. (Interview)

Interviewer: [in Arabic] Do you have friends who speak Hebrew?
 Rula (L1 Arabic-speaking girl, novice Hebrew learner): [in Arabic] No, I have none.
 Interviewer: [in Arabic] Who are your friends in the preschool?
 Rula: [in Arabic] Nur.
 Interviewer: [in Arabic] Does Nur not speak Hebrew?
 Rula: [in Arabic] She does, but she is an Arab.

These similarities in the acculturation patterns between the novice L2 learners and the L2 experts might be attributed to the fact that, along with the relatively high level of competence in spoken L2 Hebrew, and even, in some cases, a higher level of social sensitivity, the tendency to build friendships with group members was very strong. At the same time, the study shows that relative competence in a new language of the “other” was a condition for readiness to become flexible and to go beyond their ethnic identity to establish new social relationships. This tendency is reflected in Situation 8 from our classroom observation and its interpretation in Excerpt 24 from the interview with Dina.

Situation 8. (Class observation)

Dina (L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher): Maybe Khaled [L1 Arabic-speaking boy] would like to tell us what he did during the weekend?
 Khaled (L1 Arabic-speaking boy): [in Hebrew] I visited Hanna [L1 Hebrew-speaking girl].

Excerpt 24. (Dina, L1 Hebrew-speaking teacher)

Now it starts happening [the intercultural communication]. There is our mediation here as educators in order for it to happen. I mean, we have a role here, and once you are persistent, it happens. And both Khaled and Hanna are very strong in both languages.

In addition, as addressed in Excerpt 25 from the interview with Lillian, a gradual progress in L2 learning results in intercultural influences, such as expanding the Arab children’s ability for self-expression, which shapes their personality.

Excerpt 25. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

They [the L1 Arabic-speaking children] are also beginning to learn how to express [emotions]. Learning new cultural patterns. I think they [the parents] want their children to get there. Not to the level of impudence, but they are very pleased that the children are working on themselves and are gaining self-confidence.

The children's intact socialization was created by the sociocultural context of bilingualism and by the integration of the appropriate language. In the bilingual kindergarten, building socialization was based on the children's sociocultural attempts as a result of their interpersonal communication and interaction with the teachers and the environment. Both of these together led to the children's learning or to changes for their adjustment in kindergarten. An outcome of this process was that the children began to form their personal identities, which were maintained through negotiation in social situations or through their internalized social roles (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

Notably, this pattern of data reinforces the previous findings indicating a link between L2 acquisition and emotional, cultural and social changes in the learner (Barkhuizen, 2008; Feger, 2009; Norton & Toohy, 2011). According to the literature, these changes are a result of the integrated and sometimes conflicting activity of different gender, ethnic, cultural and social identities during the learner's interactions with the target language speakers.

The current study showed that the L2 experts' knowledge of both languages, in addition to social mediation, enhanced their self-confidence and their social and cultural identity. However, due to their fixed ethnic and gender identity, they did not change their main modes of play, which would have significantly undermined their sense of belonging to their own cultural group. Thus, our observations provided evidence that the expert girls were more open than the expert boys to new intercultural social experiences, whereas the expert boys preferred to play mostly with members of their own ethnic group.

4.3.1. Changes in the novices' acculturation patterns

Interestingly, the novice L2 learners gradually expanded their cultural and social boundaries. These changes were reflected in their spontaneous use of L2 with the teachers and the peers and in their initiative of interaction with the peers in free play and mealtime contexts. These facts were observed by the researchers and were reported in the teachers' interviews (Excerpt 26) after three months of intensive exposure to their novel language.

Excerpt 26. (Lillian, L1 Arabic-speaking teacher)

There is a breakthrough. They [the novice L2 learners] remember more words and they repeat the words. Words are not sentences. No sentences yet, but you see that these children have gone through a process of language learning ... I think they got together more, got to know each other, learned how to play with each other more, and I think we contributed to it too... I see more interaction in free activities. In the yard, in the corners. In the household corner, with toy blocks, during meals. Many children connect during meals. Talking about all sorts of things.

Thus, we found a reciprocal and circular connection between L2 learning and changes in the learner's identity. In other words, the more the learners enriched their identity, the greater was their command of L2, and vice versa (Clarke, 2008; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe the ways in which children become acquainted with a novel culture. We sought to expand our understanding of the process of the intercultural encounter between young children from two different ethnic backgrounds, Jewish and Arab, who attended the bilingual preschool in order to be educated together and to create the CoP (Wenger, 2006). This case was particularly fascinating because this preschool was intended to create a micro model of coexistence between the two ethnic groups, who experience tension within the wider macro context of Israel.

Our data show that the process of L2 acquisition might play a catalytic role in activating a social mechanism for intercultural interaction and comprising community (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). The main findings from the interviews and longitudinal classroom observations point to the combined activation of the

personal, cultural and social forces in shaping the children's interactions in the bilingual preschool. Like studies in which Berry (2003, 2005) examined the relationship between the ethnic minority and majority groups, this study showed that, even among 5-year-olds, the ongoing intercultural encounter was a longitudinal process aimed to achieve acculturation or a cultural and psychological change. The findings also supported a theoretical claim by Bronfenbrenner (1994) and Robinson (2007) that, among young children who undergo their natural multidimensional development in parallel with the intercultural encounter, a variety of factors influence their mode and degree of acculturation. These factors can be defined as ecological (immediate environment, socioeconomic situation, ideology, and culture of the society), supportive (teachers' encouragement of acculturation in the educational environment) and developmental (specific cognitive, emotional, and social development changes during the intercultural encounter) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Robinson, 2007).

In addition, we found that the interactional patterns between L2 experts and novices are consistent with the claim by Lave and Wenger (1991) about the role of experts in the learning of less experienced members through interaction in the CoP and with what was shown in previous research of older language mediators (Angelova, Gunawardena, & Volk 2006; Kopke & Nespoulous, 2006; Langman, Hansen-Thomas, & Bayley, 2005). Moreover, the findings showed that the ability to move from one language to another means the ability to change social identities and thus to achieve high social status (Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani, & Martin, 2006).

The special status of "mediators," "helpers," and "teachers," which the L2 experts obtained, created a situation in which bilingual knowledge becomes worthwhile and promoted. It is noteworthy that the innovation of our findings lies in identifying similarities as well as differences in the way in which the L2 experts and their L2 novice peers developed their intercultural interactions. More specifically, it appeared that despite the differences observed in the patterns of social adaptation to the bilingual preschool between the expert and the novice L2 learners, all children showed developmental intercultural changes (Robinson, 2007). These changes were identified in the three main developmental areas: cognitive and language development (development of different modes of thinking, progress in L1 and L2 acquisition), social development (emergence of interactions within and outside their sociocultural group of belonging) and emotional development (expressing empathy and caring for others). These developmental changes shaped the children's acculturation strategies (Berry, 2003, 2005) during the intercultural encounters. At the initial stage, the L2 experts chose the integration strategy, initiating intercultural relations while preserving the original culture, whereas the novice L2 learners maintained their original culture and avoided intercultural interaction. However, despite the initial differences, later on, both the L2 experts and the novice L2 learners showed a common trend toward intercultural integration. In light of these findings, we can conclude that a bilingual preschool experience might reduce the interpersonal, linguistic and cultural distance between the Jewish and Arab children when mutual accommodation is encouraged by the educational-social environment, i.e., the preschool teachers.

The study also highlighted that while acquiring a novel culture and language, the children's sense of belonging to the ethnic group was strengthened. Moreover, both ethnic groups showed a tendency toward membership categorization. In this case, Sacks's idea (Sacks, 1972) of social classification is especially relevant to the analysis of these intergroup interactions. According to Sacks, the tools of social classification (resources and strategies) allow people to define their affiliation groups. Moreover, as in the case of our study, membership categorization seems to consolidate the children's cultural identity (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

6. Conclusions and implications for practice

The observed process of intercultural interaction was influenced considerably by the teachers, who served as personal models of fruitful intercultural communication as well as of coexistence between the two ethnic groups. Concerning the L2 early learning process, Nikolov (1999) found that the teachers' own motivation has an impact on the children's motivation. Indeed, our highly motivated teachers played a key role in initiating, developing and maintaining the children's enthusiasm for intercultural interaction through an endless reflective process and implication of diverse and creative strategies. Their reflections and observed behavioral patterns could be defined as an expression of their agency enactment, which included teachers' beliefs, professional and personal experience and identity.

Within a wider international framework, the observed emergent process of the intercultural interactions during the first year in the Arabic-Hebrew-speaking bilingual classroom, as well as the teachers' reflections on it, could provide a model for bilingual educators who are working in dual language education, to promote encounters and interaction between two ethnic groups of children. Moreover, the examples and their analysis might help policy makers and educators in ethnic majority-minority contexts to view themselves as part of a community of reciprocal learning and repair.

Finally, we need to address some limitations of our study. First, we were limited in obtaining a representative sample in our ethnographic study (Nurani, 2008), and hence, our conclusions can be defined as preliminary. In addition, we need to address the fact that the children in our study were not starting their bilingual education from the same point. Among 29 children in the class, 22 had either no L2 knowledge or very low L2 competence, six had entered the preschool with a relatively high level of spoken L2 competence, and one boy was from an ethnically mixed family, in which the mother was an L1 Hebrew speaker and the father was an L1 Arabic speaker. On one hand, this diversity of linguistic histories created a unique case of enquiry. On the other hand, due to this uniqueness, we must be cautious when generalizing our findings. This notwithstanding, we hope that this study will be a springboard for a multidisciplinary examination of the intercultural and social interactions between preschool children from majority and minority groups. This examination also has implications for the social relations between the ethnic groups, who sometimes live with tension and with limited social contact, but who are seeking a model of coexistence in their lives.

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The use of previously known languages and target language (English) during task-based interaction: A pseudolongitudinal study of primary-school CLIL learners

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ABSTRACT

EN (Pseudo)longitudinal studies of the use of previously known languages (PKL) and the target language (TL) during interaction are still scarce in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts, particularly those with young learners. This paper examines the use of PKLs (Basque-Spanish) and the TL English in various categories (appeals for assistance-clarification requests-metacomments-discourse markers-private speech) in two groups of CLIL learners (grade 5 and 6) during dyadic interaction. A greater use of PKLs in older learners was found, especially in less cooperative and more external to the task strategies. As regards TL use, both groups performed similarly, except for metacomments, where younger learners made a slightly higher use. When comparing PKLs to TL use, both grade learners resorted to Basque-Spanish more frequently than to English, except for metacomments. Learners seem to use their language repertoire for task-management purposes. Nonetheless, they still resort to PKLs to keep the flow of speech.

Key words: CLIL, USE OF PREVIOUSLY KNOWN LANGUAGES, TASK-BASED INTERACTION, PRIMARY-SCHOOL LEARNERS, L3 ENGLISH

ES Los estudios pseudolongitudinales sobre el uso de lenguas previamente conocidas (LPCs) y de la lengua meta (LM) en tareas de interacción son aún escasos en contextos de Aprendizaje de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE), y más aún con jóvenes aprendices. Este trabajo examina el uso de LPCs (Euskera-Castellano) y la LM (Inglés) en varias categorías (peticiones de ayuda-peticiones de clarificación-metacomentarios- marcadores de discurso-habla privada) en dos grupos de aprendices AICLE (5º y 6º curso) durante una interacción diádica. Se encontró un uso mayor de LPCs en el grupo de mayor edad, especialmente en estrategias menos cooperativas y más externas a la tarea. Con respecto al uso de la LM, ambos grupos tuvieron resultados similares, excepto en los metacomentarios, donde los estudiantes más jóvenes la usaron ligeramente más. Al comparar LPCs con LM, los estudiantes de ambos cursos recurrieron a las LPCs con más frecuencia que al inglés, excepto en los metacomentarios. Los estudiantes parecen utilizar su repertorio lingüístico para fines de gestión de tareas, pero aún recurren a las LPCs para mantener el flujo del habla.

Palabras clave: AICLE, USO DE IDIOMAS CONOCIDOS, TAREAS DE INTERACCIÓN, ESTUDIANTES DE EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA, INGLÉS COMO L3

IT Gli studi (pseudo)longitudinali sull'uso delle lingue già note e della lingua d'arrivo (TL) in interazione sono ancora scarsi nei contesti di apprendimento integrato di lingua e contenuto (CLIL), in particolare quelli con apprendenti di giovane età. Questo lavoro esamina l'uso di lingue già note (basco-spagnolo) e dell'inglese come TL in varie categorie (richieste di assistenza e di chiarimenti, metacommenti, marcatori discorsivi di discorsi privati) in due gruppi di studenti CLIL (classi di 5ª elementare e 1ª media) durante l'interazione diadica. È emerso un maggiore utilizzo delle lingue già note nei discenti più grandi, soprattutto nelle strategie meno collaborative e più esterne al *task*. In merito all'uso della lingua di arrivo, entrambi i gruppi hanno agito similmente, ad eccezione dei metacommenti, che gli studenti più giovani hanno usato leggermente di più. Quando si confronta l'uso delle lingue già note con quello della TL entrambi i gruppi fanno ricorso allo spagnolo-basco più frequentemente che all'inglese, ad eccezione dei metacommenti. Gli studenti sembrano usare il loro repertorio linguistico per la gestione dei *task*. Tuttavia, ricorrono ancora alle lingue già note per mantenere il flusso del discorso.

Parole chiave: CLIL, USO DI LINGUE GIÀ NOTE, INTERAZIONE BASATA SUI TASK, STUDENTI DELLE SCUOLE ELEMENTARI, INGLESE COME L3

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1. Introduction

The investigation of the use of previously known languages (henceforth PKL) during task-based interaction has attracted the attention of researchers in both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) settings. Very recently, the emergence of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes has led to a growing body of research studies analyzing the effect of a more natural and intense input provided in these settings on the use of previously known language-based strategies (i.e., García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016; Martínez-Adrián, in press; Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015a). Most of these investigations have compared CLIL learners to non-CLIL learners, but (pseudo)longitudinal studies of CLIL learners across age and proficiency (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018, 2019; Lázaro Ibarrola & García Mayo, 2012), which could shed more light on the development of strategy use, are still few in number in CLIL settings, and even more limited with young learners (Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2017). In addition, a more detailed analysis of the different functions and patterns of both PKL and target language (TL) use is needed. This paper will try to fill these gaps by examining the use of PKL (Basque and Spanish) and the TL (English) in appeals for assistance, clarification requests, metacomments, discourse markers and private speech in two different age/proficiency groups of primary school learners (grade 5 and 6) immersed in a CLIL context during the performance of a communicative task in dyads. The article is structured as follows: the first section presents an overview of the literature as regards the use of PKL during oral production. Research questions are subsequently addressed in Section 2, while the methodology is described in Section 3. Results are presented and discussed in Sections 4 and 5, respectively. The last section concludes the paper and offers future research lines.

2. Literature review

2.1. *The use of previously known languages during task-based interaction*

Research on task-based interaction has shown that the use of PKL during the performance of communicative tasks is more the norm rather than the exception and has been reported to have positive effects for language learning (Storch & Aldosari, 2010). To the present date, a great bulk of studies in ESL and EFL settings with mainstream learners has been conducted, particularly with adults (i.e., Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Azkarai, 2015; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Di Camilla & Antón, 2012; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). These studies have focused on the extent of use and functions of PKL. In terms of amount, adults have not been found to draw extensively on prior linguistic experience. With regard to functions, learners mainly employ PKL for a metacognitive function, phatics and for vocabulary searches (i.e., Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010). The extent to which learners rely on their previous linguistic experience seems to depend on a variety of factors such as proficiency (Di Camilla & Antón, 2012; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), onset age (Cenoz, 2001, 2003), gender (Azkarai, 2015; Ross-Feldman, 2005), task-type (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003) and task-modality (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015). More limited research is available on younger learners (Pinter, 2007; Shintani, 2012, 2014; Tognini & Oliver, 2012). In particular, studies providing a detailed examination of the functions of PKL, as documented in research on adult learners, are nearly non-existent for younger learners.

2.2. *Research in CLIL settings*

The use of PKL when performing communicative tasks in English has recently been the focus of several studies conducted in CLIL settings. In CLIL programmes, more intense and natural input is provided to students as, in addition to English as a school subject, they receive content lessons through the foreign language (Coyle, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2011). The greater amount of exposure received in these programmes leads the learner to attain a higher command of the TL (Lasagabaster, 2008; Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015b; Navés & Victori, 2010; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2008) and in turn to a lower reliance on PKL (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Gómez-Lacabex, 2013, 2017; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016; Martínez-Adrián, in press; Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015a). Some of these investigations on the use of previously known language-based strategies during oral production have compared CLIL to non-CLIL learners (Gallardo del Puerto, 2015; García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016; Martínez-Adrián, in press; Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015a; Pladevall Ballester & Vraciu, 2017) and others, lower in number, offer (pseudo)longitudinal studies of

CLIL learners (i.e., Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018, 2019; Lázaro Ibarrola & García Mayo, 2012). Among these studies, either comparative or (pseudo)longitudinal in nature, some have centered on secondary-school learners (i.e., Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018, 2019; Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016; Lázaro Ibarrola & García Mayo, 2012; Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015b) while primary-school learners are currently the focus of several investigations (i.e., Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2017; Gallardo del Puerto, 2015; García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015; Martínez-Adrián, in press). In fact, several researchers have called for more research on the acquisition of foreign languages by primary-school learners in an effort to maximize their learning opportunities (García Mayo, 2018). CLIL studies on the use of PKL during interaction have mainly examined age and proficiency effects (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018, 2019; Lázaro Ibarrola & García Mayo, 2012; Pladevall Ballester & Vraciu, 2017), whereas findings for gender and task type have not been analysed in depth (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2017; Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2017).

In the case of CLIL studies with secondary-school learners, Martínez-Adrián and Gutiérrez-Mangado (2015a) compared the oral production of a group of CLIL learners to a group of non-CLIL learners. Participants performed an oral narration task in front of a researcher, which was subsequently examined in terms of the use of the first languages (L1s) (Basque and Spanish) in interactional strategies and transfer lapses. A lower use of the L1s and a greater use of the TL (English) was found in the case of CLIL learners. This study also confirmed a negative correlation between general proficiency, lexical richness and use of PKL. In addition to the use of PKL in interactional strategies, other comparative studies with secondary-school learners have analysed the production of discourse markers. Lázaro Ibarrola (2016) compared a group of 15 CLIL learners to a group of 11 non-CLIL learners at Time 1 when they were in their 2nd year of compulsory secondary education and subsequently at Time 2 when they were in the 4th year. All instances of discourse markers including those in English and those in Basque and Spanish were considered. In addition, the learners' use of other hesitation phenomena, namely, non-lexical discourse markers was also taken into account. The use of the L1s (Basque and Spanish) did not decrease with time and no differences were found between CLIL and non-CLIL (Basque and Spanish) learners. Few instances of discourse markers in English were produced, the most common of them being 'well', which is employed in textbooks and teacher talk. A difference was found between CLIL and non-CLIL learners in the use of non-lexical discourse markers, with a higher production on the part of non-CLIL learners. CLIL students were able to use discourse markers in the L1s while non-CLIL learners were in a previous stage of development and use more hesitation phenomena.

Other investigations with secondary school learners are (pseudo)longitudinal studies of one or two groups of CLIL learners. Lázaro Ibarrola and García Mayo (2012) tackled the use of the L1 in discourse markers and appeals for assistance as well as the morphosyntactic development of a group of 15-year-old students immersed in a CLIL context in the Basque Country. The use of the L1 significantly decreased over the two-year period investigated, while morphosyntax experienced significant development. However, the production of English discourse markers was uncommon. Arratibel-Irazusta and Martínez-Adrián (2018) explored the use of PKL (L1 Spanish/second language (L2) Basque) in appeals for assistance, transfer lapses, codes-switching and discourse markers in an oral narration task in two different age/proficiency CLIL groups of third language (L3) English learners. Both groups shared the same onset age (Year 3) but differed in length and amount of exposure. The analysis of the results did not yield statistically significant differences between the groups except for the production of foreignizings, which were more frequent in the younger group. However, the intragroup analysis revealed how less proficient learners preferred to use more implicit appeals and employed borrowings and foreignizings in similar proportions, while older learners preferred to use both explicit and implicit strategies and showed a tendency to use borrowings (a more communicative option). As for the different categories examined, discourse markers were the most common manifestation of prior linguistic experience. In a follow-up study involving the same groups of learners, Arratibel-Irazusta and Martínez-Adrián (2019) delved into the use of previous linguistic knowledge (L1 Spanish/L2 Basque) as a communication strategy (appeals for assistance and transfer) together with TL-based strategies (holistic and analytic strategies). No differences between the two age/proficiency groups were observed. As for the distribution of categories, holistic strategies were the most employed, a finding attributed to the overriding effect of CLIL as reported in other investigations with young learners that have analysed self-reported opinions (Martínez-Adrián, Gallardo-del-Puerto, & Basterrechea, 2019). In other words, even if these participants were considered low-proficient learners, they were exploiting strategies more typical of advanced learners, a result that might be due to the type of input received in their CLIL lessons, which is full of reformulations in the TL. In addition, the use of previously known language-based strategies was found to

correlate negatively with both the level of proficiency and receptive vocabulary. However, no significant correlations were found in the case of TL-based strategies. Likewise, the analysis did not yield a significant correlation between the use of PKL and the use of TL-based strategies. Thus, at this point of development, previously known language-based strategies still coexist with the use of TL-based strategies.

As regards CLIL studies conducted with young learners, most of them have examined the effect of the instructional context (CLIL vs. Non-CLIL). These studies, with a cross-sectional or (pseudo)longitudinal design, have compared CLIL to non-CLIL learners (Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2015; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2017; Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015; Martínez-Adrián, in press; Pladevall Ballester & Vraciu, 2017).

Gallardo-del-Puerto (2015) looked into data from primary school learners performing a peer interaction task. Two groups of CLIL learners in grades 4 and 6 were compared to two age-matched non-CLIL learners in terms of their production of codeswitching and transfer lapses in a dyadic story-telling task. Younger and older CLIL learners produced fewer instances of codeswitching and transfer lapses than their non-CLIL counterparts, these differences reaching significance only in the case of the older learners. As for the distribution of functions, codeswitching, borrowings and foreignizings were far more frequent in non-CLIL than in CLIL, while CLIL learners produced more calques than non-CLIL students. This study contrasts with previous investigations that claimed that foreignizings are characteristic of higher proficiency (=CLIL) learners (Agustín Llach, 2014; Celaya, 2008; Celaya & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010).

Martínez-Adrián (in press) explored the use of interactional strategies (appeals for assistance, clarification requests and metacomments) in the L1 (Spanish) and the TL (English) in the same sample analyzed by Gallardo-del-Puerto (2015). The results indicated that NON-CLIL learners produced more instances of L1 use in interactional strategies and that greater differences emerged as grade level increased. In addition, metacomments were the most common manifestation of L1 use in both years in the non-CLIL groups, which suggested that non-CLIL learners were not so accustomed to interacting in the TL and not so well equipped to perform content tasks in the TL. A qualitative inspection of the results also showed that some differences between groups in their preference for either the L1 or the TL existed in the case of appeals and clarification requests. Nevertheless, metacomments were always produced in the L1 in both groups, a finding in line with previous classroom observation data (Gené Gil, Juan Garau, & Salazar Noguera, 2012).

Using the same sample as in Gallardo-del-Puerto (2015) and Martínez-Adrián (in press), Gutiérrez-Mangado (2015) investigated the pseudolongitudinal development of CLIL and non-CLIL learners as regards L1 use in interactional strategies, transfer lapses and codeswitching. Non-CLIL learners used the L1 in these three categories in the two-year period examined, while a decrease in appeals for assistance and an increase in borrowings was attested in the CLIL learners. The analysis of the data indicated that older learners seemed to favour more uncooperative strategies rather than more cooperative ones (i.e., appeals).

García Mayo and Lázaro Ibarrola (2015) studied the effect of CLIL and age in the oral interaction of 40 age- and proficiency-matched dyads in terms of conversational adjustments, repetitions and L1 use. CLIL learners displayed slightly higher linguistic abilities, a finding supporting previous studies comparing CLIL and non-CLIL learners and were found to negotiate more and to resort to the L1 less frequently than non-CLIL learners. As for the effect of age, older children in both contexts were reported to negotiate less and to use the L1 more frequently than younger children.

García Mayo and Hidalgo Gordo (2017) compared a group of CLIL learners to a group of non-CLIL learners at Time 1, when they were in the 3rd year of primary education and at Time 2, when they were in their 4th year. Both groups completed a jigsaw task that was subsequently codified according to the following L1 functions: metacognitive talk, vocabulary (appeals, borrowings and foreignizings) and discourse markers. The examination of the results revealed that L1 use as a whole was quite limited at both testing times, but a greater use was observed at Time 2 in both groups, even though it only reached significance in the non-CLIL group. Vocabulary was the function most served by the L1 in both groups in the two school years, a finding in line with other investigations exploring young learners in a CLIL setting (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2017). As for the effect of the instructional setting, non-CLIL learners relied on the L1 to a greater extent than CLIL learners, especially in the case of learners' use of the L1 for vocabulary purposes. When dealing with metacognitive talk and discourse markers, the instructional setting did not have a great influence. As regards the effect of age on functions, only a statistically significant difference was found in the metacognitive use in favour of the older non-CLIL group.

These results are partially in line with García Mayo and Imaz Agirre (2017) who also considered the impact of the learning context (CLIL vs. non-CLIL) on L1 use adopting a longitudinal perspective. 27 dyads

participated in the study. In particular, two groups of CLIL learners were compared to two groups of non-CLIL learners at two different data collection times. In addition, younger learners were also compared to older learners in each instructional setting in order to examine the effect of age. At two data collection times, non-CLIL learners were found to use the L1 to a greater extent than their CLIL counterparts. However, while the use of the L1 decreased in the non-CLIL groups over time, in the CLIL groups it remained stable across time in the younger group of learners, while an increase was observed in the group of older CLIL learners. The nature of the task, which could have been not so motivating for students, could have yielded these results in the CLIL group. As regards the effect of age, at Time 1, older non-CLIL learners were significantly found to make a greater use of the L1. At Time 2 older learners in both instructional settings employed the L1 to a greater extent with significant differences.

Other longitudinal studies comparing CLIL to non-CLIL learners during task-based interaction have controlled for amount of exposure, a factor that could explain the existence of some contradictory findings in the literature. Pladevall Ballester and Vraciu (2017) examined L1 use in the oral production of 5th and 6th grade primary school learners over a period of two academic years. Content and function words, codeswitching, lexical transfer (i.e., borrowings, foreignizings) and interactional strategies were codified. Interactional strategies were further broken down into metacognitive strategies, metatalk strategies, task-related interactional strategies and private speech. The examination of the results indicated a decrease in L1 use as L2 proficiency increased in both CLIL and non-CLIL learners. Primary school learners were also reported to make use of their L1 as a compensatory strategy during L2 production irrespective of the type of instruction (CLIL vs. non-CLIL) received. In terms of interactional strategies, metatalk and private speech were the most common functions in both groups at the beginning of the study, while, at the very end, the L1 preserved its regulatory function but its scaffolding role disappeared. In the case of lexical transfer, borrowings and foreignizings decreased with proficiency in both groups and the same applied to codeswitching.

Apart from these investigations that have compared CLIL to non-CLIL learners, others are pseudolongitudinal studies of different age/proficiency groups of young CLIL learners (Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2017), though limited in number and examining the interaction of age with other variables (i.e. gender). This line of research is particularly interesting as it could shed more light on the development of the use of PKL during task-based interaction across age. Azkarai and Imaz Agirre (2017) examined gender effects on the amount of L1 use in Grade 3 and 4 primary-school learners while performing a spot-the-difference task. Boys were found to make use of the L1 to a greater extent than girls, and this difference was even more marked in Grade 4 learners. Boys seemed to employ the L1 to avoid communication breakdowns, while girls showed a more restricted use of the L1.

The overview of the literature on L1 use during task-based interaction has shown a growing body of research in this area. However, it has uncovered several gaps that still need to be filled. First, studies aimed at the analysis of the development of use of PKL across age are needed. Second, a detailed analysis of the different functions and most common manifestations of PKL and TL use is advocated, as to the knowledge of the author, just one investigation involving younger learners has been conducted in this respect (Martínez-Adrián, in press). Thus, the present article will contribute to these gaps by examining the use of PKL (Basque and Spanish) and the TL (English) in appeals for assistance, clarification requests, metacomments, discourse markers and private speech in two different age/proficiency groups of primary school learners (Grades 5 and 6) immersed in a CLIL context, while performing a communicative task in pairs. The following research questions will be addressed:

- RQ 1. Are there any differences between both age/proficiency groups in terms of the amount of Basque/Spanish use?
- RQ2. Are there any differences between both age/proficiency groups in terms of the amount of English use?
- RQ3. Do learners in each group show a preference for either Basque/Spanish or English in the categories analyzed?
- RQ4. Among the categories examined, which ones are the most commonly served by Basque/Spanish?
- RQ5. Among the categories examined, which ones are the most commonly served by English?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The study was carried out in a CLIL context in a mid-sized town in the Basque-Autonomous Community where Basque and Spanish co-exist as official languages. 90 Basque-Spanish bilingual learners of L3 English from a semi-private school participated in the study. All of them had been exposed to Spanish and Basque since birth and/or early childhood in the school-context¹. They were enrolled in an early partial immersion programme in which half of the subjects are taught in Spanish and the other half in Basque, except for the English as a foreign language class and some content subjects that are in English.

All participants started learning English at age 4 and were enrolled in a CLIL programme at age 8. In fifth- and sixth-years of schooling, learners are exposed to English in the classroom context for 5 to 7 weekly hours in lessons scheduled as English as a school subject (3 hours in 5th year and 4 hours in 6th year), as well as in content lessons such as science, arts and crafts or physical education (3 hours in 5th year and 4 hours in 6th year). At the time of the data gathering, 5th year learners had received 714 hours of exposure, and 6th graders 884 hours. As for their English proficiency, the proficiency level test administered at the outset of the study indicated that 5th year learners were in A2-, and 6th year ones in the A2 level (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001). Participant characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant characteristics

	Learner groups	
	CLIL 5 (n = 50)	CLIL 6 (n = 40)
Grade	5	6
Age (years)	10	11
Onset age	3.93	4.28
Exposure (academic years)	6.5	7.5
Hours of exposure to English	714	884
Hours of CLIL exposure	162	291
Proficiency level	A2-	A2

3.2. Instruments and data analysis

At the beginning of the study, learners completed both a questionnaire on their personal and linguistic background (languages known, amount of time learning English (at school and/or extramurally) as well as a proficiency level test, consisting of the reading, listening and writing sections of the Cambridge English Flyers (see <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/young-learners-english/flyers/testformat/>). Subsequently, students worked in pairs to narrate a story in English with visual support provided by a series of wordless pictures. This task type has been widely used for similar research purposes with primary- and secondary-school children in CLIL and non-CLIL settings (i.e., Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; Lázaro Ibarrola & García Mayo, 2012; Martínez-Adrián, in press; Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015a, 2015b). These vignettes were selected from the Disney movie *Aladdin* (1992)². As for the procedure, 12 pictures were distributed to the 5th and 6th graders (6 to each member of the dyad). At the beginning of the task, participants could not see each other. Each dyad member had to describe the pictures assigned, which had been randomly presented. Then, working together, they ordered the image and took turns telling the story according to the order that they had agreed upon. The participants were asked to perform the task naturally, drawing on all of their available resources, without the assistant's help for vocabulary queries. Even if this type of task has been found to be achievable and beneficial for middle school children (see García Mayo, 2018 for a review of empirical findings related to child interaction in task-based EFL contexts) and have been used in a wide range of studies with young children in an EFL context (i.e., García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015; García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; Lázaro Ibarrola & Azpilicueta Martínez, 2015; Martínez-Adrián, in press), prior to the administration of the task, the researchers ensure that the task was appropriate for the learners tested by having several meetings with the

¹ Learners had one of three profiles: L1 Spanish/L2 Basque, L1 Basque/L2 Spanish, L1 Spanish/L1 Basque.

² To avoid one student in the dyad taking on a lead role, pairings were made based on each member's similar knowledge about the *Aladdin* story.

school teachers. In addition, it was piloted with similarly aged children so as to detect potential problems and make modifications accordingly.

All the narrations were videotaped and later on transcribed and codified in CHILDES format (MacWhinney, 2000). The oral data was codified in terms of Basque/Spanish use and English use in appeals for assistance, clarification requests, metacomments and discourse markers, following the categorization from our previous studies (see Martínez-Adrián, in press, with primary-school children; Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018, 2019, with secondary-school learners). Apart from that, the use of private speech has been incorporated in the present study in line with other investigations conducted with child learners (Pladevall Ballester & Vraciu, 2017). In what follows, a description of the categories along with illustrations from our database will be provided.

3.2.1. Appeals for assistance

Appeals for assistance (also known as interactional strategies, Cenoz, 2003) are “direct or indirect appeals to the interlocutor in order to get help to produce a specific term in English . . . they are considered intentional and present a marked interrogative intonation pattern” (Cenoz, 2003, p. 5). Example 1 illustrates an appeal for assistance in Spanish and Example 2 in English:

- 1) CH2: *¿Cómo se dice señor?*
How do you say man
How do you say a man?
- 2) CH2: *How do you say a magical thing?* [meaning lamp]

3.2.2. Clarification requests

These are cases in which the learner elicits clarification (Muñoz, 2007). Example 3 provides an example of clarification in Basque and Example 4 in English:

- 3) CH2: *eh # ba ### hau*
then this
so, this?
- 4) CH1: *All?*

3.2.3. Metacomments

These are instances in which the learner comments on the communicative situation (Muñoz, 2007), as in Example 5 (use of Spanish) and Example 6 (use of English):

- 5) CH1: *no sé esta misma es que yo no me lo he leído.*
I don't know this one is that I have not read it
I don't know, just this one, because I haven't read it
- 6) CH1: *this is the last [one].*

3.2.4. Discourse markers

Also called phatics, discourse markers are “lexical items such as well, so, you know, etc., which do not have meaning and whose basic function is to facilitate the flow of speech” (Lázaro Ibarrola & García Mayo, 2012, p. 140), as shown in Example 7 (use of Spanish) and Example 8 (use of English):

- 7) CH1: *bueno, princesa, eso es una princesa?*
Well, princess, that is a princess
- 8) CH2: *and this picture, is a, well there is Aladdin and evil and evil is eh eh attacking Aladdin.*

3.2.5. Private speech

Private speech refers to those segments of the interaction primarily used for self-regulatory purposes (Pladevall Ballester & Vraciu, 2017), as depicted in Example 9 (use of Spanish) and Example 10 (use of English):

- 9) CH2: *ay the umm the ay ay eh eeh # ay no sé the eeh this (pointing at the character).*
 ay the umm the ay ay eh eeh ay not know the eeh this
 The the I don't know the this
- 10) CH2: *to the ### I don't know.*

To perform statistical analyses, data were entered into SPSS 19 (IMB Corp. 2010), and both descriptive and inferential analyses were computed. In the case of descriptive analyses, both means and standard deviations were calculated for the different categories. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were run to verify the normality of distribution of the samples. As data did not follow a normal distribution, Mann-Whitney U tests were used for inter-group comparisons and Friedman Tests together with Wilcoxon's Signed Rank Tests were conducted for intragroup comparisons. Statistical significance was indicated at the $p < .01^{**}$ and $p < .05^*$ levels. Marginally significant differences were indicated at the $p < .09\#$ level.

4. Results

To answer the first two research questions, intergroup comparisons regarding the use of Basque/Spanish in each category as well as the use of L3 English are provided. Table 2 shows the results for the total use of PKL (Spanish/Basque).

Table 2
Spanish/Basque use during interaction: Descriptive and inferential statistics

Learner groups	Instances of Spanish/Basque use	Mann-Whitney U test	
		Z	Significance
CLIL Year 5	$M = 17.00$ ($SD = 16.02$)	-2.905	**0.004
CLIL Year 6	$M = 28.63$ ($SD = 25.31$)		

As can be observed in Table 2, older CLIL learners made a higher use of PKL. This difference was highly significant from a statistical point of view. The differences were particularly evident in metacomments, discourse markers and private speech, as depicted in Table 3. The L3 (English) was also used for these categories in both groups (see Table 4). The analysis of the results indicated that both learner groups employed L3 English with the same frequency, except for the category *metacomments* in which a statistical tendency was found in favour of Year 5 learners. In order to give an answer to the last three questions, intragroup comparisons were carried out. Tables 5-6 display the findings concerning the use of Basque/Spanish compared to English in each category.

Table 3
Instances of Basque and Spanish use by categories: Descriptive and inferential statistics

Categories	Learner groups		Mann-Whitney U test	
	CLIL Year 5	CLIL Year 6	Z	Significance
Appeals	$M = 4.10$ ($SD = 3.86$)	$M = 3.85$ ($SD = 2.80$)	-0.229	0.819
Clarification requests	$M = 1.20$ ($SD = 2.00$)	$M = 0.93$ ($SD = 1.54$)	-0.404	0.686
Metacomments	$M = 7.70$ ($SD = 9.47$)	$M = 15.48$ ($SD = 20.42$)	-2.752	**0.006
Discourse markers	$M = 3.02$ ($SD = 4.11$)	$M = 6.28$ ($SD = 6.02$)	-3.319	**0.001
Private speech	$M = 0.98$ ($SD = 1.46$)	$M = 2.10$ ($SD = 2.82$)	-2.131	*0.033

Table 4
Instances of L3 English use by categories: Descriptive and inferential statistics

Categories	Learner groups		Mann-Whitney U test	
	CLIL Year 5	CLIL Year 6	Z	Significance
Appeals	M = 0.20 (SD = 0.40)	M = 0.10 (SD = 0.30)	-1.293	0.196
Clarification requests	M = 0.56 (SD = 0.95)	M = 0.30 (SD = 0.56)	-0.999	0.318
Metacomments	M = 14.26 (SD = 10.07)	M = 11.30 (SD = 11.46)	-1.922	#0.055
Discourse markers	M = 0.04 (SD = 0.198)	M = 0.65 (SD = 3.48)	-1.165	0.244
Private speech	M = 0.96 (SD = 1.52)	M = 0.73 (SD = 1.43)	-1.216	0.224

Table 5
Comparison of instances of Basque/Spanish use to L3 English use by categories in Year 5: Descriptive and inferential statistics

Categories	Language use		Wilcoxon Rank test	
	L1/L2 (Spanish/Basque)	L3 (English)	Z	Significance
Appeals	M = 4.10 (SD = 3.86)	M = 0.20 (SD = 0.40)	-5.381	**0.001
Clarification requests	M = 1.20 (SD = 2.00)	M = 0.56 (SD = 0.95)	-1.710	#0.087
Metacomments	M = 7.70 (SD = 9.47)	M = 14.26 (SD = 10.07)	-3.204	**0.001
Discourse markers	M = 3.02 (SD = 4.11)	M = 0.04 (SD = 0.198)	-5.106	**0.001
Private speech	M = 0.98 (SD = 1.46)	M = 0.96 (SD = 1.52)	-0.285	0.775

Table 6
Comparison of instances of Basque/Spanish use to L3 English use by categories in Year 6: Descriptive and inferential statistics

Categories	Language use		Wilcoxon Rank test	
	L1/L2 (Spanish/Basque)	L3 (English)	Z	Significance
Appeals	M = 3.85 (SD = 2.80)	M = 0.10 (SD = 0.30)	-5.188	**0.001
Clarification requests	M = 0.93 (SD = 1.54)	M = 0.30 (SD = 0.56)	-2.581	*0.010
Metacomments	M = 15.48 (SD = 20.42)	M = 11.30 (SD = 11.46)	-0.805	0.421
Discourse markers	M = 6.28 (SD = 6.02)	M = 0.65 (SD = 3.48)	-4.726	**0.001
Private speech	M = 2.10 (SD = 2.82)	M = 0.73 (SD = 1.43)	-2.840	**0.005

In both groups, the tendency was to resort to their PKL more frequently than to English in appeals for assistance, clarification requests and discourse markers. This preference reached significance in both groups. In the case of private speech, no differences in Year 5 students, while a significantly greater use of Basque/Spanish was observed in Year 6 learners. As regards metacomments, Year 5 students preferred to use English in a highly significant manner, whereas the inexistence of significant differences was obtained in Year 6 students, a finding that seems to indicate a more balanced use of both languages in this category. Figure 1 depicts the descriptive comparison of the use of Spanish/Basque in the different categories among Year 5 students.

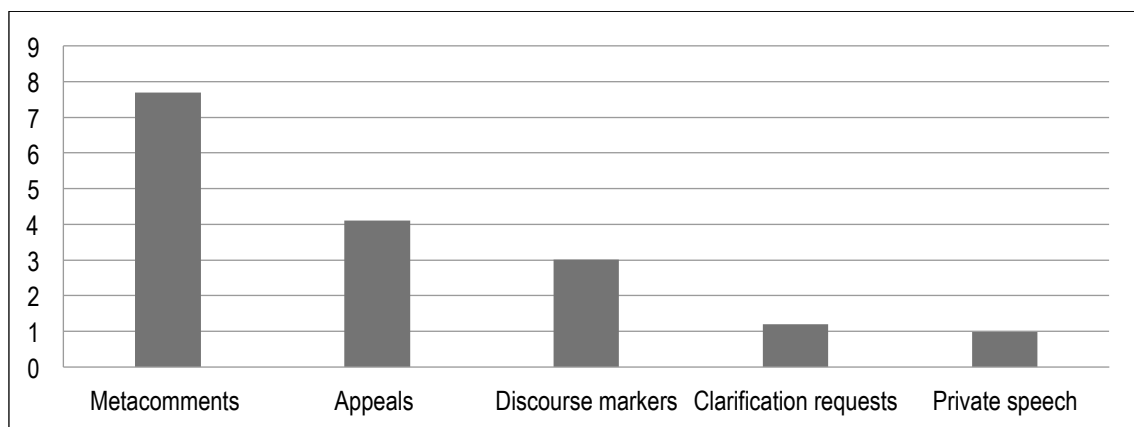


Figure 1. Categories served by Basque/Spanish in Year 5

As illustrated by Figure 1, metacomments, followed by appeals and discourse markers, were most commonly served by the use of Basque/Spanish. Clarification requests and private speech were the categories with the least use of these languages. In order to see whether these differences were statistically significant, a Friedman's Test was conducted. Statistically significant differences emerged (Chi-Square=324.708; p-value=0.001), and therefore post-hoc analyses were conducted. A Wilcoxon's Signed Rank test showed that metacomments significantly differed from the other categories. In addition, statistically significant differences were also observed among appeals, discourse markers and clarification requests, while no differences emerged between clarification requests and private speech. Table 7 presents the summary of these results. The same descriptive analysis was carried out for year 6 (Figure 2).

Table 7
Use of Basque/Spanish: Wilcoxon's Signed Rank Test for Year 5

Categories	Z	Significance
Clarification requests-Appeals	-4.842	**0.001
Metacomments-Appeals	-2.432	*0.015
Discourse markers-Appeals	-2.124	*0.034
Private speech-Appeals	-4.753	**0.001
Metacomments-Clarification requests	-5.032	**0.001
Discourse markers-Clarification requests	-3.605	**0.001
Private speech-Clarification requests	-0.621	0.534
Discourse markers-metacomments	-3.158	**0.002
Private speech-Metacomments	-4.890	**0.001
Private speech-Discourse markers	-4.101	**0.001

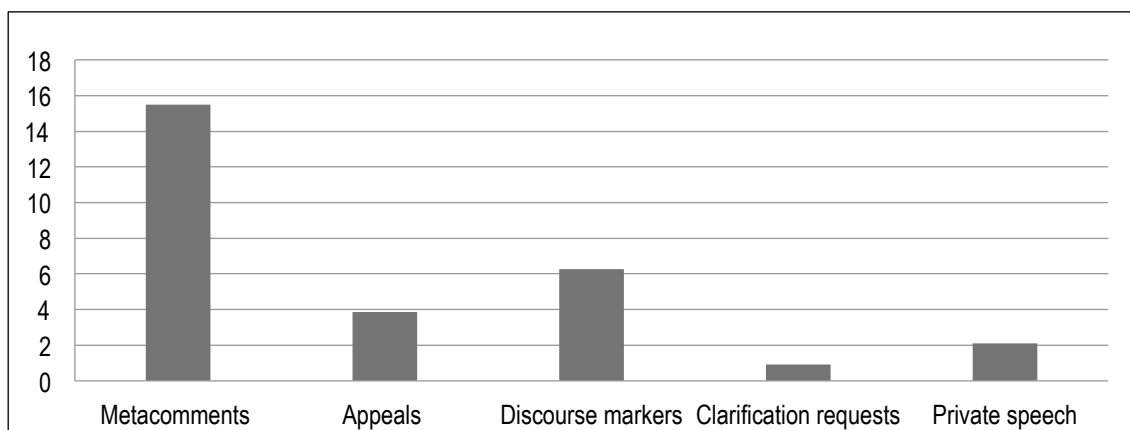


Figure 2. Categories served by Basque/Spanish in Year 6

As in Year 5, metacomments were the most common manifestation of Basque/Spanish use, followed by discourse markers and appeals for assistance. The use of these languages was less common in private speech, and even less in clarification requests. The Friedman test indicated the existence of significant differences across these categories (Chi-Square= 292.418; p-value=0.001). Consequently, post-hoc analyses were conducted. The Wilcoxon's Signed Rank test (Table 8) confirmed the existence of significant differences between metacomments and the rest of the categories. Similarly, the differences between appeals, discourse markers, clarification requests and private speech were significant or nearly significant. Figure 3 shows the descriptive analysis for the use of English in the different categories explored.

Table 8
Use of Basque/Spanish: Wilcoxon's Signed Rank Test for Year 6

Categories	Z	Significance
Clarification requests-Appeals	-4.443	**0.001
Metacomments-Appeals	-5.144	**0.001
Discourse markers-Appeals	-1.853	#0.064
Private speech-Appeals	-2.876	**0.004
Metacomments-Clarification requests	-5.376	**0.001
Discourse markers-Clarification requests	-4.784	**0.001
Private speech-Clarification requests	-2.465	*0.014
Discourse markers-metacomments	-3.033	**0.002
Private speech-Metacomments	-5.306	**0.001
Private speech-Discourse markers	-3.904	**0.001

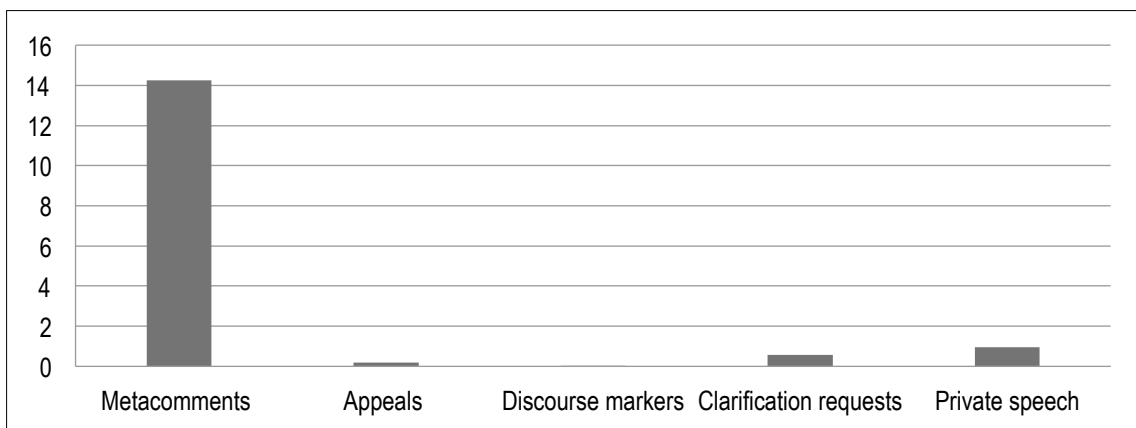


Figure 3. Categories served by L3 English in Year 5

The use of English was prevalent in metacomments, while the use of this language in the other categories was scarce. Particularly, the use of English discourse markers was nearly non-existent. The Friedman test revealed the existence of significant differences across these categories (Chi-Square = 324.708; $p = 0.001$). A Wilcoxon's Signed Rank test indicated that metacomments significantly differed from the rest of the categories. Statistically significant differences emerged among the other categories, except for the contrast between private speech and clarification requests (see Table 9).

Table 9
Use of English: Wilcoxon's Signed Rank Test for Year 5

Categories	Z	Significance
Clarification requests-Appeals	-2.640	0.008*
Metacomments-Appeals	-6.156	0.001**
Discourse markers-Appeals	-2.530	0.011*
Private speech-Appeals	-3.571	0.001**
Metacomments-Clarification requests	-6.155	0.001**
Discourse markers-Clarification requests	-3.342	0.001**
Private speech-Clarification requests	-1.335	0.182
Discourse markers-metacomments	-6.156	0.001**
Private speech-Metacomments	-6.141	0.001**
Private speech-Discourse markers	-4.073	0.001**

Figure 4 shows the results for the use of English by Year 6 learners. Year 6 students also made substantial use of English in metacomments compared to the other categories, in which the use of this language was less frequent. In particular, appeals were the least frequently used category. The interaction among these categories was significant (Chi-Square = 292.418; $p = 0.001$). Post-hoc analyses showed that metacomments significantly differed from the rest of the categories. Statistically significant differences were obtained between the rest of the categories, except for the contrast between discourse markers and appeals for assistance, as well as discourse markers and clarification requests (Table 10).

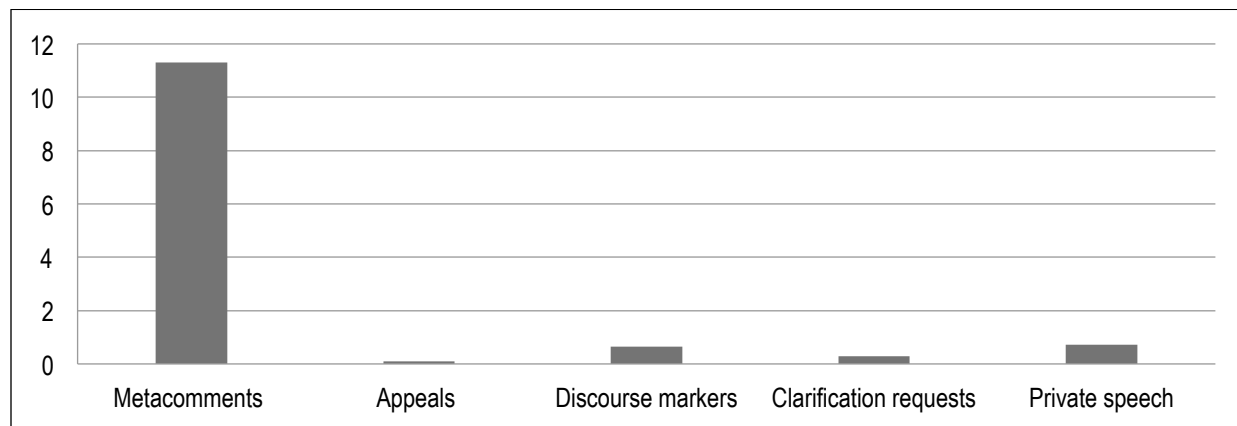


Figure 4. Categories served by L3 English in Year 6

Table 10
Use of English: Wilcoxon's Signed Rank test for Year 6

Categories	Z	Significance
Clarification requests-Appeals	-1.890	0.059#
Metacomments-Appeals	-5.092	0.001**
Discourse markers-Appeals	-0.647	0.518
Private speech-Appeals	-2.724	0.006*
Metacomments-Clarification requests	-5.219	0.001**
Discourse markers-Clarification requests	-1.016	0.310
Private speech-Clarification requests	-2.041	0.041*
Discourse markers-metacomments	-5.089	0.001**
Private speech-Metacomments	-5.164	0.001**
Private speech-Discourse markers	-1.771	0.077#

5. Discussion

In this section, the five research questions of the study will be answered. As regards the first research question (*Are there any differences between both age/proficiency groups in terms of the amount of Basque/Spanish use?*), the intergroup analysis showed a greater use of PKL in Year 6 learners, a result in line with findings from other studies carried out in a CLIL context (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018; García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; García Mayo & Imaz-Agirre, 2017; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015). This greater use of Basque/Spanish is especially reflected in metacomments, discourse markers and private speech. Due to older learners' cognitive maturity and on economy grounds, they seem to make use of strategies that are less cooperative and more external to the task. In fact, studies conducted with CLIL learners (both primary-school learners and adolescents) have shown the use of PKL to be prevalent in metacomments and discourse markers, and this use did not decrease as age increased (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018; Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015; Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016)³. As regards more cooperative

³ Also note that private speech, an underresearched category in CLIL studies, was also maintained over the period examined in the study by Pladevall and Vraciu (2017).

strategies (appeals for assistance and clarification requests), the intergroup analysis did not yield statistically significant differences. But despite the inexistence of statistically significant differences, the descriptive means point to a greater use by Year 5 learners. In previous investigations with young CLIL learners (Gutierrez-Mangado, 2015), similar tendencies were observed for these two categories. These strategies are more internal to the task, and we could claim that use decreases as age and proficiency increase. A greater gap in proficiency could likely result in statistically significant differences in these categories. Nevertheless, the results from the present study contrast with Lázaro Ibarrola and García Mayo (2012). In their longitudinal study with secondary-school learners in which a wider gap in proficiency existed, L1 use in appeals for assistance and discourse markers decreased as proficiency increased.

Even if a higher use of Basque/Spanish was observed in the older group of learners, as in other investigations with young CLIL learners (García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2017; García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015), the underlying reasons cited in these investigations for this higher use are not applicable to our sample. Unlike the older learners in these investigations, for whom the task performed may not have been very appealing or in other cases (e.g. when task repetition was carried out) not so motivating the second time they performed the task, the older learners in the present study were highly engaged while carrying out the task. Their attitude towards performing a different task from the one used in the aforementioned studies suggested that the task was indeed attractive to them. Thus, we cannot really argue that low motivation explains the higher use of PKL on the part of older learners. The higher use of PKL by older learners seems to be a trend and deserves further investigation in future studies.

With respect to the second research question—*Are there any differences between both age/proficiency groups in terms of the amount of English use?*—both groups were able to perform the categories examined in English, a result in line with the bilingual nature of the educational programme in which the learners were immersed. The use of both Basque/Spanish and English was evident in the different categories. These results contrast with the findings obtained in previous investigations with younger learners (Martínez-Adrián, in press) in which similar categories were examined. In particular, metacomments were always produced in L1 Spanish in Martínez-Adrián (in press), while both Basque/Spanish and English were employed in the present study. The differences existing in the CLIL programmes in which learners were enrolled in these studies could account for these results. In the present study, learners received instruction in content subjects such as science, arts and crafts and physical education exclusively in English. In Martínez-Adrián (in press), Years 4 and 6 learners were receiving half of their lessons in English and half in Spanish⁴.

In terms of quantity, the intergroup analysis revealed that English was employed in similar proportions in Years 5 and 6 as in previous investigations in which a small gap in age and proficiency was not so big as to result in statistically significant differences (see Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2019, with secondary-school learners and oral production; Martínez-Adrián et al., 2019, with self-reported opinions gathered from the same sample tested in the present study), except for the metacomments category in which a statistical tendency was found in favour of Year 5 learners. This result is related to the answer to the next research question, which centered on language preference in each category. In the case of this category, Year 5 preferred the use of English over Basque/Spanish. As neither interviews with the teachers of this group of learners nor the observation of the lessons were carried out, the advocacy for a more English-only policy in the Year 5 group, which could explain this result, remains tentative.

As for the third research question—*Do learners in each group show a preference for either Basque/Spanish or English in the categories analyzed?*— in Year 5 a significantly higher use of Basque/Spanish was observed in nearly all the categories except for metacomments, in which statistically significant differences emerged in favour of English use. A similar pattern was attested in Year 6, even though in the category metacomments, learners used Basque/Spanish and English in similar proportions given the inexistence of statistically significant differences in this respect. Nevertheless, even if the analysis did not yield statistical significance, the descriptive means point to a tendency to increase the use of Basque/Spanish over English in this category.

In general, the trend is for learners to use Basque/Spanish to a greater extent than English in the categories examined when they are interacting, as it is the language shared by both members of the dyads (see Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018 and Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016 for similar results in the category

⁴ Also note that the present study and Martínez-Adrián (in press) differ in design, as Martínez-Adrián (in press) compared CLIL to non-CLIL learners in Years 4 and 6, no inferential analysis was carried out when contrasting the use of English and Spanish, and the task performed, although similar in procedure, differed in terms of the visual stimuli employed.

discourse markers). However, the category metacomments deserves further examination as a preference for English existed among Year-5 students and a more balanced use of Basque/Spanish and English was observed in Year-6 learners. What these results reveal is that English is special for the performance of metacomments. This category is specifically linked to the task procedure. Learners use English to a greater extent or as much as they use Basque/Spanish when they have to, among other things, move the task forward, when they have to classify the pictures or when they have to order them. In this respect, the more functional use of English is observed. We should not overlook the fact that English is a language of communication rather than an object of study in CLIL programmes (Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015a), which could explain the use of English for metacognitive purposes. This result also aligns with Martínez-Adrián et al.'s study (2019) in which the preference for the use of English in paraphrases was evident in the same learners' self-reported opinions. In that study, this was explained in light of the input provided to CLIL learners and the fact that learners use the foreign language as a means of communication, which might lead them to manipulate the TL to a higher rate compared to mainstream learners. Even if the use of English in paraphrases or descriptions is slightly different from its use in metacomments, what seems to be clear is that the use of English as a language of communication in CLIL lessons may be the underlying reason for both episodes.

If we tackle the differences between Year 5 and Year 6 learners in terms of metacomments, even if we observed a similar use of Basque/Spanish and English in Year 6 learners, the tendency seems to augment the use of their PKL. It seems as if these Year 6 learners were more practical and were guided by economy principles to solve the task in a faster way (Lin, 2015). This is not surprising as the same learners in Year 6 were found to show a preference for more communicative options, such as borrowings, to avoid communication breakdowns in the self-report questionnaire administered to them in Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019). In fact, other studies with primary-school learners have reported similar tendencies (Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015) and the same applies to secondary-school learners (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018). On the other hand, Year 5 learners seem to be more conservative by using the language of instruction to a greater extent while making comments related to the task. However, this argument remains tentative due to the lack of questionnaires or interviews carried out with these learners and their teachers about the use of Basque/Spanish and English in their classes. The use of more qualitative data on the language policy implemented in each class would undoubtedly illuminate the discussion of the results.

All in all, what these results seem to evince is that, even if English is widely used in metacomments, Basque/Spanish use overrides the use of English in the rest of the categories. This aligns with previous research studies in which previously known language-based strategies coexist with the use of TL-based strategies (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2019; Martínez-Adrián, in press; Martínez-Adrián et al., 2019; Pladevall Ballester & Vraciu, 2017). This suggests that these learners are functioning in a bilingual mode, rather than in a monolingual mode (Martínez-Adrián, in press).

In response to the fourth research question—*Among the categories examined, which ones are the most commonly served by Basque/Spanish?*—metacomments are the most common manifestation of the use of PKL, followed by appeals for assistance and discourse markers in Year 5. A similar result is obtained in Year 6. These are the functions characterized by a greater use of the L1 in previous investigations with both children (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2017; García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017; Martínez-Adrián, in press) and adults (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010). The use of Basque/Spanish in metacomments allowed the learners to progress in their completion of the task and comply with task requirements. Similarly, the use of these languages in appeals for assistance regarding deliberations over vocabulary and in discourse markers to keep the flow of speech prevented them from communication breakdowns. In fact, the use of appeals for assistance was also one of the strategies that ranked higher in frequency in the self-report questionnaire administered to the same learners in Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019).

The least used functions were clarification requests and private speech. The lower use of L1s in clarification requests has also been attested in research with younger learners (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2017). Private speech is similarly uncommon in other investigations with children (García Mayo & Hidalgo Gordo, 2017) as well as in studies with adults conducted in an EFL setting (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009).

Finally, in response to the last research question—*Among the categories examined, which ones are the most commonly served by English?*—metacomments were the most productive category in both years. Students employed the language of instruction, which together with Spanish, was also used for task

management. This finding could be related to the use of the TL in CLIL programmes with a meaningful purpose. However, the use of English is uncommon in discourse markers and appeals for assistance. Other studies have also reported the inexistence of English discourse markers in CLIL learners' discourse (Arratibel-Irazusta & Martínez-Adrián, 2018; Lázaro Ibarrola, 2016). Likewise, when learners noticed a gap in knowledge while interacting, they preferred to use Basque/Spanish rather than English, so the communicative flow of speech would not be interrupted and doubts concerning vocabulary items could be solved much more effectively and efficiently. In this fashion, the message can be conveyed.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this study has been to examine the use of PKL (Basque and Spanish) and the TL (English) in appeals for assistance, clarification requests, metacomments, discourse markers and private speech in two different age/proficiency groups of primary school learners (grades 5 and 6) immersed in a CLIL context, while performing a communicative task in pairs. In terms of amount, there were differences between age groups, with greater use of PKL among the older learners, especially in less cooperative strategies and those more external to the task (metacomments, discourse markers and private speech). As for the use of the TL (English), the analysis indicated that both age groups behaved in a similar way, except with regard to metacomments, which younger learners used slightly more frequently. The intragroup analysis revealed that both age groups resorted to Basque/Spanish more frequently than to English, except for metacomments, in which the younger group preferred to use English, while older learners made use of Basque/Spanish and English in similar proportions. The fact that English has a more functional use in CLIL settings, as the language of communication in these meaning-oriented settings, could account for the use of English for metacognitive purposes by these learners during dyadic interaction. In terms of types, a similar pattern was observed as regards the most common manifestation of Basque/Spanish use and English use. Metacomments, followed by discourse markers and appeals for assistance were the categories most commonly served by PKL. In the case of TL use, metacomments were widely employed. What this analysis indicates is that learners use their language repertoire for task-management purposes, a finding which could be ascribed to the bilingual nature of the CLIL programme in which they were immersed.

In the light of the results, two main pedagogical implications may be drawn. The examination of the findings has shown the beneficial effect of CLIL on the learners' use of their language repertoire for task-management purposes. However, the less balanced use of their PKL and the TL attested in appeals for assistance indicates the need for more TL-based strategies (i.e., use of synonyms, descriptions, reformulations) among students or the enhancement of paraphrasing during teachers' discourse, which could provide students with rich and repeated modeling (Dalton-Puffer, 2016, as cited in Pavón & Ramos, 2019). It is not a matter of banning the use of their PKL, but of making students aware of other strategies that could help them during interaction when they might feel stuck. Similarly, more systematic activities aimed at practicing TL lexical discourse markers could promote the development of more natural speech. Taken together, these two measures could boost learners' flow of speech in the TL. By integrating the development of strategy use in the curriculum, we would be contributing to a more balanced use of learners' PKL and the TL, as advocated by recent research (see Martínez-Adrián, Gutiérrez-Mangado, & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2019). In other words, gradually bridging PKL and the TL in the everyday/academic register could lead to more optimal communication and maximize the effectiveness of CLIL in terms of both content and language learning (Lo & Lin, 2019).

For future research, as indicated in Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019), statistical correlations should be conducted between learners' self-reported opinions and their performance during oral interaction. In general, a call for more research along these lines has been made in the literature (Gao, 2007). This line of research is especially inexistent in studies on young learners. Similarly, longitudinal investigations will shed more light on how the use of PKL and the TL evolve over time. Likewise, more qualitative data (observations, interviews with both learners and teachers in different subjects) would elucidate some of the arguments provided in the discussion of the results. The impact of different types of pairings and task-modality effects are also worth investigating so as to explore the best learning conditions for young learners. Finally, a follow-up study comparing the performance of CLIL to non-CLIL learners will allow us to reach more robust conclusions concerning the effect of more intense and meaningful input during CLIL lessons.

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Learning French sound/spelling links in English primary school classrooms

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ABSTRACT

EN Two classes (n = 45) of 9- to 11-year-old children in different English primary schools experienced weekly French phonics instruction as part of a foreign language (FL) learning programme. The underpinning rationale of the phonics instruction was that systematic and explicit FL phonics could contribute to the development of FL phonological decoding, operationalised as reading aloud individual word cards. The study explored progression in learning French sound/spelling links over this period with data from a sub-sample of students (n = 23) from both classes. Additional variables such as FL general proficiency and FL literacy, as well as L1 reading age, spelling age, and teacher assessed literacy levels were collected to explore relationships with the development of French phonological decoding. This study found that French sound/spelling links developed slowly but showed significant gains between mid- and post-test and that learning appeared resistant to attrition evidenced by delayed post-test scores. Successful phonological decoders were likely to be successful FL learners generally and proficient in L1 literacy.

Key words: YOUNG FL LEARNERS, EARLY FL LITERACY INSTRUCTION, FL PHONICS

ES Dos clases (n = 45) de niños de 9-11 años en diferentes escuelas primarias de inglés experimentaron semanalmente instrucción fónica francesa como parte de un programa de una lengua extranjera (LE). Este modelo pedagógico se implementó porque la instrucción fonética sistemática y explícita de una LE podría contribuir al desarrollo de la decodificación fonológica en la LE, esta última medida en la lectura en voz alta de tarjetas de una sola palabra. El estudio observó la progresión en el aprendizaje de sonido/ortografía con datos de una submuestra de estudiantes (n = 23) de ambas clases. Otras variables fueron consideradas para observar su correlación con el desarrollo de la decodificación fonológica en francés: el nivel de competencia lingüística y alfabetización en la LE, el nivel de lectura en la primera lengua, el nivel de ortografía y los niveles de alfabetización del profesor. Con este estudio se descubrió que la relación sonido-grafía se desarrolló despacio, pero con resultados positivos entre las pruebas durante y después de la instrucción. Además, el aprendizaje se resistió al fenómeno de atrición, como mostraron los resultados de las segundas pruebas después de la instrucción. Los que decodificaban los aspectos fonológicos con éxito tenían más probabilidades de aprender una LE con éxito y con una competencia avanzada en su lengua materna.

Palabras clave: JÓVENES ESTUDIANTES DE LE, APRENDIZAJE TEMPRANO DE UNA LE, INSTRUCCIÓN FÓNICA EN LA LE

IT Come parte di un programma per l'apprendimento di una lingua straniera (LS), due classi (n = 45) di bambini tra i 9 e gli 11 anni in due scuole primarie inglesi hanno sperimentato settimanalmente lezioni di francese con il metodo fonetico. L'ipotesi alla base del metodo è che l'istruzione fonetica sistematica ed esplicita in LS contribuisca allo sviluppo della decodificazione fonologica in LS espressa dalla lettura ad alta voce di schede con una singola parola. Lo studio analizza la progressione nell'apprendimento della corrispondenza fonema/grafema attraverso i dati di un sotto-campione di studenti (n = 23) ins entrambe le classi. Sono stati raccolti dati aggiuntivi relativi a variabili quali la competenza complessiva e l'alfabetizzazione in LS, insieme all'età di lettura in L1, l'età di scrittura e il livello di alfabetizzazione, stabilito dall'insegnante, al fine di analizzarne il rapporto con lo sviluppo della decodificazione fonologica in francese. Da questo studio emerge che le corrispondenze fonema/grafema in francese si sviluppano lentamente ma evidenziano progressi significativi tra il test in itinere e il post-test e che quanto appreso pare resistere all'attrito come dimostrato dai punteggi del post-test differito. Inoltre, è risultato che apprendenti abili nella decodificazione fonologica avessero un'alta probabilità di essere apprendenti di LS complessivamente competenti e con un alto livello di alfabetizzazione in L1.

Parole chiave: GIOVANI APPRENDENTI DI LS, ALFABETIZZAZIONE IN UNA LS, METODO FONETICO IN UNA LS

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1. Literature review

1.1. The importance of FL literacy in England

Foreign language study is now compulsory in English primary schools and was included in the Primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) from Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11). The curriculum aims to develop practical communication skills in one language, to create foundational language skills as preparation for ongoing language learning and to develop cultural and intercultural awareness. It includes FL literacy (reading and writing) and requires children to “discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing” (p. 193), as well as practical skills such as: understanding and responding to written, authentic text (DfE, 2013). There are specific attainment targets which relate to reading for meaning and reading aloud which include the ability to link sounds, spellings and word meaning.

The importance of FL literacy as a component of the development of practical language skills and cultural awareness is widely accepted (Koutsompou, 2015). However, little is known about the efficacy of particular approaches to teaching literacy in FL school settings such as in the UK. Research has found that reading strategy instruction supported reading comprehension and FL motivation in English secondary schools (Macaro & Erler, 2008) and reading comprehension in English primary schools (Macaro & Mutton, 2009). A recent, large-scale project in secondary schools examined to what extent three different pedagogic approaches—phonics instruction, strategy instruction, or text experience without explicit instruction—could contribute to FL (French) linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. All approaches noted statistically significant improvements in FL reading aloud, FL vocabulary, and FL reading comprehension (Woore, Graham, Porter, Courtney, & Savory, 2018). However, the phonics group made more progress at FL reading aloud than the other conditions, and the strategies group improved most for self-efficacy in French reading (Woore et al., 2018).

Learning FL sound/spelling links in English schools is noted to develop slowly (Cable et al., 2010; Woore, 2011) and unsystematically (Woore, 2011). French reading aloud was particularly problematic for primary school learners, who tended to be influenced by knowledge and application of L1 sound/spelling links (Cable et al., 2010; Porter, 2014). Similarly, in secondary schools, Woore (2007) found that after 18 phonics lessons only the two strongest L1 readers made successful, unscaffolded analogies to single graphemes. He also noted that the weaker L1 readers tended to use larger syllabic units and attributed this to less well-developed phonemic awareness. In other words, a period of focused FL phonics instruction did not appear to compensate for the influence of L1 knowledge and skills.

As FL reading and writing are important in the development of FL skills and attitudes towards FL learning, it is essential that research continues to investigate the effectiveness of particular pedagogic tools and the process of learning literacy in FL classrooms. Phonics is often practised, as a pedagogic tool, in FL settings based on assumptions grounded in the popularity of phonics instruction in L1 English classrooms and evidence concerning its contribution to word recognition skills in alphabetic languages (Adams, 1990; Castles, Rastle & Nation, 2018). From a process perspective, whilst L2 reading has been researched and theorised with bilingual and multilingual populations, there is little evidence about the processes or outcomes for learning to read in FL settings. Again, assumptions cannot be made that pedagogic tools and learning processes identified in L1 and L2 settings will be readily transferable to beginner FL classrooms, known to lack the rich and regular input which supports learning in L1 and L2 settings (Garton, Copland & Burns, 2011; Graham et al., 2017).

1.2. Learning to read in a first language (L1): the importance of word recognition

It is now widely accepted that rapid and accurate word recognition is a fundamental skill in reading for meaning (Adams, 1990; Oakhill & Beard, 1999; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999; Vellutino & Fletcher, 2005). Word recognition is accessed by either a) decoding spellings into sounds then retrieving meaning (sub-lexical route) or b) retrieving meaning directly from spellings (lexical route) (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018).

1.2.1. The process of developing L1 word recognition

Phonological decoding, involving the mapping of letters or groups of letters onto corresponding sounds (Ziegler, Perry, & Zorzi, 2014), is essential in word recognition. Sight word recognition is believed to develop in stages or “overlapping waves” of phonological decoding, starting with a partial alphabetic phase where connections are made between a few sounds and their corresponding letters, usually initial and final consonants (Ehri, 2014, p. 5; Ehri, 1999). This development is accompanied by spelling development which

starts with written words generated from a relatively small number of learned letters e.g. giraffe = JRF (Castles et al., 2018). Development of links between sound and print is known as “orthographic mapping” (Ehri, 2014: 5) or “orthographic learning” and comprises both word-specific links between sound and print, along with awareness of the probabilistic occurrence of letters and letter combinations in a particular language (Castles et al., 2018, p. 19). Eventually “spellings, pronunciations and meanings of specific words in memory” are bound together and written word meaning is accessed directly in memory rather than indirectly through decoding (Ehri, 1999, pp. 88-96; Ehri 1992, p. 108).

1.2.2. L1 phonological decoding and word recognition

Phonological decoding is also believed to influence how representations of written words are formed/stored in memory, and it remains accessible even in skilled readers (Castles et al., 2018). Share (1999) suggests that phonological decoding is “item-based” or depends on frequency of exposure to, and active decoding of, written forms (p. 96). In other words, phonological decoding supports the learning of written forms of words throughout all stages of reading development (The Self Teaching Hypothesis; Share, 1999). Phonological decoding of embedded non-words whilst reading connected texts was found to support children’s word recognition and spelling (Share, 1999; Ricketts, Bishop, Pimperton, & Nation, 2011). The process of actively decoding the written form seems to lead to improved “lexical quality” and the “precise” yet “flexible” mental storage of written forms (Castles et al., 2018, p. 21). Kaefer (2016) too posits that phonological decoding activates explicit awareness of orthographic knowledge (spelling, word recognition) in early readers (mean age 5 years 10 months).

1.3. Learning to read in a first language (L1): Skills that underpin phonological decoding

In an L1, word recognition involves “turning listeners into readers” (Stuart, Masterson, & Dixon, 1999, p. 100), and the phonological decoding processes outlined previously are predicated on learned skills involving “lower level verbal processing mechanisms” (Koda, 1992, pp. 52-57) such as phonological awareness, phonological recoding, and verbal working memory (McBride Chang & Ho, 2005, p. 119). Phonological awareness is “one of the best predictors of literacy outcomes” (Henbest & Apel, 2017, p. 304) and involves the ability to segment and manipulate spoken words (Verhoeven, 2011). This sensitivity involves skills such as syllable identification, the ability to manipulate (delete/exchange) phonemes in spoken words, and sensitivity to onset-rime, or sounds before and after the nucleus of a syllable (Antony, Lonigan, Driscoll, Phillips, Burgess, & Cantor, 2002, pp. 68, 87). These skills are deemed essential in recognising how sounds map onto their respective letters (Ehri, 1999, p. 102). Morphological awareness or the ability to identify, reflect on, and manipulate the smallest units of meaning are also an important factor in word recognition, spelling, and reading comprehension (Apel, Wilson-Fowler, Brimo, & Perrin, 2012; Deacon & Kirby, 2004).

1.4. Teaching word recognition: The role of phonics in L1 English reading instruction

Phonics instruction is currently practised in many English L1 school education contexts (England, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) as a means of developing foundational reading skills through phonological decoding (Department of Education, Science & Training, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000; The Rose Review, 2006). Whilst phonics-only approaches to teaching early reading remain contentious (Wyse & Styles, 2007), there is evidence that teaching approaches which combine phonics or code instruction (sound/letter links) with meaning-focused activities (understanding text) resulted in faster reading progress in primary school children (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967). Meta-analyses of experimental research have found that systematic phonics instruction which promotes the learning of sound/letter links in targeted and sequenced programmes, had a statistically significant effect on reading accuracy (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Torgerson, Brooks, & Hall, 2006), reading comprehension (Ehri et al., 2001), and spelling (Ehri et al., 2001).

Commercial phonics packages such as Jolly Phonics (Lloyd & Wernham, 1992) or Read Write Inc. Phonics (Miskin, 2011) promote pedagogic routines involving production of isolated phonemes to segment sounds in spoken words, picture mnemonics to memorise letters and exemplar words which model the target sound/spelling links. These activities are supported by research which showed that articulatory gestures supported memorisation of sound/spelling links and word reading performance when coupled with practice in segmenting words (Boyer & Ehri, 2011) and that letter names supported by picture mnemonics lead to faster learning of sound/spelling links (Shmidman & Ehri, 2010). However, as phonics instruction “instils”

rather than “installs” the code (Gough & Wren, 1999, p. 75), it is essential that phonics-related skills are operationalised through reading aloud which involves applying sound/spelling links knowledge (Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994). Recall that this is likely to lead to fine-quality lexical representations stored in the learner’s memory (Castles et al., 2018). It is further argued that frequent and diverse read aloud texts support word recall and new word spelling (Rosenthal & Ehri, 2011).

To conclude, systematic phonics instruction supports word recognition and is therefore recommended by researchers as a valuable pedagogic tool in L1 literacy development (Castles et al., 2018). It is also important to note that, as the ultimate goal of any reading instruction programme is reading comprehension, secure and automatized word recognition is only one part of a complex developmental process. Other factors likely to influence reading comprehension outcomes include oral language, parsing, inferring, comprehension monitoring, exposure to print, morphological awareness, reading motivation, and cognitive resources such as working memory (Castles et al., 2018; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014).

1.5. Learning to read in an L2

1.5.1. A repeated process – shared, underlying skills and knowledge

Learning to read in a second or additional language is a “repeated process” (Koda, 2008, p. 74) and involves a constantly active “two language processing system” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 35). Research in bi-/multi-lingual settings has determined that some foundational L1 decoding related skills are evident in L2 literacy development. L1 phonological awareness supported children’s L2 reading development (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993) and predicted L2 word reading skills (Lesaux et al., 2008). Opinions vary as to whether these L1 resources are available in the early stages of L2 oral development (Genesee, Geva, Dressler & Kamil, 2008, p. 68) or whether a particular level of L2 competence is required (Interdependence Hypothesis; Cummins, 1979).

However, it is important to note that differences in orthographies and syllabic structures as well as participant age are likely to play a role in cross-linguistic transfer of L1 literacy skills (Genesee et al., 2008). For example, Goswami (2006) posits that readers of L1 English learn to map sounds with letters in chunks (Psycholinguistic Grain Size Theory) due to the consistency of English at rime level. On the other hand, L1 readers of more transparent orthographies such as Spanish, with consistent 1:1 mappings between sound and print, will have recourse first to decoding at the individual phoneme level (Landerl, 2006, p. 518).

Interestingly, in FL settings, a bi-directional influence for foundational L1 literacy skills has been noted. Clusters of L1 skills such as spelling, word decoding, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and reading comprehension influenced FL attainment and aptitude in high school (Sparks & Ganschow, 2012; Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2009). These researchers had earlier identified that similar L1 skills acted as a foundation for L2 proficiency, arguing that weak phonological processing could negatively influence both L1 and L2 learning (Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). Research in younger FL classrooms has evidenced bi-directionality of phonological awareness influence, finding that L2 phonological awareness can also support the development of L1 phonological awareness in learners aged 7-8 (Murphy, Macaro, Alba, & Cipolla, 2014).

1.5.2. A different process- new sounds and new mappings

Word recognition and phonological decoding rests upon phonological awareness (deemed transferable) but also on orthographic mapping or the development of links between sounds and their respective letters (Ehri, 2014). In an L1, these sounds are already secure and just need to be mapped to letters. However, in an L2 or FL, sounds and letters will either need to be learned “from scratch” (i.e., new FL sounds linked to new FL letter/s) or re-mapped (i.e. existing letters/sounds linked to different counterparts).

In terms of remapping, Koda (2007) argues for a process where L1 knowledge and skills are transformed into additional L2 competencies through exposure to L2 print. However, this seems problematic bearing in mind that L1 readers’ knowledge and decoding skills are likely to have transformed from effortful to automatized through the process of learning L1 reading (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2014; 1999). The task for learners of L2/FL re-mappings will likely involve adapting automatized L1 sound/spelling mappings, and automatized cognitive language learning mechanisms are believed to be particularly resistant to adaptation (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2019).

Although there is little evidence concerning the learning of novel phonology in FL settings, L2 phonological acquisition has been extensively investigated. Whilst recognising important differences between L2 and FL contexts in terms of input quality, extent, and intensity, theories relating to L2 phonology

acquisition could give some insight into the process of learning novel sounds when an L1 phonological system is well established.

Opinions differ regarding ease of acquisition of L2 phonology. For some, novel sounds are deemed harder to learn either due to entrenched L1 phonological representations or because they require the creation of new L2 sound categories (Escudero & Boersma, 2004; Lado, 1957). Others assert that dissimilar sounds are easier to learn as they are more likely to be perceived and therefore result in “new L2 phonetic categories” (Speech Learning Model; Flege, 1995). Crucially, L2 sounds will differ from monolingual sound acquisition as L2 sounds will interact with the L1 and presumably subsequent, additional languages over an individual’s lifespan (Flege, 1995; Nimz, 2018).

For example, French nasal sounds, for example, vowels (often novel for learners) have proved problematic showing variation across advanced learners and particular types of nasal vowels: <ON> /ɔ̃/ was the most accurately produced but <IN> /ɛ̃/ was the least accurately produced and tended to be substituted by <AN/EN> /ā/ (Adeline Charlton, 2014; Neveu et al., 2010). Foreign language instruction seems to assist the development of novel French nasal vowels and shifts in phonological representations occur between proficiency levels (Martinez, 2016). Interestingly, once learners are literate in their L1, orthographic knowledge influences the perception and production of L2 phonology (Bassetti & Atkinson, 2015; Escudero & Wanrooij, 2010; Nimz, 2018). L1 orthography is indiscriminately activated when written cues are involved in sound perception and this has an ambivalent effect on perception (Escudero & Wanrooij, 2010). It should also be noted that other factors, such as L1 syllable structure, L1 phonotactics, and individual differences, influence L2 sound perception, particularly of vowels (Tyler, Best, Faber, & Levitt, 2014).

1.6. Teaching FL/L2 reading

Bearing in mind issues such as transfer of L1 related skills and competencies, the instructional task for teachers differs from that of teaching children to read in an L1. Assumptions should not be made that pedagogic tools and approaches relevant in the L1 will automatically have the same, or indeed any, effect on FL development.

Clearly when learning to read in a second or subsequent language, the learner is not a *tabula rasa* (Porter, 2014). Firstly, a learner approaches L1 reading with a fairly extensive L1 spoken vocabulary, internalised L1 grammar, and L1 phonological inventory. The 6-7 year old (grade 2) native speaker has an average L1 root word vocabulary of 5200 words, rising to 8400 words by age 11 (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). In instructed L2/FL contexts, the starting point is somewhat different. Often, literacy instruction in the FL/L2 languages classroom is initiated after the development of oral skills and it is suggested that L2 phonological decoding has limited effectiveness unless the oral representation of the word is already known (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 42). However, in FL settings where instructional time is limited, waiting for the right or optimum time to introduce decoding and focused literacy instruction may not be a pedagogical option. On the other hand, it appears as though the essential foundational literacy skills of phonological awareness may be available to learners if they are already developed in the L1. It is also likely that increasing cognitive maturity of children in the later stages of primary school (when FL instruction generally commences) may assist in the teaching and learning of FL literacy.

To summarise, word recognition is a key skill in developing FL literacy and is underpinned by the knowledge and application of FL sound/spelling links. Research indicates that teaching FL word recognition is likely to be a shared and yet different process to its development in the L1. Already-literate learners could bring transferable skills to the task of FL word recognition, such as phonological awareness, relative cognitive maturity, and shared sound/spelling links. However, some L1 skills—sound perception, knowledge of FL sound/spelling links, and FL oral vocabulary—are likely to complicate the learning process. It is therefore important that, in primary FL settings, research is conducted to explore the potential effectiveness of L1 literacy pedagogic practices and curricular expectations.

2. Method

The study set out to investigate whether/how children studying French as a new FL made progress at reading aloud FL word cards during and after a 23-week teaching programme which comprised systematic and explicit phonics instruction in French (research question 1). The test measures also aimed to contrast how successfully the children read aloud known (familiar) words that they had practised every week with how they decoded novel (unfamiliar) words (research question 2). Lastly, the study aimed to evaluate

whether there were any relationships between L1 literacy measures, FL proficiency scores, and reading aloud performances at each test time (research question 3). These analyses would account for influential factors in the learning process and therefore possibly explain some of the variation in FL reading aloud outcomes.

- RQ1: To what extent do learners engaged in systematic and explicit FL phonics instruction make progress in reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar FL words at mid-, post-, and delayed post-test?
- RQ2: Are performances on reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards different at mid-, post-, and delayed post-test?
- RQ3: To what extent are L1 literacy measures and FL global proficiency scores related to FL reading aloud proficiency at each test time?

2.1. Sample

This study took place in two English primary schools. The total sample (n = 45) was tested at three main test points: pre-, post-, and delayed post-test on reading aloud in sentences. The focus of this paper concerns a sub-sample of students (n = 23) who were tested on all the main measures plus word card reading aloud at mid-test (approximately 10 teaching weeks after the phonics instruction commenced), post-test (23 weeks after), and delayed post-test (7 weeks after the teaching programme finished). The mean age of the sub-sample was 10.07 years (minimum 9.10, maximum 11.0) and the children were taught in mixed-year classes (England Years 5 & 6; US Grades 4 & 5). All of the children spoke English as their L1. Although some had exposure to other languages at home (e.g. Nepalese, Arabic, Dutch), these were not spoken as primary home languages. Both schools were not in areas of social deprivation and were situated in small, rural villages. The FL provision in both settings was identical: the same French teacher (the researcher) taught one 50-minute FL lesson per week. This teacher/researcher had worked in School 1 for 2 years and School 2 for 6 years prior to the research.

It should be noted that the mixed-year class in School 1, in particular those children in Year 6, had had one year less cumulative instruction than the Year 6 children in School 2. No children had previously received systematic and explicit French phonics instruction, and FL literacy generally had not been given special or sustained emphasis. Nonetheless, there was only one significant difference in FL pre-test scores between schools, which concerned FL reading aloud scores. Parents and guardians were approached for informed consent, and the children's verbal consent was sought in order to conform to ethical requirements for school-based teaching and learning research. This was an action research study so there was flexibility within the design to adapt and amend teaching practices. However, in order to support robustness and generalizability/transferability, the principles underpinning the overarching teaching programme (of which FL phonics instructed formed a component) and those principles underpinning the specific strand of phonics instruction are outlined below.

2.2. Pedagogic principles for literacy instruction

This small-scale study aimed to build a phonics instruction programme which could assist primary school learners of French as a FL, with extremely limited input, to start to develop FL sound/spelling links. The teaching programme included a weekly phonics component which formed part of lessons which aimed to develop both FL oracy and literacy skills. The phonics instruction specifically had three overarching principles based on the extant literature regarding L1 phonics instruction.

2.2.1. Principle 1: Focus on FL sounds

First, it was crucial to develop distinctive FL sounds (phonology) as phonics instruction involves linking known sounds to letters. This task required the development of distinctive new or adapted phonemes such as nasal vowels. Rather than aiming for native-like pronunciation, distinctive FL sounds were evidenced by sounds which were clearly differentiated in production from their closest L1 counterparts.

There are particular French phonemes which do not have exact counterparts in the L1 (e.g. nasal vowels /ɔ̃/, /ɑ̃/, /ɛ̃/, /œ̃/). Furthermore, some French phonemes have similar English counterparts and could therefore be difficult to discriminate (e.g. French front rounded vowel /y/ versus the similar English back rounded vowel English /u:/). Bearing in mind the L2 phonological development literature, the pedagogic programme therefore comprised a small element which focused on FL sound perception (discrimination) and production.

2.2.2. Principle 2: Systematic and explicit phonics instruction

In line with commercial phonics packages (e.g., Read Write Inc. or Jolly Phonics) sounds and letters were taught explicitly and in a planned order (Table 1). Less attention was given to phonological awareness such as the ability to segment spoken words into sub-lexical units—individual phonemes and/or onset-rime or syllables—as this knowledge was assumed to transfer from the L1 (e.g., Genesee et al., 2008; Lesaux et al., 2008). However, children were occasionally asked to segment spoken words into syllables and to segment and blend written words.

Table 1
Target FL sound/spelling links

	Sound	Letters	Exemplar	Gesture	Visual	Links with L1
Pre-lesson	Letter names	Alphabet				
Week 1	Final silent letters	PETS, <P>, <E>, <T>, <S>				
Week 2-5	/ɔ̃/	<ON>	Cochon (<i>pig</i>)	Finger on nose - snout	Picture of pig	Novel FL sound/existing L1 grapheme
	/y/	<U> and <Û>	Putois (<i>ferret</i>)	Fingers pinching nose (smell)	Picture of ferret	Novel FL sound/existing L1 and novel FL grapheme
	/j/	<LL>	Billet (<i>ticket</i>)	Taking a ticket	Picture of train ticket	Existing L1 sound/existing but different L1 grapheme
Week 6	/ā/	<AN> and <EN>	Enfant (<i>child</i>)	Rocking a baby	Picture of baby	Novel FL sounds/existing L1 grapheme
	/ē/	<IN>, <IEN>, <EIN>	Singe (<i>monkey</i>)	Arms bent at sides	Picture of monkey	Novel FL sounds/existing L1 and novel FL graphemes
Weeks 7-11	Practice all previous sound/spelling links					
Week 12	/e/	<E>, <ER>, <EZ>, <ET>	Éléphant (<i>elephant</i>)	Arm imitating trunk	Picture of element	Novel FL sound/existing L1 and novel FL graphemes
	/o/	<EAU>, <O>, <Ô>, <AU>	Océan (<i>ocean</i>)	Arm moving like a wave	Picture of ocean	Novel FL sound/existing L1 and novel FL graphemes
Week 13-20	Practice all previous sound/spelling links					

Sounds and their corresponding letters were also presented through an exemplar word, e.g. cochon, which aimed to allow for associative learning and the possibility that this could be used through analogy to decode the same grapheme in unfamiliar words. It was anticipated that the learning of FL sound/spelling links would be facilitated by shared links with English but that learning to adept/amend existing mappings or

creating entirely novel ones would be more problematic. The sounds and their links were taught on a cumulative basis so that, as a new sound was introduced, previous sound/spelling links were still practised regularly.

2.2.3. Principle 3: Applying sound/spelling links through reading aloud practice

It was also deemed necessary to offer children opportunities to practise applying these sound/spelling links through reading and writing opportunities. Weekly spelling activities involving core vocabulary (not phonics exemplar words) supported the children's learning of links between sounds and letter in French. The children were asked during a sequence of tasks designed to support vocabulary memorisation, to recall a word orally from a visual cue and then to attempt to write this word from memory (having seen the written form several times previously). Wherever possible, core vocabulary was utilised to teach phonics sound/spelling links such as *ondule* (*slither*) <ON> = /ɔ̃/ and *fourette* (*fur*) <U> = /u/. It should be noted that these words were chosen to support broader, communicative language use rather than act solely as practice for the phonics element of the instructional programme. In reading aloud opportunities such as stories and pairwork, peer-assessed reading of sentences were used to practise phonological decoding. Again, these stories were mostly focused on meaning-related activities in line with integrated approaches to reading but comprised occasional decoding opportunities (Adams, 1990).

2.3. Procedures

The reading aloud test battery targeted specific, taught FL sound/spelling links as well as a broader range of linguistic skills and knowledge. Due to the lack of existing resources for testing phonological decoding in primary school learners of French, test items were designed by the teacher/researcher. As there was no pilot sample with similar language learning experience in terms of age, language, and extent of input, these tests were not piloted. The broader linguistic FL assessment tasks were closely aligned with classroom activities and designed to test the constructs of FL general proficiency and FL global literacy. These were administered at pre-, post-, and delayed post-test. The post-test was conducted immediately after the instructional programme ended, and the delayed post-test was completed seven weeks later. The general proficiency construct comprised an oral vocabulary recognition test and an elicited imitation test designed to measure developing interlanguage. The FL global literacy tests involved reading aloud target words in sentences (with illustrative pictures to support meaning) and reading for global meaning and detail of a short text. An additional reading aloud test was implemented during the teaching programme in order to capture any development in a) applying sound/spelling links through decoding familiar exemplar phonics words and b) applying these taught sound/spelling links in novel contexts (unfamiliar words). This test was delivered with a sub-sample of pupils (n = 23) at mid-test, post-test and delayed post-test. The whole sample (n = 45) took the FL reading aloud word card test at post-test and delayed post-test.

2.4. Research instruments

2.4.1. FL general proficiency: Receptive vocabulary and elicited imitation

This variable was addressed through two complementary, general proficiency (non-literacy) measures. The *FL receptive vocabulary* test was based on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 2007) and the ELIAS British Picture Vocabulary Scale (Dunn, Dunn, Whetton, & Burley, 1997). Lexical items which had been taught over previous years were chosen and individual worksheets were completed. From a spoken cue (provided by the teacher), the children had to circle the picture which correctly represented each lexical item. Some items were discrete words (e.g., *le père* – *father*) and some were formulaic utterances/constructions (*j'adore faire du cheval* – *I love horseriding*). The pictorial cues were familiar to the children as they were largely derived from historic teaching materials used by the teacher.

The *FL elicited imitation* test was designed to show developing implicit (subconscious) L2 knowledge (Erlam, 2006). Learners listened to utterances incorporating particular syntactic or morphological demands, such as interrogatives or negation, and were asked to repeat them after a short gap. Prior to listening, they were guided to process the utterances for meaning by being warned that they would have to answer questions about the utterances after they had heard them. All the stimuli were designed to be long enough to exceed working memory capacity and therefore could only be reformulated by accessing meaning and reconstructing the utterance from interlanguage. For example, the sentence *Xavier, il n'aime pas aller à l'école* (*Xavier does not like going to school*) was elicited to explore learning of negation expressed through dislike. Elicited imitation is deemed an efficient way of accessing spontaneous oral ability in young learner

classrooms where there are often practical constraints such as the amount of available test time (Campfield, 2015). To measure performance, reproductions were marked by target-like syllables. Each utterance, regardless of length, could achieve a maximum score of 4 and syllabic errors were deducted from this as required (Lonsdale, Graham, Kennington, Johnson, & McGhee, 2008). Therefore, a sentence with two syllable errors (non-target-like reproduction) would receive a mark of 2. Often elicited imitation tests with younger learners are marked on a rating scale such as: 3 = mainly target-like reproduction to 0=unintelligible production. It was felt that a syllabic scoring mechanism might give a better indication of the extent of FL oral processing (reproduction in terms of sentence length and complexity) rather than an arguably more subjective rating scale which focused on evaluation of overall accuracy of sentences. A small sample of post-test scores were second-marked by the same rater with a reliability score of 67%.

2.4.2. FL literacy proficiency: Reading aloud (sentences) and reading comprehension

For the *FL reading aloud (text)* test, short sentences illustrated with pictures were read aloud by each child. For example, *Monsieur Laurent travaille au marché (Mr Laurent works on the market)* was constructed to elicit reproduction of specific, underlined sound/spelling links. Individual words (containing instructed FL sound/spelling) were scored for target-like recoding, and a clear scoring scheme was set out to contribute to rater reliability. Recoding was strictly marked to reflect explicitly taught characteristics of FL sounds and their links to letters. In other words, recoding of <ON> was only deemed target-like (scoring 1 = correct) if it reflected nasality /ɔ̃/. Even though /ɔn/ would have been largely intelligible to a sympathetic speaker of the language, it was marked incorrect as production/discrimination of novel FL phonology was an integral part of the instructional programme. Second marking by the same rater yielded a reliability score of 83%. This test was conducted on a one-on-one basis, during lesson time in a private setting at each school.

The *FL reading comprehension* test aligned with primary FL learning outcomes including: “understand the main points and some detail from a short written passage” and “reading texts for enjoyment or information” (DfES, 2005, p. 57). A short passage with 11 (8%) unfamiliar words was designed as a police report concerning a robbery. Questions were presented in children’s L1 and designed to test reading for understanding of the main points and some detail. Responses were designed to require “limited production” (McKay, 2006, pp. 106, 186) in that children could identify the meaning by selecting a picture. For instance, for the question “What item was stolen?” children could choose from pictures of a wallet, a bag and some house keys. It was anticipated that this would mitigate cognitive loading effects for children with weaker L1 literacy. Scoring was dichotomous, and this test was conducted using individual worksheets in a whole class setting without conferring. Children were allowed approximately 15 minutes to complete the test.

2.4.3. FL phonics: Read aloud word card

This test was designed in line with action research principles and cycles of research where initial investigations yield new or more refined lines of inquiry. The teacher/researcher deemed, during the instructional programme, that learning and applying exemplar sound/spelling links was challenging for the children. She felt it would be interesting to uncover how progress was unfolding with respect to decoding exemplar phonics words and also whether this knowledge was being applied to novel contexts. With this in mind, illustrated word cards were designed (arguably more as a formative assessment tool than as a research instrument). At mid-test, due to time constraints, a small number of pupils (n = 23) were tested. The children were selected based on their FL reading aloud performance at pre-test (sentence) from each third of the scoring range (Table 2). The children were each asked to shuffle the cards and then read aloud each word whilst being audio-recorded. Each child sat alone in the corridor outside the classroom at mid-test whilst the teacher taught the rest of the class. No feedback was given at any stage. At post-test and delayed post-test, this word card measure was incorporated into the overall test battery and delivered on a one-to-one basis with the teacher/researcher in a private room. Each word card had a picture for meaning (Figure 1). For every targeted FL sound/spelling link there was a card with the phonics exemplar word and card with the same grapheme, in a different position, in an unfamiliar word.

Table 2
L2 reading aloud pre-test, quartile breakdown

Pre-test read aloud scoring (max 10)	Participants
Low (0-2)	8
Mid (3-4)	10
High (5-6)	5
Total participants	23



Cochon



Ongle

Figure 1. Example of exemplar phonics word card

2.4.4. Underlying L1 literacy measures

In line with national data collection in English primary schools at the time, this study had access to a range of standardised L1 literacy test scores (reported on a national level by school and child) and classroom-based informal teacher assessments. These were deemed potentially important in explaining the influence of L1 literacy on FL reading aloud performances. Children's chronological reading ages were collected using a standardized New Group Reading Test (GL Assessment, 2018). This test comprises two parts: sentence completion (decoding with some comprehension) plus passage comprehension where children are tested on a range of comprehension skills. The Single Word Spelling Test (GL Assessment, 2018) was also administered by the regular class teachers to determine children's chronological spelling age through spelling words in context (sentences). This is also a standardized, commercially produced test.

In addition to these standardized tests, the children's regular class teachers (not the researcher who was their longstanding yet visiting FL teacher) undertook ongoing formative assessments of each child's progression in all curricular subjects. These teacher-centred assessments, backed up by observation and other classroom data such as examples of children's work, were then linked to levels of attainment which at the time formed part of the National Curriculum. Whilst levels have now been eliminated formally from government documentation, they are still sometimes referred to by teachers as a means of benchmarking pupils' performances against their peers and previous cohorts. National Curriculum levels ranged from 1-6 with the idea that, by the end of primary school, expected attainment for children would reach level 4. Each level was accompanied by descriptors for each subject and had sub categories (1c was the bottom sub-level within level 1 whilst 1a was the top sub-level). To facilitate statistical analysis, these levels were converted to a continuous scale e.g. level 1c was 1 and level 6a was 18. Numerical levels were assigned to each child for L1 reading (reading aloud, comprehension) and L1 writing (spelling, complexity, genre, cohesion).

3. Results

A Shapiro-Wilk test (as n equalled <50) showed that assumptions of normality were violated for 33% of the pre- and post-test FL constructs. Given that result, and bearing in mind the relatively small sample size, subsequent statistical analyses were conducted using non-parametric techniques. Mann Whitney U-Tests were conducted to identify whether there were any differences between sub samples in each school for L1 and FL read aloud measures at pre-, post-, and delayed post-test times. No differences were found between school or gender.

3.1. To what extent do learners engaged in systematic and explicit FL phonics instruction make progress in reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar FL words at mid-, post-, and delayed post-test?

Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 will report on whole-sample performances for reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards, during and immediately after the instructional programme (at mid-test and post-test). Descriptive statistics will portray the extent and nature of developing of FL reading aloud scores at both test times. Sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 will then use statistical techniques to establish whether any improvements were statistically significant in reading a) familiar word cards and b) unfamiliar word cards.

3.1.1. Reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards at mid-test

By mid-test, which was conducted 10 weeks after the FL phonics instruction commenced, descriptive statistics showed that progress reading familiar word cards was slow overall (mean score 1.13; median score 1.00) out of a maximum score of 5 (Table 3).

Table 3
Descriptive statistics, mid-test, reading aloud word cards ($N = 23$)

	Mid-Test							
	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Min	Max		
Familiar words (max 5)	1.13	1.00	.00 ^a	1.100	0	4	1.096	1.168
Unfamiliar words (max 5)	.3042	.00	.00	.653	0	2	1.994	2.934

Note. ^a = multiple modes

Positive skewness and kurtosis values indicated that scores at this test time were clustered towards the lower end of the scoring range (Figure 2). However, the range of scores showed that whilst one child (out of the 23 participants) had scored close to full marks, others had made no progress (seven children scored 0) reading familiar words. Despite weekly lessons which involved practising production and discrimination of FL sounds, FL phonological decoding (spellings to sound), and reading aloud of familiar (exemplar) words, learners had made little progress at reading aloud the practised words mid-way through the teaching programme.

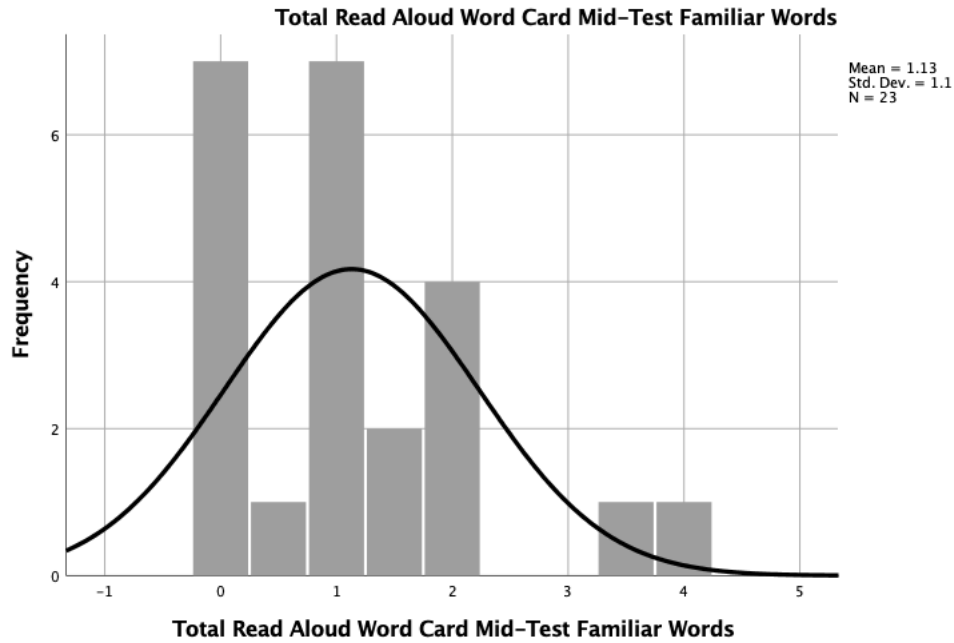


Figure 2. Distributions of read aloud familiar words at mid-test

Unfamiliar word card reading scores were less variable (range 0 to 2). Eighteen children scored zero whilst two children scored 2 marks at mid-test points. Almost no progress was evidenced at mid-test for reading unfamiliar word cards (unfamiliar mean .3043; median .00) and again skewness and kurtosis showed scores weighted toward the lower end of the range (Figure 3). Perhaps unsurprisingly, bearing in mind the limited progress for familiar (exemplar) words, the children had also made scant progress at applying learned sound/spelling links to novel contexts.

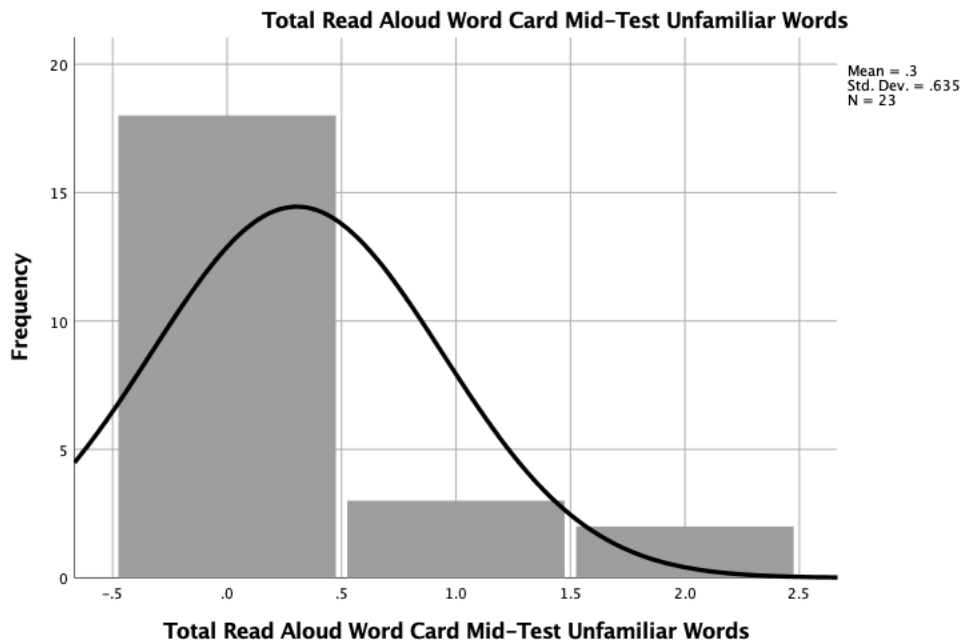


Figure 3. Distributions of read aloud unfamiliar words at mid-test

3.1.2. Reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards at post-test

By post-test, at the end of FL phonics instruction (23 weeks in total), descriptive statistics showed that progress reading familiar word cards had improved (mean score 2.174; median score 2.00) out of a maximum score of 5 (Table 4).

Table 4
Descriptive statistics post-test reading aloud word cards (N = 23)

	Mid-Test							
	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Min	Max		
Familiar words (max 5)	2.174	2.00	1.00	1.230	0	4.5	-.040	-.708
Unfamiliar words (max 5)	.9130	1.00	.00	.950	0	3	.535	-.934

A change in skewness values (now negative) indicated that scores were clustered towards the mid or higher end of the score range. However, positive kurtosis values indicated that there remained a heavy tail of scores in the lower marks (Figure 4). Two children scored 4/4.5 and two children scored 0 reading familiar words. In other words, the range was still wide between top and bottom scores but the lowest scorers were less numerous. After 23 weeks, the sample seemed to be making progress in reading aloud familiar (exemplar) words.

However, scant progress was evidenced at post-test for reading unfamiliar word cards (mean .9130; median 1.00) and again skewness and kurtosis showed scores tended towards the lower end of the range (Figure 5). Unfamiliar word card reading scores showed slightly different variability (range 0 to 3 maximum) with 10 children scoring zero and 1 child scoring the top mark of 3 at post-test. 23 weeks after the weekly phonics instruction commenced, most children were still unable to consistently apply their developing knowledge of FL sound/spelling links to novel contexts

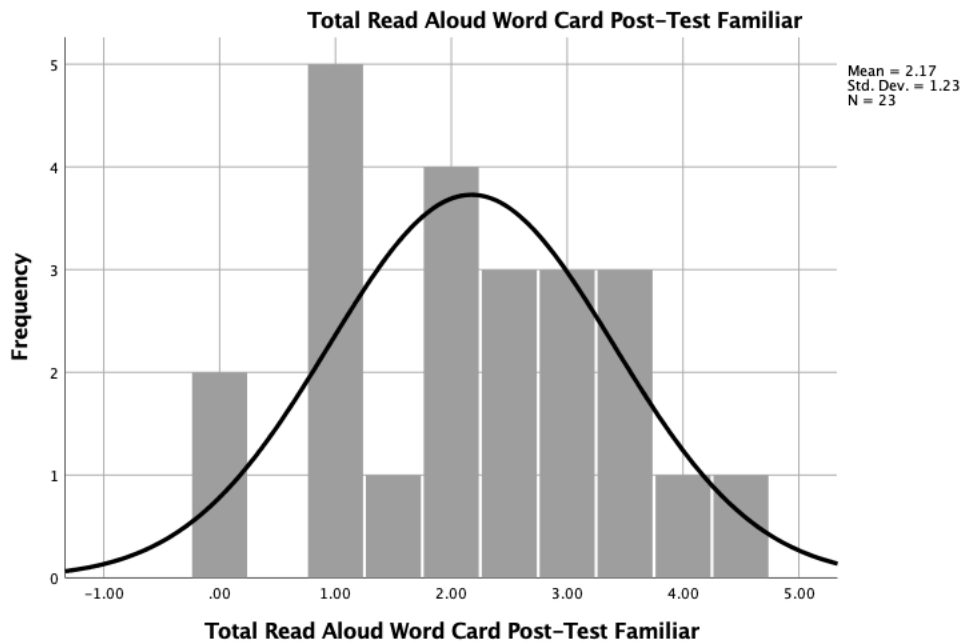


Figure 4. Distributions of read aloud familiar word cards at post-test

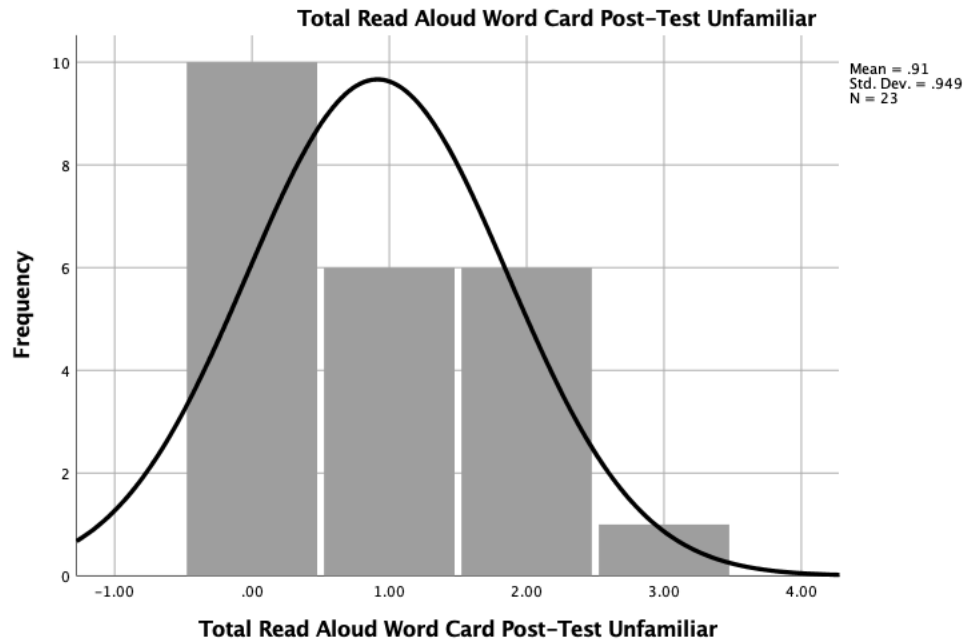


Figure 5. Distributions of read aloud unfamiliar word cards at post-test

3.1.3. Reading aloud familiar word cards: Differences between mid-test and post-test

In this and the following section, scores between mid- and post-test are compared for both kinds of word cards separately to evaluate whether reported improvements were of statistical significance. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (Table 5) show that the scores for familiar reading aloud word cards between mid- and post-test were significantly different. Target-like decoding at post-test was significantly higher (median 2.000) than at mid-test (median 1.000), $z = 3.533$, $p = <0.0001$, $r = 0.52$, moderate effect size. So by the end of the teaching programme, there was a significant improvement in children's familiar word reading aloud scores.

Table 5

Mid-test To Post-Test Familiar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Mid-test	Post-test				
FL Word Card Familiar Reading Aloud	1.000	2.000	3.533	<.0001	19.245	0.52

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

3.1.4. Reading aloud unfamiliar word cards: Differences between mid-test and post-test

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (Table 6) show that unfamiliar reading aloud word cards between mid- and post-test were significantly different. Target-like decoding at post-test was significantly higher (median 1.000) than at mid-test (median .000), $z = 2.617$, $p = .007$, $r = 0.40$, moderate effect size. This meant that the children became significantly better at reading aloud unfamiliar word cards between the mid and end point of the teaching programme. It is, however, important to note that medians and means for both kinds of word cards at mid- and post-test were still below the mid-point of the scoring range.

Table 6

Mid-test To Post-Test Unfamiliar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Mid-test	Post-test				
FL Word Card Reading Aloud	.000	1.000	2.617	.007	10.937	0.40

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

Sections 3.1.5 will now turn to performance at delayed post-test approximately 7 weeks after all FL instruction had finished. This will evaluate the durability of any learning and explore whether there was any observed attrition related to word reading aloud in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts. Descriptive statistics will first explore the nature of change (Section 3.1.5), and inferential statistics will then compare performances between post- and delayed post-test (familiar and unfamiliar words treated separately) to evaluate whether any observed differences were statistically significant (Sections 3.1.6. and 3.1.7.).

3.1.5. Reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards at delayed post-test

By delayed post-test, which was conducted 7 weeks after the FL phonics instruction ended (with no French language input in between), descriptive statistics show a dip in means (to 1.8696 out of a maximum of 5) but not in medians (Table 7).

Table 7
Descriptive statistics delayed post-test reading aloud word cards (N = 23)

	Mid-Test							
	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Min	Max		
Familiar words (max 5)	1.8696	2.00	.00	1.440	0	4.5	.136	-1.093
Unfamiliar words (max 5)	.6957	.00	.00	.974	0	3	1.331	.876

A reversal in skewness scores (Table 7, Figure 6) was also noted which illustrated that scores had shifted from the higher range (at post-test) back to the lower range (by delayed post-test). This confirmed that reading aloud of familiar FL word cards had suffered attrition once the weekly FL instruction (phonics and language) had ceased.

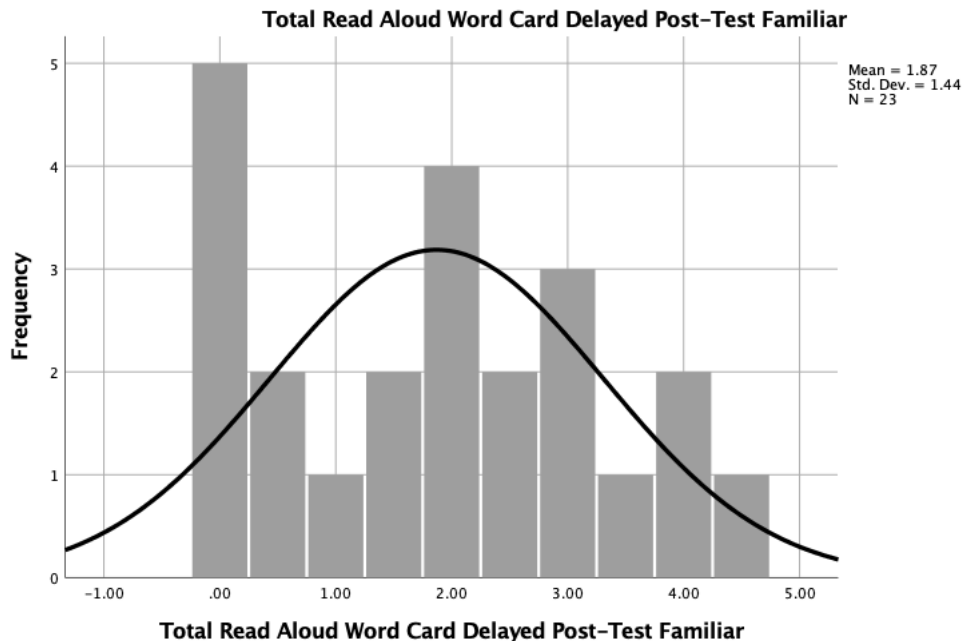


Figure 6. Distributions of familiar read aloud word cards at delayed post-test

For unfamiliar word cards the mean had decreased slightly, from an already low point at post-test. Interestingly, the range of scores for familiar and unfamiliar words were identical to those at post-test and the skewness and kurtosis values remained positive (Figure 7). It seemed as though progress in reading aloud of sound/spelling links in unfamiliar contexts was resistant to instruction during the programme and therefore scores were not particularly impacted once the FL instruction finished.

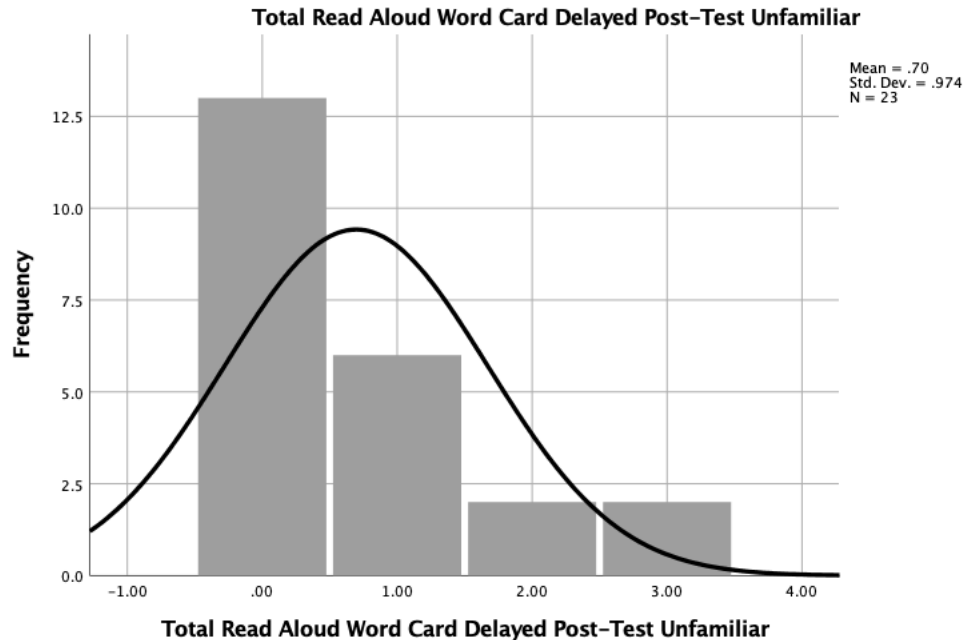


Figure 7. Distributions of unfamiliar read aloud word cards at delayed post-test

3.1.6. Reading aloud familiar word cards: differences between post-test and delayed post-test

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests were conducted to evaluate the extent of attrition in students' scores on word card read aloud tests (Table 8) with a Bonferroni correction applied for repeated tests ($p = .0125$). For familiar word card reading between post-test and delayed post-test (Table 8), target-like decoding clearly was not significantly lower at delayed post-test (median = 2.000) than familiar word card reading at post-test (median = 2.000), $z = -1.613$, $p = .107$. In other words, there was no significant attrition between post-test and delayed post-test for children reading aloud familiar words.

Table 8

Post-Test to Delayed Post-Test Familiar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Post-test	Delayed post-test				
FL Word Card Reading Aloud	2.000	2.000	-1.613	.107	20.767	n/a

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

3.1.7. Reading aloud unfamiliar word cards: differences between post-test and delayed post-test

For unfamiliar word card reading (Table 9) between post-test and delayed post-test, target-like decoding was not significantly lower at delayed post-test (median .000) than unfamiliar word card reading at post-test (median 1.000), $z = -1.155$, $p = .248$. So, there was also no significant attrition between post-test and delayed post-test for unfamiliar word card reading.

Table 9

Post-Test to Delayed Post-Test Unfamiliar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Post-test	Delayed Post-test				
FL Word Card Reading Aloud	1.000	.000	-1.155	.248	12.124	n/a

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

Overall, then, moderate statistically-significant progress was made for familiar words between mid- and post-test and for unfamiliar words between mid- and post-test. Neither familiar nor unfamiliar words,

examined separately, showed any significant difference between post- and delayed post-test. So the learning of sound/spelling links observed in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts was relatively long-lasting. Nonetheless, it is important to contextualise the nature of the significant differences across test times and test conditions. The shape of the distribution of scores for familiar word cards changed between mid- and post-test but the spread of scores were still centred around the lower scoring range.

3.2. Are performances on reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards different at mid-, post-, and delayed post-test?

Now the analyses will focus on whether word familiarity affects FL reading aloud performances as the descriptive data examined so far suggests this is likely. Sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.3 will take each test-time in isolation and explore whether FL reading aloud outcomes for familiar versus unfamiliar word cards were statistically different. Alongside comparison of group medians, a more detailed examination of performances will be covered in section 3.2.4 at the level of word card.

3.2.1. Reading aloud familiar versus unfamiliar word cards at mid-test

Children's scores were compared, using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests, between tasks (familiar and unfamiliar word cards) at each time point. This was to discern whether there was a difference at each test time between reading familiar, exemplar words (rehearsed, whole word pronunciation) compared to unfamiliar words (application of FL decoding and therefore FL sound/spelling link knowledge). Table 10 shows that mid-test familiar word card decoding was significantly higher (median = 1.000) than for unfamiliar word card reading (median = .000), $z = -3.368$, $p = 0.001$, $r = -0.49$, medium effect size. In other words, at mid-test there was a marked difference in overall performance when reading aloud familiar compared to unfamiliar words.

Table 10

Mid-Test Familiar versus Unfamiliar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Familiar	Unfamiliar				
FL Word Card Reading Aloud	1.000	.000	-3.368	.001	17.367	-0.49

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

3.2.2. Reading aloud familiar versus unfamiliar word cards at post-test

Similarly, Table 11 shows that at post-test, familiar word card decoding was significantly higher (median 2.000) than unfamiliar word card decoding (median 1.000), $z = -3.851$, $p < 0.001$, $r = -0.57$, medium effect size. By post-test the pattern continued that familiar word learning (reading aloud) was better than unfamiliar word reading.

Table 11

Post-Test Familiar versus Unfamiliar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Familiar	Unfamiliar				
FL Word Card Reading Aloud	2.000	1.000	-3.851	<.0001	24.668	-0.57

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

3.2.3. Reading aloud familiar versus unfamiliar word cards at delayed post-test

Finally, Table 12 shows that at delayed post-test, familiar word card decoding was still significantly higher (median 2.000) compared to unfamiliar word card decoding (median .000), $z = -3.521$, $p < 0.001$, $r = -0.52$ medium effect size. This demonstrates that at all test points familiar, exemplar words were more successfully decoded than unfamiliar words.

Table 12

Delayed Post-Test to Familiar versus Unfamiliar FL reading aloud word cards – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Familiar	Unfamiliar				
FL Word Card Reading Aloud	2.000	0.000	-3.521	<.0001	22.864	-0.52

Note. Max score familiar words 5; unfamiliar words 5.

3.2.4. Reading aloud by word card at each test time

Performances across familiar and unfamiliar word cards at all test times were also examined through analysis of each word card. A breakdown shows that overall performances were centred around specific sound/letter links (Figure 8). Broadly speaking, novel FL sounds linked to existing L1 spellings were learned best in familiar words (*singe, cochon, enfant*). Those sounds which were either a) similar to an existing L1 sound /y/ or b) an extant L1 sound /j/ which required a different mapping were learned slowest. This was not particularly affected by order of presentation: /j/ as in *billet* was recoded less successfully than /ɛ/ as in *singe*, yet /j/ had been presented earlier in the teaching programme. Sounds that were most successfully decoded in post-test familiar conditions were likely to show relative success at post-test unfamiliar conditions, although *singe/câlin* proved an exception. It is important to note that *grand* (unfamiliar) didn't perform as differently as expected although this is likely because the children chose to use this word as part of their extended reading/writing work (the adjective formed part of the core taught vocabulary) and it is also a "false friend" (false cognate) in English.

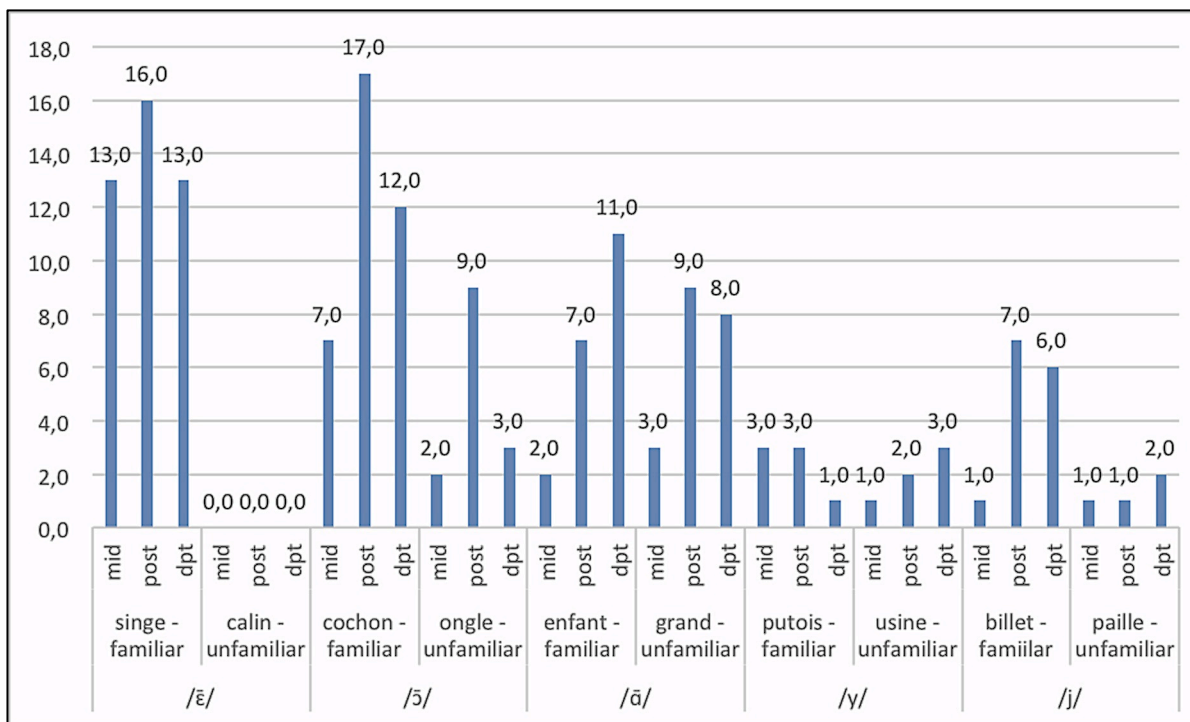


Figure 8. Performance at each test time for specific word cards/sound-spelling links (max score per word/test time 23)

3.3. To what extent do L1 literacy measures and FL global proficiency scores relate to FL reading aloud proficiency at each test time?

This research question seeks to identify whether particular underlying constructs, known to influence FL reading, could explain any of the variance in this study's FL reading outcomes. Firstly, Section 3.3.1 describes the nature of L1 proficiency across the sample and then explores the potential for relationships between L1 literacy measures and FL reading aloud performances at each test time.

3.3.1. L1 literacy measures and FL reading aloud performance

Descriptive statistics (Table 13) show the range of L1 literacy achievement across the sub-sample. Mann Whitney U tests were conducted and confirmed that there were no significant differences in L1 baseline literacy scores between School 1 and School 2.

Table 13
Descriptive statistics for all L1 literacy-related measures

	Baseline L1 Scores							
	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Min	Max		
NGRT L1 reading age	12.709	12.07	13.02	1.675	9.0	15.0	-.003	-.221
SWST L1 spelling age	10.517	10.07	10.02 ^a	3.211	7.08	17.0	-1.118	5.115
NC Reading Levels (max 14)	9.96	10.07	10.00	2.383	6	14	2.383	-.319
NC Writing Levels (max 14)	9.35	10.00	10.00	1.991	5	13	-.189	-.325

Note. ^a = multiple modes exist

These data were examined using Spearman’s Rho correlation coefficients to establish whether there were relationships between the individual measures of L1 literacy proficiency. Strong positive relationships were found between both National Curriculum reading levels (teacher-assessed) and NGRT standardised reading scores $r^s = .809^{**}$ sig < .0001 (* = .05 alpha; ** = .001 alpha). Moderate relationships were also found between National Curriculum writing levels (teacher-assessed) and SWST standardised spelling scores $r^s = .556^{**}$ sig = .006. NGRT and SWST scores also correlated moderately $r^s = .580^{**}$ sig = .004. Correlational tests also showed that across all times L1 literacy measures showed positive and significant relationships with FL reading aloud outcomes (FLRA - Table 14).

Table 14
Relationships between L1 literacy-related outcomes and FL reading aloud at all test times

	Mid-Test FLRA (fam-unfam)		Post-Test FLRA (fam-unfam)		Delayed Post-Test FLRA (fam-unfam)	
	r^s	sig	r^s	sig	r^s	sig
	L1 reading age NGRT	.583**	.003	.513**	.012	.568**
L1 spelling age SWST	.693**	<.0001	.645**	.001	.701**	<.0001
NC Reading Levels	.691**	<.0001	.583**	.004	.767**	<.0001
NC Writing	.516**	.012	.614**	.002	.713**	<.0001

Whilst the influence of L1 reading age on FL reading aloud remained significant at all test times, it diminished slightly after the teaching programme, evidenced by slightly lower r^s values. Interestingly, L1 spelling and teacher-assessed NC levels show highest r^s values, and therefore strongest relationships, at delayed post-test although with the exception of NC writing, these did not result in different values of statistical significance. Spelling age is the most influential, continuously showing r^s values above .6 (strong).

3.3.2. Global FL scores (literacy and general proficiency)

Section 3.3.2 turns to examine FL global performances (collected from additional, combined FL measures) to establish whether FL word card reading aloud scores at each test time were related to underlying FL proficiency. Firstly, global literacy and general proficiency scores at each test time were examined to determine whether FL learning occurred during the teaching cycle and if any attrition occurred between post- and delayed post-test (Tables 15-17). These composite scores were derived from the following

datasets: Global FL literacy comprised FL reading aloud (target-like production of specific sounds/word) in sentences plus FL reading comprehension (reading for global meaning and detail). It should be recalled that the reading aloud task was different from the FL reading aloud word card task reported in RQ1 and RQ2. FL general proficiency was derived from FL receptive vocabulary (recognising words and linking to pictorial representations) plus FL elicited imitation (sentence reproduction).

At pre-test, FL global literacy and general proficiency scores showed wide ranges in achievement across the sample with scores for spoken language measures ranging between 15-57 marks out of a total of 116 (receptive vocabulary, N = 29; elicited imitation, N = 87). For FL literacy, scores were similarly diverse with children's performances ranging from 1 to 9.5 out of a total of 18 (reading aloud, N = 10; reading comprehension, N = 8 – Table 15). By post-test, both means and medians had risen, but it should be noted that there was still a substantial range in achievement scores in both FL general proficiency and global FL literacy variables (Table 16). At delayed post-test, both means and medians had risen slightly for FL general proficiency and had dropped slightly for the FL global literacy scores (Table 17). Again, the range in scores remained wide between the higher and lower achievers.

Table 15

Descriptive statistics pre-test FL general proficiency and FL global literacy (N = 23)

	Pre-test						
	Mean	Median	SD	Range		Skewness (S.E. Skewness)	Kurtosis (S.E. Kurtosis)
				Min	Max		
FL general proficiency (max 116)	36.609	41.000	9.981	15.0	57.0	-.822 (.481)	.950 (.935)
FL global literacy (max 18)	5.370	5.500	2.2270	1.0	9.5	.247 (.481)	-.250 (.935)

Table 16

Descriptive statistics post-test FL general proficiency and FL global literacy (N = 23)

	Post-test						
	Mean	Median	SD	Range		Skewness (S.E. Skewness)	Kurtosis (S.E. Kurtosis)
				Min	Max		
FL general proficiency (max 116)	45.391	46.000	10.4174	21.0	66.0	-.413 (.481)	.346 (.935)
FL global literacy (max 18)	6.957	6.500	2.4117	3.5	13.0	.482 (.481)	.176 (.935)

Table 17

Descriptive statistics delayed post-test FL general proficiency and FL global literacy (N = 23)

	Post-test						
	Mean	Median	SD	Range		Skewness (S.E. Skewness)	Kurtosis (S.E. Kurtosis)
				Min	Max		
FL general proficiency (max 116)	46.652	48.000	10.7602	26.0	67.0	-.304 (.481)	-.379 (.481)
FL global literacy (max 18)	6.500	6.500	2.5628	2.5	12.5	.433 (.481)	-.130 (.935)

Learners' progress on FL general proficiency and FL literacy constructs will now be explored to illustrate broader FL learning during the overall teaching programme (Tables 18 and 19). As these tests also comprised two literacy-related test items, it is interesting to note progress made beyond the sub-skills of FL phonological decoding measured through the FL reading aloud word card test. These analyses also explore whether this broader FL learning was durable by examining scores between post- and delayed post-test.

Table 18 shows that from pre-test to post-test (immediately after the teaching programme), students made statistically significant progress across both FL combined measures. Global general proficiency scores

(pre-test mdn = 39.609; post-test mdn = 45.391, $z = 2.930$, $p = 0.56$; $r = 0.43$) and global literacy scores increased moderately (literacy: pre-test mdn = 5.50; post-test mdn = 6.50; $z = 2.930$, $p = .003$; $r = 0.43$). Between post-test and delayed post-test, medians either remained the same or increased slightly but were not statistically significant (Table 19), showing that the FL learning was relatively durable.

Table 18

Pre-Test to Post-Test FL general proficiency and FL global literacy scores – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Pre-test	Post-test				
FL General Proficiency	39.609	45.391	3.771	<.0001	30.763	0.56
FL Global Literacy	5.50	6.50	2.930	.003	28.666	0.43

Note. Max score FL general proficiency 116; FL global literacy 18.

Table 19

Post-Test to Delayed Post-Test FL general proficiency and FL global literacy scores – Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (N = 23)

	Median		z	p	S.E.	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Pre-test	Post-test				
FL General Proficiency	45.391	46.652	1.123	.261	30.708	0.17
FL Global Literacy	6.50	6.50	-1.051	.293	26.646	-0.16

Note. Max score FL general proficiency 116; FL global literacy 18.

In Table 19, comparison of FL global literacy scores using a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test shows that there was no significant difference in scores between post-test (Mdn = 6.50) and delayed post-test (Mdn = 6.50), $z = -1.051$, $p = .293$, thereby showing that the progression made in FL literacy during the teaching intervention appeared relatively long-term. However, general proficiency scores increased slightly (though not significantly) between post-test (Mdn = 45.391) and delayed post-test (Mdn = 46.652), $z = 1.123$, $p = .261$, small effect size $r = 0.17$). Section 3.3.3 will turn to global FL proficiencies (general proficiency and global literacy) to establish whether these abilities were related to the FL word card reading aloud scores at each test time.

3.3.3. Global FL and FL reading aloud scores

The relationships between FL general proficiency and FL global literacy with FL reading aloud (word card) outcomes at all test times were explored using Spearman's Rho correlations (Table 20). All pre-test FL outcomes (with the exception of FL global literacy at mid-test FLRA) showed statistically significant relationships with word reading outcomes at mid-, post-, and delayed post-test times. The influence of FL outcomes increased in strength immediately after the teaching programme (at post-test) and also at delayed post-test. General proficiency and literacy-based FL outcomes showed, broadly speaking, the same strength of influence at post-test, evidenced by similar r^s values.

Table 20

Relationships between combined FL outcomes and FL reading aloud word card (familiar and unfamiliar) at all test times

	Mid-Test FLRA (fam-unfam)		Post-Test FLRA (fam-unfam)		Delayed Post-Test FLRA (fam-unfam)	
	r^s	sig	r^s	sig	r^s	sig
Pre-test FL General Proficiency	.480*	.020	.486*	.019	.568**	.005
Pre-test FL Global Literacy	.379	.074	.561**	.005	.570*	.005
Post-test FL General Proficiency	.643**	.001	.552**	.006	.626**	.001
Post-test FL Global Literacy	.612**	.002	.605**	.002	.690**	<.0001
Delayed Post-test FL General proficiency	.501*	.015	.535**	.009	.562**	.005
Delayed Post-test FL Global Literacy	.583**	.004	.786**	<.0001	.781**	<.0001

Whilst it seems likely from extant literature that these FL and L1 variables could be predictors of FL outcomes including FL reading aloud outcomes, the sample size ($n = 23$) precluded statistical analysis to identify such predictors (Field, 2014).

4. Discussion

4.1. To what extent do learners engaged in systematic and explicit FL phonics instruction make progress in reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar FL words at mid-, post- and delayed post-test?

For familiar word card reading aloud, the children made slow but statistically significant progress both during and immediately after the FL phonics teaching programme. The slow progression is evidenced by a low mean 2.174/median 2.00 at post-test out of a total score of 5. Unfamiliar words and application of sound/spelling links showed similar patterns. Ten weeks into the phonics instruction programme this sub-sample ($n = 23$) had made almost no progress in applying learned FL sound/spelling links to novel words. The children's progression (for unfamiliar word cards) between mid- and post-test was slow (mean .9130/median 1.00 at post-test) but statistically significant with a moderate effect size ($r^s = .40$), likely due to a zero-starting point. These findings resonate with prior research in a similar context which found that sound/spelling links, particularly those taught in French (an irregular orthography) developed slowly and that children's reproductions tended to reflect L1 sound/spelling links (Cable et al., 2010). An investigation of phonics instruction conducted in English secondary schools (children aged 11-13) found that, after 16 weeks of systematic and targeted weekly sessions, some participants still failed to successfully decode written FL non-words through a sound-alike test (Woore et al., 2018). It seems likely that development of FL reading aloud skills in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts is a long-term pedagogic endeavour and, consequently, progress may have been further hindered by the relatively low amounts of weekly instructional time, which is known to affect primary FL outcomes (Graham et al., 2017).

Like other primary and secondary school studies (Cable et al., 2010; Woore et al., 2018), this study found that the range of performances was diverse at all test times. Almost one third of the sample ($n = 7$) scored zero for reading familiar words at mid-test, ten weeks after the phonics instruction commenced and, after 23 weeks of learning, there were still children who were unable to recognise and pronounce familiar words and to decode unfamiliar words. Correlational analyses showed that during and after the teaching programme both L1 reading proficiency and FL proficiencies were related to achievement at FL reading aloud. It could be possible that the learners who apparently made no progress following the phonics instruction programme had lower L1 literacy skills. It should also be noted that, in this sample, L1 spelling ages showed considerable range (7.08 years to 17.0 years). This measure was found to have strong relationships with FL outcomes in this study and L1 spelling is also known to be influenced by L1 phonics instruction (Castles et al., 2018), therefore L1 spelling ranges could have explained some of the range in FL reading aloud scores. Perhaps the phonics pedagogy should have focused more systematically on practising writing both exemplar and other words incorporating the targeted sound/spelling links. On a broader scale, it should be noted that diversity in FL outcomes is a known phenomenon in FL education for young learners. Other studies across Europe have found that FL oracy and literacy scores vary considerably amongst learners of the same ages; even within the same classes (Cable et al., 2010; Enever et al. 2011; Graham et al., 2017).

Finally, the kinds of sound/spelling links taught also appeared to matter to some extent. The best performances at post-test for familiar words centred around novel FL sounds (e.g., nasal vowels) which had to be linked to existing L1 spellings. Those involving extant L1 sounds which required new mappings to different FL spellings seemed more problematic. This perhaps could be explained by the distinctiveness of novel FL sounds which are easier to perceive and therefore link and/or remap to their respective spellings (Flege, 1995). It should also be noted that the phonics instruction which involved both gestures and pictures worked particularly well as clues for the articulatory properties of nasality. For example the nasal vowel / ɔ̃ / was linked to the exemplar word coch<ON> (*pig*). This was accompanied by a picture of a pig and whole class enactment of an action which involved pushing the tip of the nose to resemble a snout whilst saying the sound. This, of course, drew attention to the nasality and potentially acted as a retrieval cue for articulatory properties. However, no phonetic analysis of sound perception or production was involved in the study, therefore this explanation should be treated with caution.

4.2. Are performances on reading aloud familiar and unfamiliar word cards different at mid-, post- and delayed post-test?

Similar patterns for familiar and unfamiliar words showed that learners made slow but significant progress at reading both word types during the teaching. Comparison of familiar versus unfamiliar word card performance at each test time also showed consistently significant differences. In other words, just 10 weeks after the phonics programme started, familiar words were more successfully decoded than unfamiliar words ($p = .001$; $r^s = 0.49$ moderate). This preference was replicated at post-test ($p < .0001$; $r^s = -.057$) and delayed post-test ($p < .0001$; $r^s = -.052$). At each time point learners were significantly better at reading familiar words compared to unfamiliar words.

These results show that enhanced practice and exposure is key in phonics instruction in developing reading aloud of familiar and unfamiliar words. It demonstrates the importance of familiarity with words (item-based learning) to ensure accurate decoding, in line with L1 literature (Share, 1999) and frequency of presentation (Share, 1999). This could also be linked to active decoding and the development of better quality lexical representations (spelling, sound and meaning) in memory (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2014). However, there are a number of complex issues surrounding the difference in performance between known and unknown words. Perhaps the multimodal (enhanced) nature of presentation of phonics exemplar words (written words, pictures, gestures plus meaning) could have boosted the memorisation of familiar words such as *s<IN>ge* (monkey) (Boyer & Ehri, 2011).

Due to frequency of presentation and rehearsal, it is possible that these exemplar words were not actually phonologically decoded in a conscious manner and could have been linked as whole word forms to their corresponding phonological representation. It is also feasible that the children had memorised the oral form of the word and could have generated this from the picture on the word card but it is, nonetheless interesting, that when the visual was presented alongside the written form, some learners were still unable to suppress the corresponding L1 mappings and produced a non-target-like form for the familiar word after 23 weeks of phonics instruction. Again, this seems to suggest that learning FL sound/spelling links takes time and plenty of practise. Historic pedagogic advice and anecdotal teacher opinion contends that FL reading should be avoided until reliable phonological representations of words have been established so that these will counteract L1-based mispronunciations (Hurrell, 1999). This study instead suggests that print-induced L1 mispronunciations will result regardless of timing for L1 literate learners. It seems possible that increasing success rates at post-test show that early opportunities to tackle FL reading can yield eventual target-like decoding. However, as section 5.1 notes, it is beyond the remit of this study to attribute any outcomes directly to the efficacy of FL phonics instruction and pedagogic recommendations would benefit from further research.

Evidently the phonological decoding of unfamiliar words is the bona fide indicator of application of conscious sound/spelling link knowledge. However, particular sound/spelling links which were more successfully realised in familiar forms performed better in unfamiliar contexts too, and this seems to indicate that there could be a link between memorisation of exemplars and conscious phonological decoding. Whilst not a focus of analysis, learners tended to make L1 related errors when phonological decoding such as substituting ON = /ɒn/ for ON = /ɔ/. This seems to show that a degree of automatized L1 phonological decoding was indeed activated, even for conscious or effortful decoding of unfamiliar words and successful performance could have indicated whether children were able to override these automatized L1 sound/spelling link knowledge. It appears that, whilst many of them were making progress in this regard, reading in an additional language is a dual (or multiple) language affair, and overriding competing L1 knowledge is challenging (Cable et al., 2010; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Koda, 2008; Woore, 2009). Perhaps the learners could have benefited from more opportunities to apply practised sound/spelling links in novel contexts, thereby strengthening recall of FL sound/spelling link knowledge. The phonics instruction programme could have included more opportunities to practise reading a range of unknown words.

4.3. To what extent do L1 literacy measures and FL global proficiency scores relate to FL reading aloud proficiency at each test time?

Statistical analyses showed that all L1 literacy measures (both standardised test scores and teacher assessments) correlated strongly and positively at all test times with FL word reading aloud test scores. This indicated, as expected from the literature, that successful L1 readers and writers were likely to be more successful at FL reading aloud. Wider research has found that young learners FL literacy and indeed FL

outcomes generally are likely to be influenced by L1 literacy (Courtney et al., 2017; Sparks & Ganschow, 2012). The relationships between L1 literacy and FL word card reading aloud decreased very slightly at post-test, then increased again at delayed post-test. This was despite the differences between post-test scores and delayed post-test scores not being statistically significant. It seems possible that this could relate to a particularly low start for FL reading aloud scores which increased immediately following the FL phonics instruction programme. It could also show that some of the lower achieving L1 literacy learners increased their FL reading aloud skills as their L1 literacy skills were improving too. This was not evidenced as the L1 data collection was focused on the beginning of the school year, however, it is likely that L1 literacy skills would be boosted markedly during the last two years of primary school when pupils are preparing for national standardised literacy and numeracy tests.

Both L1 reading age and L1 spelling age were influential at all test times, although spelling age was marginally more important, tending to demonstrate strong rather than moderate relationships. This could be because the L1 reading age test examines word recognition and reading comprehension by asking student to select the correct written word from a range of options to complete a gapped sentence, whilst the SWST spelling test involves typing or writing a target word in a gapped sentence from an auditory cue (e.g. orthographic decoding). Arguably the SWST would act as a more direct indicator of L1 relationships between sounds and letters. It could also be relevant to note that the SWST scores showed greater range than the NGRT scores and this perhaps influenced the statistical analyses. This could also reflect links with phonics knowledge and spelling evidenced in the L1 literature (Rosenthal & Ehri, 2011).

Interestingly, FL outcomes were generally related to FL reading aloud word card scores at all test times, with the exception of FL global literacy scores at mid-test. So, if learners were high achievers at either FL literacy or FL global proficiency, then they tended to score higher for FL word card reading aloud. As discussed in the results section, the sample size was not large enough to explore these variables as predictors, so it is impossible to discern whether these FL proficiencies are likely to have determined performance. It is also important to note that relationships between FL outcomes and FL reading aloud could have been mediated by other factors such as learner self-efficacy and motivation, as earlier young learner FL studies have noted links between attitudinal factors and learning outcomes (Courtney, 2017; Graham et al., 2017).

5. Conclusion

To summarise, over the course of a 23-week programme of systematic weekly phonics activities where French sound/spelling links were taught and practised, learners made steady progress. The reading aloud process showed great variation inter-participant, but the overall learning, whilst slow, tended to be durable and was evident at least seven weeks after the instructional programme finished. The influence of L1 literacy-related skills, particularly L1 spelling age, was important for FL reading outcomes. In other words, skilled L1 readers had a clear advantage for reading aloud FL words. For all learners, familiar FL phonics exemplar words were more accurately read aloud than unfamiliar words, but after 23 weeks of instruction, progress applying learned sound/spelling links to novel (unfamiliar) contexts started to emerge. This study shows that learning to read aloud FL words is a slow process but that children do make progress. On a broader scale, this study confirmed that young, beginner FL learners are able to make meaningful progress in limited input classroom settings. It was also apparent that whilst L1 literacy skills have facilitative role in FL outcomes, the process of re-mapping (and/or suppressing) L1 sound/spelling links is a complex and arduous one.

5.1. Limitations

It is important to recall that this was not a direct evaluation of the phonics instructional programme alone, as the children were engaged in a rich programme of oracy and literacy activities, which has been documented in the supplementary materials. This is in line with wider literacy-related research which evidences the importance of both phonics instruction and meaning-based text activities to support learning (Adams, 1990). To evaluate the direct implications of the phonics instruction package, one school would have had to have only the phonics instructional programme. As little is known about best practice for FL phonics instruction or its effectiveness, this study undertook to investigate the possible outcomes and learning processes in a limited input, limited timeframe FL setting. It is also important to consider that teacher factors such as linguistic ability, language specialist training, and teaching time are likely to underpin FL outcomes (Graham et al., 2017) and could have influenced progression in this context. Arguably, the teacher/researcher

stance meant that this study was implemented by someone who was heavily invested in the teaching/learning process.

5.2. A future research agenda

As it cannot be assumed that the benefits for phonics in English L1 literacy learning can simply be transferred to any FL context, future research should aim to investigate the effectiveness of FL phonics in primary schools in a controlled experiment. It would also be useful to examine the learning of sound/spelling links of different foreign languages in young learner instructed settings as well as the teaching and learning of FL literacy for learners with different L1 (non-alphabetic) backgrounds such as Chinese.

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- EN** **Alison Porter** is a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the University of Southampton. Her primary research area is young language learning in instructed settings. She is particularly interested in the teaching and learning of foreign language literacy and has participated in teaching and learning research in both early (ages 5-7) and late (ages 9-11) primary school classrooms. She also taught foreign languages in English primary schools for ten years. Most recently, Dr. Porter collaborated on a large-scale teaching intervention study in early secondary school classrooms (ages 11-13) which aimed to evaluate the effects of different types of reading instruction: phonics and strategy use. In 2017, Dr. Porter established a Southampton University Primary Languages (SUPL) Research and Practice partnership with Emeritus Professor Ros Mitchell. SUPL currently collaborates with 20 local primary schools to co-construct, implement, and evaluate foreign language literacy practices in classrooms. Participating teachers are concurrently trained in classroom research methods, and several small-scale investigations have already resulted. Dr. Porter is also a member of the Research in Primary Language network (RiPL), founded by the University of Essex, which engages with practitioners on a local level as well as national stakeholders in a bid to inform policy and sustainability issues relating to primary foreign language provision.
- ES** **Alison Porter** es una profesora de Lingüística Aplicada en la Universidad de Southampton. Su área de investigación es principalmente el aprendizaje de la lengua en niños en un contexto educativo. Se ocupa sobretodo de enseñanza y aprendizaje de alfabetización de una lengua extranjera y ha contribuido en investigaciones sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje tanto en niños de 5-7 años como en los de 9-11 años. Impartió clases de lenguas extranjeras en escuelas primarias durante diez años. Más recientemente, la profesora Porter ha colaborado a un estudio a gran escala sobre la intervención de la enseñanza en las escuelas secundaria (11-13 años de edad) que tenía como objetivo evaluar los efectos producidos por diferentes tipos de enseñanza de lectura: instrucción fónica y uso estratégico. En 2017, la profesora Porter estableció la asociación Southampton University Primary Languages (SUPL) Research and Practice junto con el Profesor émerito Ros Mitchell. Hoy en día SUPL colabora con 20 escuelas primarias locales para desarrollar juntos, implementar y evaluar las practicas de alfabetización de lenguas extranjeras en clase. Los docentes que participan son formados al mismo tiempo en métodos de investigación desarrollando ya numerosas investigaciones a pequeña escala. La profesora Porter es también miembro de Research in Primary Language network (RiPL), fundado por la University of Essex, que se relaciona con tanto con profesionales a nivel local como con stakeholders a nivel nacional con el intento de informar sobre cuestiones de política y sostenibilidad relacionadas con la oferta de la lengua extranjera en la escuela primaria.
- IT** **Alison Porter** è Ricercatrice in Linguistica applicata presso l'Università di Southampton. La sua area di ricerca principale è l'apprendimento linguistico dei bambini in contesto di istruzione formale. È particolarmente interessata all'insegnamento e apprendimento della letto-scrittura nella lingua straniera e ha partecipato a ricerche sull'insegnamento e apprendimento in classi iniziali (5-7 anni) ed avanzate (9-11) nella scuola primaria. Ha inoltre insegnato lingua straniera nella scuola primaria inglese per dieci anni. Ultimamente, Porter ha collaborato a un ampio studio sull'intervento didattico in classi iniziali della scuola secondaria (11-13 anni) finalizzato alla valutazione degli effetti di tipi diversi di insegnamento della lettura: il metodo fonetico e l'uso di strategie. Nel 2017, Porter ha stabilito una collaborazione dell'Università di Southampton con il professore emerito Ros Mitchell per Southampton University Primary Languages (SUPL) Research and Practice (SUPL). Attualmente, SUPL collabora con 20 scuole locali per la creazione, implementazione e valutazione di pratiche di alfabetizzazione per la classe. Gli insegnanti coinvolti vengono al contempo istruiti sui metodi di ricerca per la classe e ne sono già derivati diversi studi su piccola scala. Porter è anche membro della Research in Primary Language network (RiPL) fondata dall'Università dell'Essex, che si confronta con gli operatori del settore a livello locale e con le parti interessate a livello nazionale nel tentativo di orientare questioni di politiche e sostenibilità relative all'insegnamento delle lingue straniere nella scuola primaria.

Language use in the primary classroom: Maltese teachers' views on multilingual practices

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ABSTRACT

EN Recent global migration trends and an increase in worldwide human mobility are currently contributing to unparalleled challenges in the area of literacy and education within multicultural and multilingual societies (Leikin, Schwartz, & Tobin, 2012). Malta, a small island in the Mediterranean, is one country currently seeking ways in which to adapt to the realities of today's diverse classrooms. This paper details original research into Maltese teachers' perceptions and practices in multilingual classrooms. Following a brief overview of Malta's language history and educational system, we draw on the experiences of eight bilingual primary school teachers through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Recent demographic changes in Malta necessitate a paradigm shift in education. With Malta's challenges mirrored at global level, this study makes an important contribution to understanding the issues faced by educators and children, exploring pathways towards an equitable and socially just education for all.

Key words: MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION, MULTILINGUAL TEACHING PRACTICES, TRANSLANGUAGING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

ES Las tendencias migratorias recientes y el aumento de la movilidad en todo el mundo están contribuyendo al desafío sin paralelo en el área de la educación y la alfabetización dentro de sociedades multiculturales y multilingües (Leikin, Schwartz, & Tobin, 2012). Malta, una pequeña isla en el Mediterráneo, busca formas de adaptarse a las realidades de las diversas aulas de clases de la actualidad. Este estudio detalla investigación original en la percepción y las prácticas de maestros malteses relacionadas con las aulas de clase multilingües. Después de una breve descripción de la historia lingüística de Malta y su sistema educativo, nos basamos en las experiencias de ocho maestros de escuela primaria bilingües por medio de entrevistas profundas, presenciales semiestructuradas. Los cambios demográficos recientes en Malta requieren un cambio de paradigma en la educación, y con los desafíos de Malta reflejados a nivel mundial, la investigación proporciona una contribución importante para comprender el problema al que se enfrentan los educadores y los niños, explorando caminos hacia una educación equitativa y socialmente justa para todos.

Palabras clave: EDUCACIÓN MULTILINGÜE, PRÁCTICAS DE ENSEÑANZA MULTILINGÜES, TRANSENGUAR, DESARROLLO PROFESIONAL, FORMACIÓN INICIAL DEL PROFESORADO

IT Le recenti tendenze migratorie e l'aumento della mobilità a livello globale pongono sfide senza precedenti in termini di alfabetizzazione e istruzione nelle società multiculturali e multilingue (Leikin, Schwartz, & Tobin, 2012). Malta, una piccola isola nel Mediterraneo, è in cerca di soluzioni per adeguarsi alle realtà scolastiche di classi eterogenee. Questo articolo descrive in dettaglio una ricerca su percezioni e pratiche di insegnanti maltesi nelle classi multilingue. Dopo una breve panoramica della storia linguistica e del sistema educativo di Malta, attingiamo alle esperienze di otto insegnanti bilingui della scuola primaria attraverso interviste in profondità, semi-strutturate, faccia a faccia. I recenti cambiamenti demografici a Malta richiedono un cambio di paradigma nell'istruzione e, con le sfide di Malta, riflesse a livello globale, questo studio offre un contributo importante alla comprensione delle questioni affrontate da educatori e bambini, esplorando percorsi per un'istruzione equa e socialmente giusta per tutti.

Parole chiave: ISTRUZIONE MULTILINGUE, PRATICHE DI INSEGNAMENTO MULTILINGUE, TRANSLANGUAGING, SVILUPPO PROFESSIONALE, FORMAZIONE INIZIALE DEGLI INSEGNANTI

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1. Introduction

The world is presently undergoing an unparalleled rise in global immigration, leading to a shift in societies towards more cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Human mobility reached 258 million in 2017 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017), with migrants comprising 14% of the population residing in high-income countries, an increase of almost 5% since the beginning of the millennium (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017). The past decade's global demographic shifts have led to populations becoming increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse. This diversity is increasingly represented in the classroom, with global figures showing that multilingualism in schools is on the rise. In England, for example, 21.2% of primary school pupils are exposed to a language other than English in the home (UK Department for Education, 2018). In the US, the most recent census in 2014 revealed similar numbers, with 22% of the school population (5-17 years old) speaking a language other than English at home (Camarota & Ziegler, 2015). While these figures illustrate an increasing trend within individual countries, gaining a holistic, international overview is difficult, since countries adopt diverse reporting and tracking strategies. For instance, some countries track first-generation migrants only, leading to issues with respect to the reporting of multilingual children, due to an oversight of children born in-country to migrant parents (European Commission, 2019).

Beyond counting students, the recent developments regarding diversity, both in the classroom and in society, have led to a call for an increased understanding of and engagement with multilingualism in education. Language ideologies which advocate the strict separation of languages are now making way for more flexible practices including translanguaging, which supports the concept of fluid language repertoires that human beings naturally utilize as a communicative tool, depending on context or circumstances (García & Kleyn, 2016; Sabino, 2018). Within the classroom, however, these practices are still in their infancy, with many teachers reporting insecurity when it comes to the teaching of multilingual students (Tinsley and Board, 2016). A look at the international figures highlights the need to understand more about the complexities of multilingualism in the classroom, in particular, the need for research with practising teachers who are called upon to implement national education policies, which are frequently operating on insufficient or unclear data (European Commission, 2019; Tinsley and Board, 2016). This study uses Malta as one example of the larger global trend of diversity, addressing the following research questions:

- In which ways are Maltese primary school teachers supporting multilingual students within their classroom environments?
- What are these teachers' current practices and perceptions of using flexible language pedagogies such as translanguaging in bilingual and multilingual classrooms?

The present study focuses on participants' perceptions of bilingual and multilingual classrooms, together with their views and practices related to translanguaging pedagogies. Findings from the study aim to contribute to the growing understanding of teachers' practices and requirements related to diversity in the classroom, highlighting the need for more qualitative research to explore necessary changes to both educational policy and practice.

2. The Maltese context

Malta is a small island nation in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, with an area of 246 square kilometres. Neighboured by Italy and Libya, the Maltese islands boast of a rich history that has witnessed many a foreign rule. As part of their historical legacy, the Maltese people have lived within the reality of multilingualism for many centuries as the linguistic traits of the island's inhabitants were influenced by an assortment of different languages, with Arabic, Latin, Sicilian, Italian, French, English and Maltese spoken on the island throughout the years. As part of Malta's British colonial heritage, the English language was introduced in schools in 1833, eventually replacing Italian as the country's official language, whilst Maltese was recognized as an official language alongside English in 1934 (Brincat, 2011; Camilleri Grima, 2013b; Frendo, 1988). Notwithstanding its Semitic origins, the Maltese language is written in Latin script and is essentially a hybrid of Arabic, English and Italian (Vella, 2012). The Maltese vernacular includes a plethora of English vocabulary and expressions, whilst code-switching is a ubiquitous and natural part of local communication (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Most Maltese people are bilingual to some extent, however the level of proficiency varies considerably amongst individuals, depending on their language backgrounds,

preferences and contexts (Farrugia, 2016). The Maltese language is spoken by over 95% of Maltese people, whilst over 85% speak English (Camilleri Grima, 2016). Italian is also spoken by many Maltese people, albeit to varying degrees of fluency. This is due to the countries' geographical proximity and the influence of Italian television stations, which are popular amongst Maltese households (Caruana, 2013).

In spite of the small size of the island, there appears to be a linguistic divide according to locality, as inhabitants of certain parts of Malta such as Sliema, St. Julian's, and the surrounding areas tend to speak English more fluently, whilst those hailing from Southern areas are usually perceived to be more proficient in Maltese. The Constitution of Malta recognizes both Maltese and English as official languages, and Maltese is also one of the official languages of the European Union. The population of Malta stood at 475,700 in 2017, signifying the largest relative increase in population in Europe during this year (+32.9 per 1000 residents) (Eurostat, 2017). Paradoxically, in the same year, the Maltese islands had the lowest birth rate in Europe (Eurostat, 2017). This indicates that globalization and intensifying migration trends are seeing asylum seekers and refugees entering Malta in unprecedented numbers, since the island is presently considered a symbolic gateway between Africa and Europe. Moreover, Malta's accession to the European Union in 2004 has also brought about many EU citizens benefitting of their free right of movement within other member states (International Organization for Migration, 2016). Despite Malta's multilingual and multicultural history, this sudden and rapid demographic shift is nonetheless giving rise to unprecedented challenges as the island's inhabitants are striving to welcome and provide for the ever-increasing number of foreigners within their society and educational settings. As a result, classrooms that were previously bilingual are increasingly multilingual (Farrugia, 2017; Scaglione & Caruana, 2018). This transformation is proving to be positive and enriching on many levels, though educators are also struggling with issues pertaining to language use, for which they do not feel sufficiently trained.

3. Malta's multilingual classrooms

Malta's educational system is an integral part of its British colonial legacy, and hence built on the British Educational system. Maltese families have the choice of enrolling their children into state, parochial, or private schools, where both Maltese and English languages are taught concurrently from pre-school. All other subjects are taught in English, Maltese, or a variety of both (depending on school policy), with code-switching featuring regularly during the majority of lessons. The large part of reading and writing is conducted in English, due to the greater availability of English textbooks over those in Maltese. A third or fourth language is introduced to students during the end of their primary school years or in their first year of senior school. Malta's language policy endorses bilingual and multilingual development as it encourages young students to adopt positive attitudes towards English, Maltese, and other languages (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2015).

The population of non-Maltese students in schools has doubled over a span of 4 years, from 1,890 in 2012 to 4,289 in 2016 ((NSO, National Statistics Office - Malta, 2018). This means that Maltese schools are witnessing a rapid and inevitable transformation from bilingualism to multilingualism, which is mirrored in other countries across Europe, particularly higher-income nations (European Commission, 2019). Since this demographic shift is a rapid and unprecedented one, Maltese teachers do not feel sufficiently equipped with the necessary skills required to meet the challenges which multilingualism and multiculturalism in the classroom inevitably create. Teachers are presently faced with students in class who are required to comprehend and communicate in both Maltese and English in order to access the curriculum, whilst also striving to preserve their mother tongue, which is an integral part of their identity (Micallef Cann & Spiteri, 2014). This is proving to be problematic for teachers and students alike, especially in cases where migrant children do not speak any Maltese or English at all. Additionally, this predicament is also contributing to family pressures, as many are faced with the intricacies of negotiating language use within their host country (Little, 2017).

Another challenge is a shift in educational paradigms within teacher training for which Malta is not yet sufficiently prepared. Language education needs to respect linguistic heritage whilst preparing children for a globalised world, and there seems to be a gap in research and professional training in the field at a local level. As a result of this, initial teacher education programmes, together with continuous professional development sessions for experienced educators, are still not adequately addressing these issues, and hence teachers are striving to meet the needs of the linguistically and culturally diverse pupils in their classrooms through personal empathy, rather than professional skill (Scaglione & Caruana, 2018). This, again, is representative across Europe, with teacher training for the integration of migrant students being

comprehensively monitored in Spain, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg and Serbia only (European Commission, 2019). Educators need to be trained to maximise the potential of multilingualism and multiculturalism for the benefit of all their students alike. This can be achieved through innovative pedagogies including translanguaging, programmes that support the conservation of the Maltese language, programmes that promote the universal value of English, and structures offering ample support for the children's own cultural identity and linguistic heritage. Involving families in their children's education may also be a way of celebrating and valuing student diversity. Moll (2015) states that in today's globalised world we need to "[engage] teachers strategically with their cultural environments for teaching – an absolute necessity in today's rapidly changing sociocultural contexts of schooling" (p. 114).

4. Translanguaging

One theoretical lens that is helpful in supporting these shifts, both within classrooms and teacher training, is translanguaging. A theory of translanguaging views the aim of language as primarily as a communicative tool, and therefore sees shifts in language use as a natural part of globalization and migration trends. This challenges the concept of societally labelled languages, replacing them with linguistic ideologies, approaches to research, and understandings of speakers' practices which view languages as uncompartimentalized and fluid. The idea of translanguaging was coined in Wales where it originated as a pedagogical practice whereby bilingual students were provided with input in one language and were asked for output in the other language (Williams, 2002). It was subsequently researched in depth by language scholars such as García, Cenoz, Baker and Wei, amongst others. Translanguaging refers to the naturally occurring language practices employed by bilingual and multilingual speakers which consider languages as hybridized repertoires into which speakers may delve as necessary, as opposed to the idea of formally separated and societally constructed systems (Baker, 2011; García, 2009; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). Gort and Sembiente (2015) point out that translanguaging is not distinct or unusual, but rather is the standard manner in which bilinguals communicate within multilingual communities, since "bilinguals pragmatically draw on their entire linguistic repertoires to maximize understanding and performance across a variety of contexts, to shape experiences, and to make sense of the world" (p. 8).

Although translanguaging is a naturally occurring practice amongst multilingual speakers, educators need to be competent in utilizing it strategically. They must also be aware of the importance of distinguishing between language as a learning and communicative tool, and language which is used for assessment purposes. Translanguaging encourages the strategic shifting between these two languages during instruction time, depending on the circumstances and the requirements of the task involved. Teachers may thus encourage students to draw from their entire linguistic repertoire during brainstorming sessions, discussions, debates or oral presentations, whilst the use of the target language would be promoted for the publishing, presentation or a final written product, or for assessment purposes. Merging and extending naturally occurring language practices such as translanguaging into pedagogical strategies may thus be one way forward within our ever increasing linguistically and culturally diverse societies, in order to ensure a truly inclusive and equitable education for all (Cenoz, 2017; García, 2005; Scaglione & Caruana, 2018).

Using translanguaging pedagogies may hence help to mitigate challenges within multilingual and multicultural classrooms, and the judicious use of language mixing may enable children to reach their full potential as they feel free to naturally think, feel, discuss and communicate in the language or languages they feel most comfortable in (Beres, 2015; García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging practices in class encourage children to participate and interact further during lessons, since they may feel less self-conscious when drawing on their entire linguistic repertoire as a resource (Park, 2013). Translanguaging also enables students to tap into both their creative and critical skills, whilst bending the norms of traditional language use, as they make use of all their linguistic resources to inquire, discuss or express views (Wei, 2011). Additionally, translanguaging pedagogy can facilitate curriculum access, whilst also supporting students' mastery of language (Durán and Henderson, 2018).

Mifsud and Vella (2018, p. 94), advocate a flexible approach to language use in class, particularly within the early years, rather than employing a "one size fits all" model. They believe that the specific needs of the children in class need to be addressed and go as far as recommending that "a clearly agreed learning contract could be established between teachers and pupils, and their parents, relating to a more systematic alternation of languages in the classroom" (p. 93). Palviainen, Protassova, Mård-Miettinen, and Schwartz (2016) also promote the idea of flexible language practices in the classroom, and state that these are many times developed naturally, through experience and over time, rather than being formally taught. They also

state that traditional language practices which advocate the strict separation of languages are making way for more flexible approaches as a result of increasingly diverse classroom populations.

As a pedagogical tool, using multiple languages for learning is actively encouraged in many European countries, such as Finland and Germany, but although fostering plurilingual education is actively encouraged, the term *translanguaging* does not feature in the most recent European report (European Commission, 2019). Notwithstanding similarities among these two concepts, the terms are not interchangeable, since they are “at times [...] seen as oppositional and other times, seemingly fused into one similar framework” (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019 p. 3). García and Otheguy (2019) also state that plurilingualism and translanguaging have different socio-political roots which contribute to many divergences in educational practices.

5. The present study

The current paper forms part of a larger study which focuses on bilingual teachers’ identities and the ways in which their backgrounds impact their perceptions and pedagogical practices. According to García (2009), “bilingual education is the only way to educate children in the twenty-first century” (p. 5). She advocates the development of “an integrated plural vision for bilingual education, by which bilingualism is not simply seen as two separate monolingual codes” (p. 5), for the benefit of children and adults worldwide. In this respect this study aimed to explore to what extent Maltese teachers share this vision and put it into practice.

The impetus for the study came about as a result of the researchers’ own interest in bilingual teachers’ philosophies and pedagogies, and in innovative fluid language practices such as García’s (2009) concept of *translanguaging* and *transglossia*, where different languages are not separated but interrelate dynamically within globalised, multilingual communities. The research questions to be addressed in the current study concern how Maltese primary teachers support bilingual and multilingual students within their classroom environments, together with their current practices and perceptions of using flexible language pedagogies such as translanguaging. Teachers’ voices can be empowering and emancipatory, as their insights are often the catalyst to effect changes to social policy and practice (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Hence, the main aim of this study is to shed more light on several lacunae in current translanguaging practices, as well as on educators’ viewpoints about Malta’s specific bilingual status and its educational system, in light of migration trends, and about the presence of additional languages in the classroom. These perspectives add significantly to our understanding of multilingual pedagogy, whilst having implications for the improvement of professional practice and for the design of professional development and initial teacher education programmes.

5.1. The participants

Data from eight primary school teachers, each with over ten years teaching experience were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per participant). Three teachers were chosen from state schools, another three from church schools, and two from private independent schools (of which there are fewer in Malta). Choosing state, church and private independent schools enabled the gathering of teachers’ perspectives as they might vary by school context, which differ significantly in Malta (Camilleri Grima, 2013a). The teachers also had diverse language and schooling backgrounds, in order to be able to compare patterns related to home and educational backgrounds. Participants also taught at different ends of the primary spectrum, i.e. early and junior years, to gain insight on how teaching methods and viewpoints may or may not vary depending on age group taught. Participants included seven females and one male teacher, a ratio that is representative of the gender imbalance within the teaching profession, where female teachers are largely over-represented in primary education in the EU (Eurostat, 2017). Ages ranged from late thirties to late fifties, and participants hailed from different parts of Malta, which also influenced their spoken language of preference. Despite diverse backgrounds and school contexts, the participants were nonetheless relatively homogeneous in that they were all experienced and all directly involved in the topic being researched (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Table 1 offers an overview of the teachers, each of whom has been given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

For the purpose of the current paper, key quotes were selected from the interviews and excerpts will be provided in the Results section (section 6) in order to highlight the perceptions and practices of the participants in the study.

Table 1
Participants' information

Participant	Age	Education	Teaching Experience	Year Group
Diana	37	BA, MA	Church school, 13 years	Early years (years 1 and 2)
Elaine	48	BA, MA	Church school, 13 years	Junior years (years 4, 5, and 6)
Jonathan	36	BA	State school, 12 years	Junior years (year 6)
Laura	43	BA	Various state schools, 11 years	Early years (year 2)
Liliana	59	BA	Private school, 24 years	Early years (years 1 and 2), year 3 for past 10 years
Mandy	40	BA, MA	Church school, 14 years	Early years (years 1 and 2); currently subject teaching (English) in junior school (year 6)
Maria	40	BA, MA	Private school, 16 years	Junior years (year 6)
Ingrid	42	BA, MA in progress	TEFL, 4 years; state school, 10 years	Junior years (year 4)

5.2. Methods

We used a narrative inquiry approach, through semi-structured life history interviews, which were analysed thematically, as this approach gave the participants the opportunity to relate the untold stories pertaining to their bilingual identities, which in turn affected their perceptions and pedagogical practices (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). The semi-structured interview comprised a set of 32 questions. The first part focused on the teachers' own identities and life histories, whilst the second part focused on their views on language pedagogies within bilingual and multilingual educational settings. Richness of the in-depth data was favoured over quantity or broadness, since the aim of the study was to gain insight into teachers' perspectives about language use, while learning about their teaching experiences that currently underpin their philosophy of education (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). In the words of Goodson (1981), "in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is" (p. 69).

Data were collected through semi-structured, one-to-one interviews, which were held over a period of six months. Each participant was interviewed twice with a break of several weeks in between interviews. Participants were made aware of the confidential nature of the interview. Despite being a small island, the information provided is generic enough to facilitate anonymity, and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was strictly adhered to when conducting this study. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Member checking allowed for a level of both validation and further engagement of participants with the study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were invited to read and comment on transcripts between and after each set of interviews. This verified that the researcher's interpretation of the participants' perspectives was truthful and accurate, and further facilitated clarification of any parts of the interview transcripts which were inaudible or unclear.

A thematic analysis approach was chosen in order to gain insight into the participants' personal and professional lives, as to better understand their views, their pedagogical practices and the motives preceding them. Collated data was organised according to similarities, differences and other issues and colour coded accordingly. Overlapping themes were reviewed and refined whilst emerging ones were divided into sub themes. The main themes emerging in view of the current paper included the demographic changes in Maltese classrooms, challenges experienced by teachers in view of rapidly shifting student populations, attitudes towards multilingual and multicultural classrooms, teacher training needs, language use in class and recommendations for change. For the purpose of the present paper, we focus only on data pertaining to participants' perceptions and pedagogical practices related to multilingual classrooms.

The four criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985)—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were pivotal during the design of this study in order to ensure that the results were both reliable and credible. Credibility was ensured through an honest and precise account of the participants' experiences, whilst transferability was achieved as findings may be applied within other similar educational contexts. Dependability was sought through member checking, and confirmability was attained through being fully aware of researcher's own biases, assumptions and beliefs which may taint the research process.

6. Results

All the educators teaching in state and private schools voiced their concerns about the ever-increasing number of foreign children in class. As Ingrid explains,

Excerpt 1. Ingrid - Number of foreign children in class

... the intake is changing. Every year we see a larger number of foreign children. We have children from Africa, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, Italy, the UK for example. Sometimes they are not even fluent in English and can just string a few phrases together ... it's not easy to teach these children.

Teachers in church schools also described facing this reality but somewhat to a lesser extent. This may be because children are enrolled in church schools through a ballot system, which is predominantly applied for by Maltese parents who wish to give their children a Catholic education. Asylum-seeking migrant children are generally educated in state schools by law. Children of foreign workers, who typically come from families with a higher socio-economic background, are usually enrolled in private schools. Diane, a church schoolteacher, explains that so far there are few foreign children being enrolled in church schools, and the majority of these children usually possess at least a basic knowledge of English. However, Diane feels that church schools do face similar issues to private and state schools when it comes to working with migrant children.

In the rest of our findings, we focus on four themes emerging from the data, which are particularly pertinent to the scope of this paper: Attitudes towards multilingualism, strategies used in class, training needs, and recommendations for policy and practice.

6.1. Attitudes towards multilingualism

All teachers had complex and interlaced views on the use of multiple languages in the classroom. Some of these views were based on personal as well as professional experience. For example, Liliana, the oldest participant at 59, appeared to be adamantly in favour of full immersion programmes in class, especially for the Maltese children. However, witnessing the shift from bilingual to multilingual classrooms, she felt that alternative pedagogies may nonetheless be appropriate for foreign students.

Excerpt 2. Liliana – Alternative pedagogies for foreign students

I'm not in favour of mixing languages ... my grandson is two years old. He goes to playschool. They speak to him in Maltese. My son speaks to him in Maltese and his mother in English. I can already see how mixed up he is in his language ... he tells me, "il-man qieghed fil-car" [the man is in the car] ... he's not really speaking in English or Maltese. It's the product of him being exposed to two languages. Foreigners are different. When they go home their parents are going to speak to them in their mother tongue. It makes more sense to use different languages with the foreigners in class.

Liliana's perception highlights both a desire to maintain distinct languages, whilst at the same time acknowledging related complexities, particularly for non-native speakers of either Maltese or English. For three participants, the maintenance of the Maltese language in and of itself was a genuine concern. Due to an increasing proportion of foreign children in class, there was a general feeling that this may eventually lead to the extinction of Maltese, as it would no longer be a necessary form of communication within an increasingly globalised society.

Below, another teacher, Maria refers to a situation in which half of the students have at least one parent who is foreign. The other half consists of Maltese children, many of whom consider English to be their L1 and are not proficient in Maltese.

Excerpt 3. Maria – the role of Maltese

I use in English at school and when I'm teaching, many times because of the number of foreigners we have, unfortunately I can only use Maltese during Maltese language lessons you know. . . Maltese is not given the importance it deserves. I mean, we expect them to learn through a one lesson a day slot and that's it. And unfortunately, some teachers will speak English to the children during a Maltese lesson trying to explain it in English because it's a grammar point they're trying to put across. . . children will learn a grammar point by rote but they're not really learning the language. They're not exposed.

Ingrid spoke of a time when the language used in class was mainly Maltese, except for the English lesson. This is now changing due to the greater proportion of English speakers,

Extract 4. Ingrid – the role of Maltese

...the policy seems to be changing. *Qisu* [it seems as though] English has become more important. In a way it worries me because I feel we may be losing our language... our identity.

Notwithstanding the participants' concerns related to the preservation of the Maltese language, they still mention the value of English as *lingua franca* and acknowledge that students in Malta are fortunate to be given to the opportunity to learn the language. These views reflect Malta's sociolinguistic situation of societal bilingualism without diglossia, where the two official languages are used in most domains and are viewed as equally important (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). As Jonathan put it, English allows students to travel and to study; "... they can become whatever they want. So many opportunities nowadays!"

6.2. Strategies used in class

One common concern amongst participants was that they feel unsure of the strategies they are employing in order to support their multicultural students. The word "guilty" was mentioned by different educators in relation to their code-switching or language mixing during lessons. This may be a legacy of past education programmes and policies such as the National Minimum Curriculum (1999), which advocated the strict separation of languages. This is in contrast with more positive views on plurilingual strategies such as those expressed in the National Literacy Strategy, which refers to code-switching as "an essential element of a bilingual country," as it promotes access to different languages and to a "wide and varied linguistic heritage" (National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta, 2014, pp. 28-29). Moreover, the Council of Europe promotes the concept of a plurilingual society, where individuals have competence in more than one language and can switch between languages, according to circumstances (Language Education Policy Profile for Malta, Language policy unit. Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2015).

Some teachers were in favour of language mixing during certain activities, such as brainstorming and discussion, if the end focus is on the target language. Elaine thought that her opinions on language mixing are changing over time in order to be in line with the requirements of today's classrooms, and she expressed this view:

Extract 5. Elaine – Language of instruction

it was understood... me included 'jigifier' [that is]... that total immersion in a language was the best way to learn it. Even I used to feel very strongly about this. But I'm not sure now. You see... based on my experience I have come to believe that it is okay to use one language to teach another... I think it is easier... for the student... and the teacher. Better understanding... less frustration.

Ingrid spoke of a time when she used to have a Maltese speaking and an English-speaking doll present in class during language lessons:

Extract 6. Ingrid – Code-switching while teaching

These dolls did not understand the other language *allura* [so] this meant that the children could not speak in the other language. So, I strongly believed in this and that's how I used to teach. Now I think the situation is changing. We need to adapt. I think switching between languages is not so harmful really if it helps the children understand better. I mean even for the foreigners ... thing is where do you draw the line then? Is this causing confusion?

Although Diana tried to use visuals as much as possible during language lessons, she did use code-switching or translating with children "who look at [her] blankly." She also mentioned using what she considered to be her third language in class when the need arose:

Extract 7. Diana – Using any language as a resource

Last year I had an Italian boy. They did not understand Maltese or English. I used to communicate with the parents in Italian. With the child I used to use Italian just to make him feel at ease. For example, when he walked in, I used to tell him “*buon giorno come stai oggi?*” [good morning how are you today?] but only so that he feels at ease and he settles down in class.

Elaine believed that when students are free to use their native language, this engages them academically, as “using their native language as a tool to learn a second language helps them learn more effectively”. She recalled her own schooling years when students were made to learn foreign languages through full immersion practices,

Extract 8. Elaine – When I was a student

. . . I found it extremely difficult to cope. Instead of trying to use the cues to learn it, I completely switched off when it came to that lesson. For me, it was as good as nothing... perhaps even worse, because I remember being very frustrated... not to mention that I barely learnt anything in three years!

Participants also reported drawing on digital literacy and technology in order to overcome language barriers. Jonathan was one of several participants highlighting the use of technology to mitigate communication problems in the classroom:

Extract 9. Jonathan – Multimodal communication

We use signs and pictures, visuals, Google translate... I think it’s easier nowadays with the Internet. I also ask the children themselves to help me. Children have this special gift of communication. They manage to communicate with each other in spite of the language barriers. It is amazing.

Ingrid stated that in a rapidly changing digital world teachers need to keep abreast with the latest developments and,

Extract 10. Ingrid – Digital literacy

work on ways to leverage [children’s] amazing technology skills. I mean digital literacy is very important today. Perhaps we are not channelling the children’s skills in the right direction. It’s not easy. Sometimes they know more than us. Plus, things are constantly changing. It’s difficult to keep up.

Maria also mentioned the use of technology, particularly the internet, in order to enable all children to access the curriculum. She also highlighted the need for teachers to be creative in order to meet their students’ diverse needs:

Extract 11. Maria – Non-verbal communication

You simplify instructions, you use the board, power points, you use pictures you know ... you try and use actions, there are times when you have to change if the book gives you verbs for example which are really difficult to conjugate I might change... instead of “to whatever...” I use “to drink” ... “to write”, where I can mime. Something that is more tangible for them.

The teachers interviewed displayed creativity and innovation in their strategies, sharing their unique perspective on multilingual development. The fact that, in such a historically multilingual context, teachers still felt uncertain about their teaching demonstrates the need for greater attention to teacher training in this context.

6.3. Training needs

The participants in this study demonstrated a willingness to implement the practices required within today’s rapidly changing sociocultural contexts. However, their responses held an element of uncertainty and they all voiced the need for further guidance. Diane strongly believed that teacher training and continuous development programmes do not adequately address teachers’ needs in the area of multilingual classrooms, and hence educators are often in a dilemma. She told us,

Extract 12. Diane – Code-switching while teaching

We were taught that if we used another language it was a huge mistake, we would confuse the children. That is the general perception, I think. As a teacher, I do allow it sometimes, but I do question it. I feel guilty. I ask myself is it ok? I think we need to be told that it is ok. Even for the new teachers following the course at university. We need to tell them that it is ok to use different languages sometimes to a certain extent. In practice if you think about it, it is what we really do. We do code-switch, although we do encourage the use of one language... it is instinctive to use both sometimes.

Laura also stated that she wished to learn more about innovative teaching methods before implementing them in class,

Extract 13. Laura – Innovative methods

I feel I do not know enough about these new methods. I follow what I feel is right ... I think the fact that more children are coming to school with different language backgrounds might require some changes really but I'm not quite sure what is allowed and what isn't ... what works and what doesn't. There are so many different opinions on this and things are constantly changing. We are told to do it one way then all of a sudden, we are told to scrap the whole idea and do something completely different. It's mind boggling.

Jonathan also felt that further training is necessary, especially in the realm of language use,

Extract 14. Jonathan - Additional training

I think that we should also be informed better about the benefits of these practices perhaps through CPD sessions. We were never taught about this at university ... anzi [on the contrary] we were always told never to mix languages

The teachers' uncertainty and struggles highlight the need for a more organised approach to continued professional development, ensuring that not only newly trained teachers gain adequate skills for working in multilingual settings, but that currently practising teachers can update their skills in line with global changes.

6.4. Participants' recommendations for policy and practice

All participating educators stated that Malta is currently undergoing a major paradigm shift in education, mainly as a result of the demographic changes on the island. They were all in agreement about how inadequate their own teacher training was in view of these challenges, and that they were "winging it" on many levels. They all felt that most of the experienced teachers in class were trained during a time when the demographic situation in Malta was very different, and that they were not being offered the right support or further training to meet the needs of students today. Moreover, they believed that initial teacher training programmes needed to be restructured in order to train future teachers appropriately in the area of multilingualism and multiculturalism, regardless of teachers' own backgrounds. Training programmes for both initial and experienced teachers need to be more culturally relevant in ways that reflect the sociocultural changes within our educational settings.

Participants mentioned different positive educational initiatives currently being introduced, such as the introduction of "Ethics" class as an alternative to "Religion" course, in order to embrace multi-ethnic Maltese classrooms. Together with the formation of the Migrant Learners' Unit within the Ministry of Education and Employment, these initiatives focus on promoting the inclusion of migrant learners. However, the teachers all felt that there should be more focus on programmes that value and celebrate diversity and more resources and adequate training, together with further local research on the subject. As Mandy put it, "we are still in the process of learning through trial and error, rather than solid research and empirical evidence."

Maria felt that human resources should be viewed as a priority and that language maintenance programmes should be offered in all schools in order to celebrate diversity and to protect heritage languages. Diana also shared this view, as differentiation requires teaching smaller groups, necessitating the need for more assistance in class. In this regard, Jonathan believed that parental involvement may also be one way to tap into the community as an invaluable human resource. Additionally, he advocated the employment of a more diverse teacher workforce in order to be in line with the rapidly shifting classroom demographics:

Extract 15. Jonathan – Heterogeneous workforce

I also think that we need more multilingual teachers ... native speakers ... this would help to include these children in this multicultural era. I mean, if we have children who are speaking different languages in class, it makes sense to have other people who can cater for their needs.

All participants felt the need to narrow down syllabi, to move away from the idea of standardized testing and to focus more on play-based activities, in order to foster a love of learning, especially in the primary years. Maria highlighted the importance of exposure and fostering positive attitudes towards language:

Extract 16. Maria - Exposure

A lot of it is about getting them to love the language... stories, singing etc. Grammar is boring. A lot of teachers think that because they're seeing blank faces they're not retaining. But they're being exposed... we need to apply grammar in context.

She also felt the need to move away from focusing on formal writing in the early years, saying "[we should] not focus on every word, every grammar point, every full stop, capital letter ... testing everything. Let them try to express themselves and write freely especially in the younger years."

Ingrid also thought that making the lessons interesting and play-based, especially within the primary sector, was fundamental. She highlighted the importance of teaching functional language use in order to prepare children for the future. Mandy echoed these views, stating that providing children with more opportunities to apply concepts is imperative, "...to actually provide children with an education that would be practical, where they can actually put the language into use."

Diana believed that the system needs to prioritise differentiation methods which are in line with the diverse student population of today's classrooms:

Extract 17. Diana- Differentiation methods

We need more resources. We need less content. You set limits and standards yes ... but not grouped by age. Everyone gets there in their own time. Within say these 10 years the children need to get to this... they need to master such and such skills but over a span of time. Each child at their own pace.

She felt that teachers need to be given more opportunities to target different needs within diverse classrooms, and that compressed and rigid syllabi do not lend themselves to differentiated teaching. She explained that language teaching needs to be restructured according to level:

Extract 18. Diana- Differentiation methods

If you have a child who is very fluent in English and you keep on teaching her the same things. . . If you have a Maltese speaking student, you need to start from the basics. So even though the children have the same age they are at completely different levels.

Jonathan voiced his concerns about a language policy that encourages bilingual practice, but which is not always viable due to the growing number of foreign students in school:

Extract 19. Jonathan – Bilingual practice

. . . this is so difficult to do with children who can only speak their own language. We tend to use a lot of visuals and resources and signing with these children. But it's very spontaneous. Some of these children have so many difficulties.

Jonathan mentioned the recently established Migrant Learners' Unit, within the Ministry of Education and Employment, which seeks to promote the inclusion of newly arrived learners into the education system, while focusing on the acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural competences. While Jonathan felt that this was a positive initiative, he also thought that it operated on a deficit model and does not truly celebrate linguistic diversity. These concerns are mirrored across Europe, where multiple levels of integration for newly arrived learners exist, ranging from full initial separation, to partial separation, to immediate, full integration into all mainstream classes (European Commission, 2019). Each of these models highlights issues

linked not only to language acquisition, but also to integration, with students separated from their peers sometimes struggling to access the main curriculum, if too much emphasis is placed on language acquisition above content acquisition (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016).

7. Conclusions, pedagogical implications, and limitations

Due to its strategic position, Malta was immersed in a variety of languages as part of its historical legacy. Most Maltese teachers are hence naturally adept at and open to hybridising languages, as it is a part of their history and a natural way of communicating (Panzavecchia, in preparation). Sciriha (2001) states that multilingualism and multiculturalism are natural to the Maltese and that, “what is essentially ‘natural’ for the Maltese themselves is very surprising to visitors who, as soon as they land in Malta, immediately perceive the multicultural component to life in Malta” (pp. 36 – 37).

As in many other bilingual societies, code-switching is common practice within Maltese classrooms and Maltese teachers already engage in natural translanguaging practices to support Maltese-born bilingual students who are less proficient in one of the two official languages. Moreover, many Maltese teachers are proficient in at least one other foreign language apart from their two official languages, and thus find themselves naturally shifting between two or more languages daily.

Multilingual classrooms are on the increase on the island, and therefore Maltese children are now being exposed to several different languages, other than English and Maltese. This is enriching on many levels as educational settings which value multilingualism have been proven to improve children’s self-esteem, encourage the integration of migrant students, shape cultural identities and empower all children to reach their full potential. Children whose home languages are not valued and supported are found to be disadvantaged both socially and academically (OECD, 2012). The situation thus clearly necessitates more fluid and flexible linguistic practices, such as García’s (2009) concept of *transglossia*, which focuses on the way different languages interrelate within a globalised society. Paradoxically, Maltese educators still feel unsure about how, when and if they should utilise this as a pedagogical strategy. In this regard, the participants in this study all expressed the need to be given more formal guidelines on how to deal with their increasingly multilingual and multicultural classrooms, and how to further explore their spontaneous and naturally occurring translanguaging practices, in order to reach out to migrant students who are struggling with the country’s two official languages. They also felt the need for more research in the area in order to support the development of initial teacher education programmes and specialised training sessions for established teachers.

The participants also advocated for more emphasis on preserving the Maltese language within an ever-increasing multilingual community. Moreover, there is a need for further investment in language maintenance programmes, mother-tongue instruction and culturally inclusive and multicultural curricula for immigrant students, so that every child’s linguistic identity would be valued and celebrated. The educators in this study also recognised the need for more human resources which would enable these ideas to be put into practice, together with more focus on parental involvement, which may prove to be an interesting way in which to value and celebrate migrant children’s diverse identities through capitalising on families as valuable resources. The participants also felt a need for revising course syllabi, and for educational settings to offer a more play-based, fun approach in order to foster positive attitudes towards language learning. They felt that in mainstream schools, curricula, and school syllabi do not adequately reflect the urgent need to support a diverse student population.

Malta serves as an example of a global trend, with countries becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multilingual. The need for a paradigm shift in education is becoming more pressing. It is thus imperative that educational institutions support today’s diverse students through viewing linguistic and cultural diversity as an enrichment rather than a deficit. Although Maltese educators are naturally predisposed to making use of two or more languages in their personal and professional lives, they still feel they need to be provided with formal guidelines and training programmes which could support and further explore these practices. This could be the catalyst required for changes within educational systems which would meet the challenges of today’s diverse schools.

Although there is a vast body of research dedicated to multilingual classrooms and, more recently, to translanguaging practices, there seems to be a gap in literature concerning language teachers’ perspectives and thoughts about language pedagogy, which we aim to bridge within the limitations of our study. The overall findings of this inquiry offer valuable insights into teachers’ views on language practice within multilingual classrooms, however, due to time constraints and the restricted sample size of our participants,

the conclusions drawn from this study are not representative of all Maltese teachers. The unique views and professional practice of the participants in this study may, however, be used as a resource for further studies and to make suggestions for future practice. A more comprehensive perspective and further research on translanguaging, both in the Maltese context and beyond, would provide further insights into multilingual practices in educational settings.

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Motivating self and others through a whole-school storytelling project: Authentic language & literacy development

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ABSTRACT

EN This study reports on a whole-school project carried out with preschool and primary children, taking a whole-language approach to literacy development, through a storytelling methodology which uses authentic picturebooks and peer modelling. This article presents the results of an exploratory mixed methods study conducted over a three-year period with the older (10-12-year-old) participants in the project (N=27). Within an action research framework, data was collected from field notes of classroom observations, video recorded sessions, questionnaires and interviews with students and teachers. The study aims to assess the motivational effect of the storytelling project on learners, identify the learning outcomes generated and identify strategies that were particularly effective in generating such outcomes. Through a process-oriented approach, the findings verify the motivational effect of the storytelling project. These findings also help bridge the gap between theory and practice in motivational research and contribute to the growing body of literature on the use of authentic picturebooks in the L2 classroom and the potential benefits of peer modelling.

Key words: STORYTELLING WITH PICTUREBOOKS, PEER MODELLING, READING, AUTHENTICITY, EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING, PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY

ES Este estudio presenta un proyecto *whole-school* implementado con alumnado de educación infantil y primaria. El proyecto, basado en un enfoque de lenguaje integral, emplea una metodología *storytelling* con álbumes ilustrados auténticos y un uso estratégico de modelaje por pares. Este artículo expone los resultados de un estudio de métodos mixtos realizado con los/las participantes más mayores (10-12 años, N = 27) durante un periodo de tres años. En el marco de la investigación-acción, los datos recopilados provienen de observaciones y grabaciones en el aula, cuestionarios y entrevistas con estudiantes y docentes. El estudio evalúa el efecto motivador del proyecto e identifica los resultados del aprendizaje y las estrategias que han demostrado ser eficaces en la producción de estos resultados. Desde un enfoque orientado al proceso, los hallazgos verifican el efecto motivador en el alumnado. Estos resultados ayudan a reducir la distancia entre la teoría y la práctica en la investigación motivacional, a la vez que contribuyen a la literatura sobre el uso de álbumes ilustrados auténticos en la clase de L2 y los beneficios del modelaje por pares.

Palabras clave: STORYTELLING CON ÁLBUMES ILUSTRADOS; MODELAJE POR PARES; LECTURA; AUTENTICIDAD; APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS EN EDADES TEMPRANAS; EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL Y PRIMARIA

IT Questo studio presenta un progetto che ha coinvolto un'intera scuola e i bambini della scuola dell'infanzia e della scuola primaria. Il progetto si basa sia sull'approccio *whole language* per lo sviluppo dell'alfabetizzazione attraverso la metodologia dello *storytelling* con l'uso di libri illustrati autentici e del *peer modelling*. Questo articolo presenta i risultati di una ricerca condotta con metodi misti che ha coinvolto i bambini più grandi (10-12 anni, N = 27) nell'arco di tre anni. Nel quadro della ricerca-azione, ho raccolto dati scaturiti da osservazioni in classe e sessioni videoregistrate, questionari e interviste con studenti e insegnanti. L'obiettivo dello studio è valutare l'effetto motivazionale del progetto di *storytelling* sui discenti, individuare i risultati di apprendimento e le strategie rivelatesi efficaci nel produrre tali risultati. Attraverso un approccio orientato al processo, i risultati verificano l'effetto motivazionale dello *storytelling* e uniscono la teoria e la pratica nella ricerca motivazionale contribuendo alla letteratura sull'uso di libri illustrati autentici nelle classi di L2 e i potenziali benefici del *peer modelling*.

Parole chiave: STORYTELLING CON LIBRI ILLUSTRATI, PEER MODELLING, LETTURA, AUTENTICITÀ, APPRENDIMENTO PRECOCE DELLA LINGUA STRANIERA, SCUOLA DELL'INFANZIA E SCUOLA PRIMARIA.

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1. Introduction

Within a whole language approach to literacy development (Galda, Liang, & Cullinan, 2016; Martinez & McGee, 2000), reading is not regarded as a separate skill to be developed once the basics of the language have been acquired; instead, it is conceived as a critical part of the language learning process itself. Furthermore, and from a socio-constructivist approach to learning, this process is an active undertaking in which we learn language by using it (Bruner, 1983) in interactive experiences involving social and collaborative exchanges with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Authentic children's literature can provide a rich starting point for interactive storytelling sessions by engaging children's interest on the one hand and encouraging emerging literacy skills on the other (Brand, 2006; Campbell, 2001; Martinez & McGee, 2000).

This paper reports on a whole-school project that connected literacy development with foreign language learning by aligning L3 learning with strategies already found to be effective in promoting learning and development in L1 and L2. The project was implemented in a rural preschool/primary school in Catalonia where Catalan is the main language of instruction (L1) and Spanish is learned as an L2. While actual usage and knowledge of these two languages depends on the home environment of each student, the school context provides students with an education that aims to develop competence in both languages (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2015b, 2016). In addition, and in line with curricular guidelines, students begin to learn English as a foreign language, referred to here as L3 (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2015a).

Consistent with regular practice in the region, children in the preschool programme (ages 3-5) have their own annex within the school compound. This enables teachers from different educational stages to maintain close contact and coordinate activities bringing children from preschool and primary education (6-12 years old) together. Capitalizing on this situation, the school places considerable emphasis on peer-to-peer work and coordinated activities in which older children become role models for their younger peers. The primary school's L1/L2 literacy programme includes regular activities in which older children read stories to their peers, including students from the lower years of primary and the younger children in the preschool. This established practice has generated positive results for the school, particularly in promoting the following learning outcomes: positive attitudes toward reading, effective oral communication skills, and interpersonal and intrapersonal competence. These results support the theoretical arguments advanced in favour of using peer modelling in education, particularly seeing as it stimulates positive self-efficacy beliefs (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1977). On such accounts, observing peers carrying out what is perceived to be a challenging task encourages learners to believe that they will also be able to achieve similar goals in the future. Given the consistently positive results obtained using peer modelling strategies in L1/L2 literacy development, the school decided to implement a new project replicating some of the aspects of the peer-to-peer reading programme, while adapting it to the challenges of introducing an L3 (i.e., English), as explained in the first sub-section (Context) of the Methodology described below.

In the first instance, the project aimed to generate similar outcomes to those resulting from the L1/L2 programme (i.e., positive attitudes to reading, effective oral communication skills, and interpersonal & intrapersonal competence), while also aiming to promote positive attitudes toward the foreign language. I carried out an initial study focusing on the attitudinal aspect of the programme. Within a qualitative framework, the study explored the effect of the project on the students' emerging self-concepts as foreign language learners and assessed changes in self-efficacy beliefs prior to and after completion of the project (Waddington, 2019). Results from this previous study highlighted the way in which debilitating learner attributions often impeded the emergence of positive foreign language self-concepts. Three main explanations for low self-efficacy levels emerged: perceived weaknesses in communication skills/comprehensibility, anxieties about pronunciation/accent and identity-related issues/competing languages. Results showed significant increases in self-efficacy beliefs after project implementation and more positive attitudes toward foreign language learning. These initial results encouraged the school to continue with the project and to include it as a permanent feature of their language and literacy programme.

The study presented in this paper aims to build on the findings of the previous study by focusing on the effects of the whole-school and whole language literacy programme on learners. Specifically, and as discussed in detail in the Methodology section, the study aimed to:

- assess the motivational effect of the reading project on learners,
- identify the learning outcomes generated, and
- identify strategies observed to be particularly effective in generating the observed outcomes.

2. Theoretical perspectives and literature review

2.1. Language and literacy development

Considering the development of reading as part of a student's global development presents challenges that go well beyond language, as emphasised by Gail Ellis (2010) in a paper that focused on lower secondary school students (ages 11-14). The main challenges Ellis highlights are: the mixed levels of language skills and knowledge, which can vary considerably within a group; the maintenance of learner motivation over extended periods of time; the selection of age-appropriate, but linguistically accessible material, and students' role in selecting such material; the development of effective reading strategies; the cultivation of positive attitudes and self-confidence; and the development of active citizens. In relation to this latter point, Ellis also places considerable emphasis on the need to build 'communities of readers' and to create opportunities for students to share their reading experiences with each other. Summing up the challenges presented, two principle lines of action emerge:

- selecting appropriate and motivating reading material, and
- providing ideal motivational conditions while developing learning strategies.

2.2. Motivation

The question of motivation and the development of effective learning strategies is particularly relevant to the focus of this present study. Influenced by behaviourist approaches, early theories of motivation in education tended to emphasise the transitive nature of learning, understanding the teacher's role as that of a motivator and key agent responsible for stimulating student learning (Williams, Mercer, & Ryan, 2016). Increasing attention to the learner's central role in the learning process and to the need to increase learner participation and autonomy from early ages (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015) has led to the emergence of more situated and complex approaches to motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), focusing more on the learner, and suggesting that the mere application of external stimuli is not enough. Despite theoretical advances in this field, several authors have highlighted the gap between theory and practice (Lasagabaster, Doiz, & Sierra, 2016; Ryan, 2016; Waddington, 2018). In particular, they suggest that comprehensible guides are needed to support teachers as they endeavour to appropriately and effectively incorporate motivational strategies within their practice, in a way that places the learner at the centre of the process. It is with this practical focus in mind that Ellis (2010) presents Dörnyei's process-oriented approach to motivation (Dörnyei, 2001) as an effective organisational tool for her own study on motivating secondary school students to read. The approach helps identify strategies corresponding to different components of a holistic and learner-based model of motivation: 1) creating basic motivational conditions, 2) generating initial motivation, 3) maintaining and protecting motivation, and 4) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. For Dörnyei (2001), successful language teaching practice must pay attention to *all* components, including the development of effective strategies to address the different components and subcomponents of the model. Nevertheless, a recent study exploring how primary school teachers understand and implement motivational strategies in the foreign language classroom shows a different picture (Waddington, 2018): the majority of strategies reported correspond to the third category of *maintaining and protecting motivation*, with the emphasis being on the resources used and their presentation by the teacher as strategies to *break the monotony of classroom events* or *increase the attractiveness of tasks*. Although participants in the study (primary school teachers) make some references to strategies related to *creating the basic motivational conditions* and *generating initial motivation*, these are exceptional and generally under-developed. Finally, while teachers demonstrated high awareness of the need to encourage students and keep them motivated, no specific examples were reported of strategies used to *encourage positive self-evaluation*. The findings therefore confirm the thesis advanced by previous authors that work is needed to develop more holistic approaches to motivation and to close the gap between theory and practice. The findings also reveal an over-emphasis on attractive resources and a generalised view that *having fun* equates with being motivated. Although fun and enjoyment clearly have their place in learning—especially early learning—they need to be situated and understood within an approach that attends to all aspects of learning, as highlighted by Diana England (2017) in a recent newsletter calling for a more critical approach to 'having fun' in young learner ELT.

2.3. Authentic reading material: picture books

Regarding the selection of appropriate and motivating reading material, like other authors discussed in more detail below, Ellis (2010) advocates the use of authentic material to bridge the gap between pupils moving: from primary to secondary, from storytelling (listening) to independent reading and increased reader involvement, from reading to learn English and reading in English for pleasure, from teacher-led or controlled work to pupil led work, from teacher-selected books to pupil-selected books and reading choices, among other transitions. In this particular case (i.e., with a lower secondary school focus), *authentic* denotes material designed primarily for literary as opposed to language learning purposes and includes, but is not limited to, novels, joke books, storybooks and factual books. In the primary and pre-primary school context, authentic reading material is often associated with the use of picture books, a genre that is gaining increasing acceptance despite initial resistance prompted by the common assumption that such books are for babies and toddlers and in spite of the scarce attention given to picture book scholarship (Mourão, 2017). As in the previous secondary school case, the term *authentic* when used in relation to picturebooks denotes the prioritising of artistic/literary criteria and highlights the fact that the material has not been created or abridged in any way for language learning/teaching. The significance of this point lies not only in the distinction that can be found between controlled or graded language and ungraded or *real* language use. Instead, and as discussed at length by Mourão (2016), the significance lies in the authentic language *use* that such material generates.

Overall, picturebooks are not *just* authentic texts because of the words they contain, for they enable language use through the learners' interpretation of the pictures, words *and* design, as these elements come together to produce a visual-verbal narrative which is disregarded when there is a focus on the words only. (p. 30)

It is, then, the learners' interpretation of the combined visual-verbal narrative and the language use that this prompts that is particularly significant in the language learning process, as discussed by Sipe (1998) in a semiotic analysis of what happens internally when the reader/listener interacts with the visual-verbal narrative. On this account, and within the classroom setting, the picture book provides the context and springboard for the generation of meaningful language work in which the focus is placed on meaning rather than language, and the aim is to expand children's listening comprehension skills and oral expression (Fleta, 2019). This focus is closely aligned with *whole language* approaches to literacy development in L1 referred to earlier (Galda et al., 2016; Martinez & McGee, 2000), which promote the use of authentic literature (including picturebooks) and the integration of reading and writing across the curriculum. Extending this argument further, other studies emphasise the positive relation between interactive storytelling sessions—with children as actively engaged listeners—and emerging literacy skills (Brand, 2006; Campbell, 2001; Martinez & McGee, 2000).

In the context of second language learning, many authors regard storytelling and picturebooks as much more than one of the multitude of activities and resources available to the language teacher. Instead, and in marked contrast, they consider the storytelling process enacted with the support of picturebooks as the keystone that enables and encourages natural language acquisition (Cameron, 2001; Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Goshn, 2013). As a result, a growing body of scholarly research has emerged to provide theoretical foundations to justify the implementation of storytelling-based pedagogical approaches (Fleta 2015, 2019; Mourão, 2012, 2016, 2017), and to provide teachers and early years practitioners with guidelines and practical ideas for implementing such an approach (Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Goshn, 2013; Jalongo, 2004, 2008), or for supplementing cross-curricular activities (Nespeca & Reeve, 2003). In all the research consulted, emphasis is placed on the learner as active agent in a shared, interactive process. While the importance of this shared role is highlighted, nevertheless, in most cases, the interactions are conceived and designed to be teacher-led, with an emphasis on the benefits generated in terms of learner comprehension and natural language acquisition (Fleta, 2019) and on other more specific skills such as active listening (Jalongo, 2008).

2.4. Peer modelling

The study presented in this paper considers the learning outcomes generated when learners take on the teacher's role and become the leaders of the storytelling process with the guidance and support of their teachers. In this sense, the study aims to contribute towards research carried out on the effects of peer

modelling by considering the effects on the learner who takes on the role of model, and the learner who observes.

Although scarce literature is available discussing the benefits of peer modelling with younger learners, studies with older learners (i.e., university students) suggest that such techniques encourage more participation (Mennim, 2017) and engagement (Brown, Iyobe, & Riley, 2013) in the learning process, while also helping to increase motivation and authentic communication among students (Assinder, 1991). On a more cautionary note, results of a study inspired by Assinder’s (1991) earlier findings report fewer positive outcomes and warn against regarding methods as universally applicable panaceas (Spratt & Leug, 2000).

Taking into account the different theoretical perspectives presented, the study carried out aims to contribute to the different lines of research outlined above, linking motivational theories on language and literacy development with the use of authentic children’s literature (focusing on picturebooks) as well as the strategic deployment of peer modelling in the language classroom.

3. Methodology

3.1. Context

The storytelling programme was designed in a way that included the whole school, with involvement varying depending on the educational stage. Figure 1 provides a brief summary of the activities carried out within the project, as well as a short description of the general aims at this educational stage according to curricular standards (Departament d’Ensenyament, 2015b, 2016).

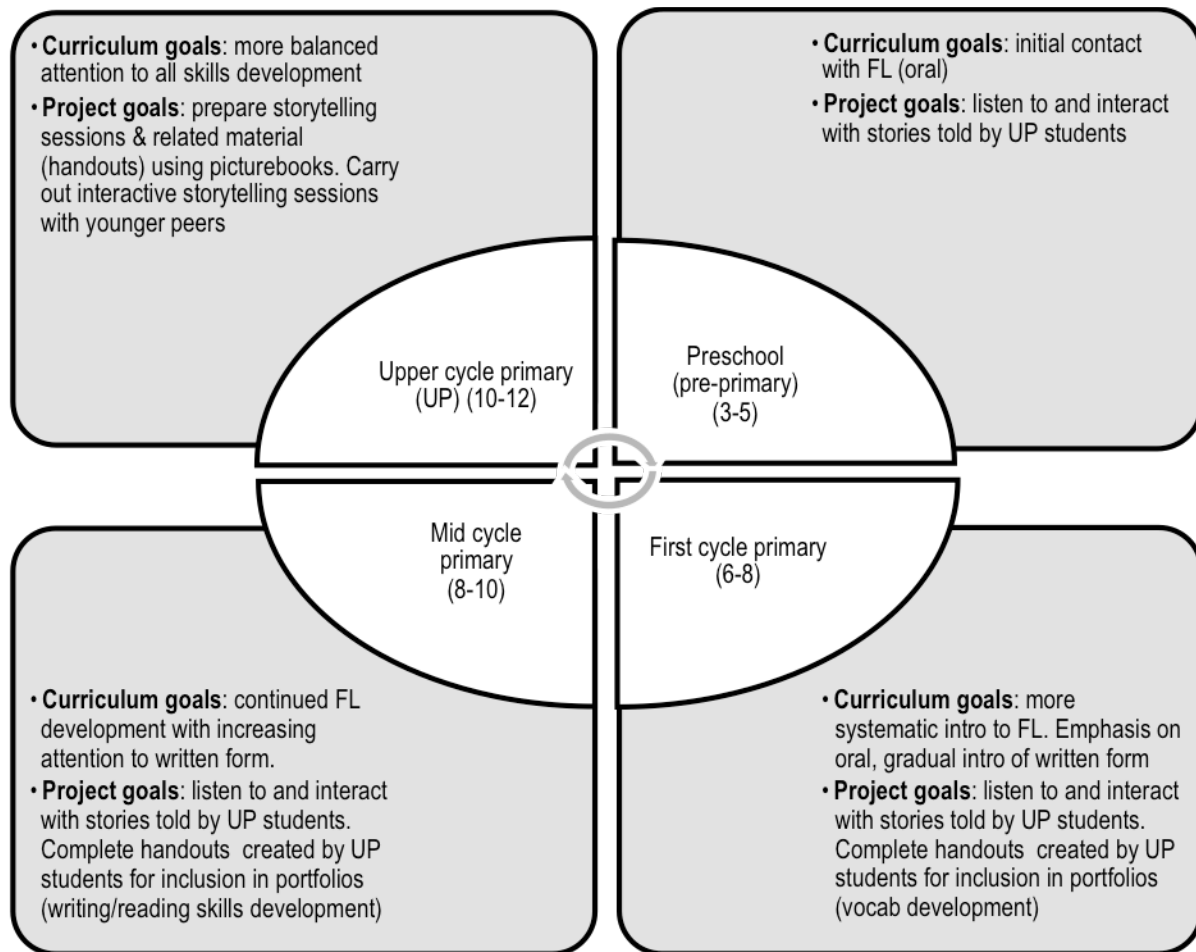


Figure 1. Stages of cyclical storytelling project

As we can observe in Figure 1, the role of the children in preschool, first cycle and mid-cycle of primary school was to listen and interact with stories told by upper cycle (UP) students using picturebooks in the foreign language (FL) they are learning. These storytelling sessions were delivered during the third term of the year during their regular English class time: on some days, instead of their usual class, they received a visit from UP students (in pairs or groups of 3) who had planned a session according to the routine presented in Figure 2.

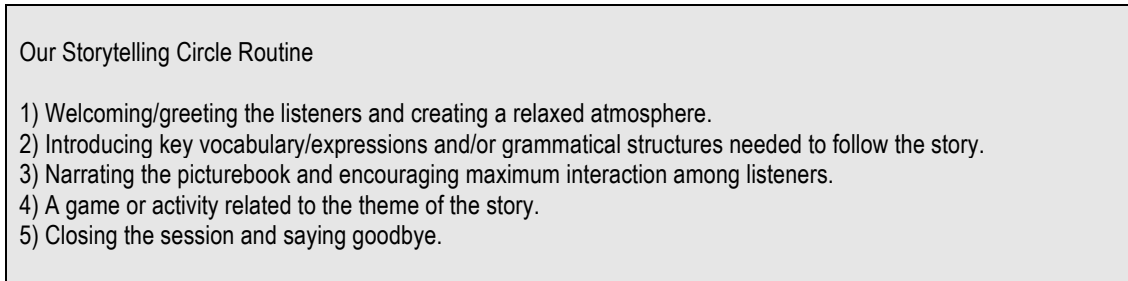


Figure 2. Different phases of storytelling routine. Author's own design (see Waddington 2017)

The preparation of these sessions was carried out during the first two terms of the year, with one of the two 1-hour English classes per week dedicated to the storytelling project. The content of these sessions grew out of initial picturebook selection, narrative comprehension (Paris & Paris, 2003) and text comprehension, and was followed by preparation of a storytelling session and the creation of related materials. For the preparation stage, all groups followed the same routine indicated in Figure 2. While students were familiar with the routine from volunteer storytelling sessions, a video recorded session was used to model each phase and to provide students with an understanding of each step of the procedure. The teacher's role was to organise and facilitate these sessions so as to maximise English-speaking time (while allowing for L1 usage when appropriate), provide support and guidance in response to student needs, and ensure that they progressed through each stage of the process. Details of how this unfolded in practice are provided in the Findings section.

3.2. Method

An exploratory mixed-methods study was conducted over a three-year period within an action-research framework. The researcher and author of this paper worked closely with the school during the implementation stage of the project. In this collaborative role, I attended regular meetings with the teachers and was also invited to participate in different class sessions during the three-year period. I attended both meetings and classes in the role of participant observer, where participant observation is "the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities" (Kawulich, 2005, p. 2). A relation of mutual trust had already been built with the school through the researcher's previous role as volunteer storyteller and collaborator at the school. As a result, my participation was viewed as natural and appropriate within this context by teachers and students alike. My role as observer was made explicit in different ways: initially, by providing information about the study aims and obtaining informed consent from teaching staff and families of participating students, and later by extending this information to all members of the educational community. In these informational sessions with students, I explained my university work and clarified that I would observe their activities and record information relevant to the study. Following recommendations for conducting participant research in an ethical manner, I regularly wrote field notes publicly (writing *in situ*) to remind participants of my research and data collection purposes (DeWalt & DeWalt, 1998). This form of close observation has been recognised as particularly beneficial in terms of identifying non-verbal forms of expressions and discovering how participants communicate with each other (Schmuck, 1997), and for developing a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). This direct method of data collection was also supplemented with other techniques, which are explained in the data collection and analysis sections below.

3.3. Participants

The study takes as its core sample of analysis the children enrolled in the upper cycle (grades 5 and 6) of primary education, while considering the whole-school context and teacher perspectives. As a low-population rural school, class sizes tend to be small. Nevertheless, collecting data over a 3-year period helped increase the analysis sample to a total of 27 participants, comprising three heterogeneous class groups, as shown in Table 1 below. The numbers in the table constitute the full class sizes, since all children and parents agreed to participate in the study.

Table 1.
Profile of study participants

Group	Females	Males	Age	Observations
G1	5	8	10-12*	Participants during their final year of primary education. All students ages 11-12 except 1 high-ability child (age 10) moved up a grade in the middle of primary schooling. Highly heterogeneous group, some students with learning and behavioural difficulties.
G2	4	2	10-11 11-12	Participants during two consecutive years (5 th & 6 th grade of primary). Mixed academic abilities but cohesive group.
G3	1	7	10-11	Participants while still in grade 5. Mixed abilities but mainly cohesive group.
Total	10	17		

Note: Students are identified within the study according to Group + letter assigned to each student: e.g., G1a refers to the first student (from a randomly ordered list) from Group 1.

3.4. Research Phases

3.4.1. Field work/data collection

Data were collected at key moments during the project implementation from both teacher meetings and class sessions. In terms of the former, field notes were taken at the regular meetings scheduled to discuss the implementation of the different stages of the programme, to discuss progress made and difficulties encountered, and to share in the final assessments of the programme at the end of each school year. Final assessments identified strengths and weaknesses and key areas for improvement. With regard to classroom observations, I attended initial sessions in which students were introduced to the programme, classes during which students worked on the preparation of their storytelling sessions, sessions during which they delivered their storytelling sessions to younger learners, and final classes during which they carried out co-assessment and self-assessment activities. In addition to the field notes taken at all of these sessions, audio and video recordings were made of some sessions to supplement the field notes taken and to provide more data for subsequent analysis. Most of the data recorded mixed L1 and L2 usage, reflecting the flexible attitude toward language use adopted during the classroom sessions, and coinciding with recent theories supporting the need for such flexibility in foreign language classrooms (Durán & Henderson, 2018). Transcriptions were made of these recordings to facilitate the subsequent data analysis process, and the fragments in need of translation into English were reviewed by a professional translator. Finally, data from a questionnaire administered to students in class at the end of the programme (after the assessment activities) were also collected, along with the oral comments that students made during follow-up discussions held in class. The ad hoc questionnaire included questions aimed at identifying student perceptions of their strengths and areas of improvement during the preparation sessions and during the actual delivery of their storytelling session. It also asked them to consider whether they thought the listeners had enjoyed the experience or not, how this made them feel and whether they would like to repeat the experience.

3.4.2. Data analysis

The data collected was subjected to a process of analysis, reflection and evaluation within an interpretative paradigm drawing on 'grounded theory' and using the constant comparison method developed by Corbin and Straus (2008). In light of the threefold aim of the study, the initial focus of analysis concentrated on assessing the programme's overall motivational effect on participants. Data from teacher meetings were analysed to obtain a global sense of the programme from the teachers' perspective. This overall picture was further informed by the analysis of student responses to the post-intervention questionnaire and comments from follow-up discussions, with responses to the final question being subjected to particularly close analysis. This two-part question presented students with a dichotomous "yes or no"

choice in response to the question “Would you like to tell more stories in English?” After choosing from the two options, students were then asked to explain this choice in response to the open-ended question (“Why?”). Analyses of student responses to this question thus provided indicators of a quantitative as well as qualitative nature, which were further supported by the oral data obtained in the follow-up discussions. A Framework approach was then employed, characterised by the intention to maintain a close link with the raw data, while developing a thematic analysis in prioritising the research questions (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton, & Ormston, 2013). In the first instance, the raw data were understood to be all data that could help assess the motivational effect of the programme. All such data were thus extracted and grouped together, following an open coding procedure (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to help break down, compare, conceptualise and categorise the data in line with the primary goals of the study. By way of example, some initial codes that helped to organise the data included: *helping others* (to capture cases in which students reported that helping their younger peers motivated them to make an effort, or in which teachers reported on the effects of seeing students help each other); *making individual choices* (when students or teachers explicitly referred to being given choices and what this meant to them); and *devising motivational strategies* (when students or teachers explained actions taken to engage and maintain the interest and participation of listeners). This coding process was conducted manually and then subjected to a process of validation to ensure reliability. Two external experts in the area of childhood language education were asked to review the codes. Their feedback helped to validate the process on the one hand, while also providing constructive criticism, which was incorporated into the final stage during which the codes were further organised by adding more options, merging options, and gradually transforming the raw data into more useful data, as described below.

3.4.3. Presentation of findings

Ultimately, in the final stage of analysis, I adopted Ellis’ (2010) approach in her study on motivating secondary school students to read, which entails organising and presenting the data analysed according to the four components of Dörnyei’s process-oriented approach to motivation (2001). The four components presented the findings in a cohesive and organised manner, while attending to the main study goal of assessing the motivational effect of the reading project on learners. Thus, after presenting the overall picture obtained from the initial analysis (see overview), the useful data obtained from the constant comparison method were organised under the categories of: 1) creating the basic motivational conditions, 2) generating initial motivation, 3) maintaining and protecting motivation and 4) encouraging positive, retrospective self-evaluation. After presenting these findings, the Discussion section attends to the two remaining study aims by identifying and discussing the learning outcomes as well as the specific strategies that effectively produced them. When presenting the findings, all comments have been anonymised using the coding system explained in Table 1. Furthermore, and due to the disproportionate gender distribution in some groups, all references to individual student comments are made using feminine pronouns in order to maintain full anonymity.

4. Findings

4.1. Overview

The mixed method of data collection and analysis contributed to an overall picture, allowing for cross-checking between teacher and student perspectives. From the teacher perspective, analyses of data collected from the regular meetings show that teachers report considerable differences in student motivation levels prior to and following the implementation of the project. The school’s decision to continue with the project and to incorporate it as a permanent feature of their language and literacy programme was made in view of its perceived motivational effect on learners and the positive outcomes generated. From the student perspective, data collected showed a general consensus in line with the teachers’ perception, as illustrated in the following analyses. In the first year of implementation, during the final class session, one student expressed her disappointment that the project had not been implemented previously, since this meant that her group (grade 6) had only been able to take part in the experience once, unlike their grade 5 peers who would be repeating it the following year: “*it’s not fair, they’ll get to do it again*” (G1a). This disappointment was shared by other students, suggesting that the experience had built positive attitudes toward this kind of language and literacy work, and had overcome the challenges described by Ellis (2010) (i.e., the selection of motivating reading material and the provision of ideal motivational conditions for the development of communities of readers). These findings are further supported by analyses of the post-intervention questionnaires, in which nearly all students reported that they would like to prepare/tell more stories

following the storytelling circle routine. This contrasted sharply with responses to pre-intervention questionnaires in which most students had expressed clear reservations about their ability to complete such a task (see Waddington, 2019). When analysing the reasons for students' willingness to repeat the experience, we found explanations that provide an initial picture of their overall impression of the value of the experience (see Table 2). The reasons cited by participants included:

- "Because it was good fun and I enjoyed it."
- "Because it's a really good way to learn English."
- "Because I like telling stories to the little ones."
- "Because I like speaking English."
- "Because it's been enjoyable."
- "It's a good way to improve your English."
- "I like to teach English to others by telling them a good story."
- "Because I like learning by explaining things to my classmates."

The terms *fun* and *enjoyable* appear repeatedly during the analysis. Nevertheless, and as advocated by England (2017), the use of these terms seems to be situated within a critical approach to having fun, which conceives enjoyment as a stimulus to learning as opposed to a substitute for learning. Thus, in addition to regarding the experience as fun and enjoyable, learners also made repeated references to the way in which the process had helped them learn more English, emphasising the role that their peers have played in this interactive learning process. Comments such as the one cited above (e.g., "I like learning by explaining things to my classmates") indicate that peer modelling has a two-way effect: generating positive outcomes for the learner modelling as well as the learners being modelled to. For the learner modelling, these positive outcomes are not only detected during the peer modelling activity, while telling the story to peers, but also during the preparation stage as described in more detail below. The findings confirm that having a specific audience (i.e., younger peers) and purpose (i.e., to tell the story well) in mind increases learner participation and engagement in the task set, as suggested by previous studies on the benefits of peer modelling (Mennim, 2017; Brown et al., 2013).

Despite the overall positive effects reported, a small minority of students expressed negative evaluations of the project. Further analysis helped to explain why some students expressed an unwillingness to repeat the experience. In one case, the explanation related to the student's lack of interest and engagement in school life in general. In other cases, analyses revealed that some students found the excessive amount of time spent on the project (one, or part of one, of their two 1-hour English classes every week for the first two terms) to be a negative factor, thereby illustrating one of the challenges highlighted by Ellis (2010) concerning the difficulties of motivating children over extended periods of time. The fact that this finding was detected during the early stages of implementation—at the end of the first year—meant that efforts could be made to adjust the pace of the programme during subsequent years. Finally, in contrast to the majority of students whose participation and engagement increased as a direct result of the peer modelling context, a small minority found the activity 'too hard' and appeared demotivated by the experience. This supports the findings of Spratt and Leug (2000), who warn against regarding methods as universally applicable panaceas. The finding also highlights the need to exercise caution when introducing new methods, taking care to provide students with additional attention and support whenever needed.

This overall picture will now be further extended through the presentation of additional findings in relation to the different categories of the process-oriented approach (Dörnyei 2001) discussed above. The aim is to demonstrate how all components of this approach are addressed and developed during the different experiences reported.

4.2. Creating the basic motivational conditions

Under the first component of the process-oriented approach to motivation, highlighting the need to create basic motivational conditions, it is important to stress how the cyclical, whole-school project design impacted on the learner experience. G1a's complaint that "it's not fair, they'll get to do it again" shows that students conceive the process as an ongoing project involving and connecting learners from different educational stages, as illustrated in Figure 1. The fact that they conceive the project in this way has a marked influence on their learning outcomes, as we will see in the different sections discussed below. In addition to fostering group cohesiveness by facilitating cooperative group work, which enables students to develop tasks

involving different levels of difficulty (see *Maintaining and protecting motivation*), the cyclical design also helped promote cohesion at a school-wide level, by establishing a context in which learners at different stages had an interconnected role. In this way, students gradually progressed from the early stages of contact with the new language to a stage in which they became the ones partially responsible for this initial contact, by telling their own stories (with picturebooks) to their younger peers from preschool, first cycle and mid cycle of primary. This context therefore provides the ideal conditions for building the *communities of readers* and creating opportunities for sharing reading experiences, which is crucial in motivating children to read (Ellis, 2010). According to their teachers, the younger (i.e., preschool) learners benefitted considerably from these conditions, which put them into contact with ‘real’ language use in the form of authentic picturebooks, and with speakers of the L2 in the form of older role models from their own school. Terms such as ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ appeared repeatedly in the data, strongly suggesting that these literary experiences were associated with meaningful language use, as indicated by Sipe (1998) and Mourão (2017), among others. As the children progressed through the different educational stages, the aspirational effect of observing their older peers began to emerge, manifesting itself to a greater or lesser extent depending on the individual learner. Overall, teachers reported high levels of willingness to embark on the project at the end of mid-cycle and beginning of upper cycle, with comments such as “it’s our turn now”, revealing the students’ eagerness to take on what they perceived to be a challenge that had been realised by their predecessors. The fact that entire class sessions had been dedicated to the storytelling sessions at the end of the school year also served to highlight the importance given to these experiences by everyone involved. This was noted by the new upper cycle students in comments such as “it will soon be our turn to tell a *great* story.” The word *great* is emphasised here as its use by a 10 year-old highlights the fact that in addition to assuming responsibility and ownership for the task, learners highly valued the picturebooks as a source of literature. This finding also supports Mourão’s efforts to challenge assumptions that regard picturebooks as material suitable for babies or toddlers, and to emphasise their value as multimodal literary objects (Mourão, 2012, 2017).

4.3. Generating initial motivation

Although teacher-reported data revealed that students had high levels of motivation to move up to the storytelling stage, many students displayed low self-efficacy levels and doubted their own ability when called upon to carry out the task (see Waddington, 2019). At this point, students were presented with a clear road-map (Waddington 2017) that indicated the different steps necessary to prepare sessions, which helped set realisable goals and, above all, emphasised the point highlighted by many students in end of project questionnaires that success in their storytelling sessions was mainly due to the hard work invested during the preparation stage. Relevant comments included “it was hard work, but worth it in the end” and “we worked really hard preparing our story.” In this regard, having a clear purpose (i.e., performing in public at the end of the year) motivated students to work hard for themselves and also for their younger peers. From their recent past experiences observing older peers, students equated being a role model with being responsible for the younger students’ learning, as demonstrated in many of the comments highlighting the extent to which they assumed this responsibility in a way that simultaneously advanced their own learning. For example, “we practiced a lot so they would understand the story” was a typical response to an open question in the end of project questionnaire asking about the reasons for their success in the storytelling session. The fact that this purpose both motivated students and influenced their actions during the preparation stage is demonstrated by two specific examples observed during different class sessions.

In the first example, a group of three grade 6 students were nearing the end of the preparation stage and were practising their session with students from their own class. Ordinal numbers were a crucial element within the narrative of this group’s picturebook. They had distributed different roles in the storytelling sequence, and student G1d had assumed the task of asking the listeners to repeat the ordinal numbers when they appeared in the story. Practising with their same-age peers, G1d spent considerable time asking them to repeat the words, labouring over potentially difficult sounds such as the voiced ‘th’ (/ð/). Responding to his classmates who asked why they had to keep repeating the same thing, she explained that the younger learners would need help to be able to make these sounds properly. What is interesting about this example is that the learner in question had undergone several years of speech-language therapy to overcome development difficulties during the first cycle of primary education. The empathy demonstrated in this attempt to support younger learners in their acquisition and reproduction of new language sounds may stem from the learner’s own prior experience. The satisfaction obtained from helping others overcome potential difficulties was evident during the group’s storytelling session (delivered to first- and mid-cycle students),

particularly when G1d carried out her part of the activity with a confidence and enthusiasm, for which she was strongly commended by the teacher. Apart from increasing authentic communication as outlined by Assinder (1991), the peer modelling experience analysed here helps to develop learner empathy and foster a supportive classroom climate.

In the second example, a pair of grade 5 students were also reaching the end of the preparation stage and were simulating the initial part of the session in front of their teacher and the researcher in a class session organised in the style of a workshop (see below for more description of the workshop format). After showing how they would begin their session, the teacher asked if they thought the listeners (i.e., pre-schoolers, due to the characteristics of the picturebook chosen) would pay attention and be drawn into their story. Initially displaying little concern about the potential listener response to their storytelling session, student G3h claimed that “the little ones are like that; they don’t listen to you and they just do whatever they want.” On further questioning, and when asked to think specifically about strategies their teacher might use to attract and keep their attention, both students recalled the use of the class English-language ‘speaking’ puppet (named Tiger Tiger) and asked if they could incorporate it into their session. After adding this effective device into their sequence, they became more at ease in the task and adjusted their planned interactions more appropriately by paying more attention to how to make their listeners feel comfortable and how to engage their interest. On the day of their storytelling session, the two students began by taking turns saying “Hello, [name of student]” to each student individually, to which the 4 and 5 year-old children responded “Hello, [name of storyteller]” one by one, thus establishing a relaxed atmosphere while also providing the younger learners with a real opportunity to use the new language in a meaningful exchange with their older peers. Once again, the storytelling context provides the opportunity for natural language acquisition as suggested in the previous literature on early literacy development (Cameron, 2001; Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Goshn, 2013; Sipe, 2007).

4.4. Maintaining and protecting motivation

Within this component of the process-oriented approach to motivation, Dörnyei (2001) proposes various strategies, including allowing learners real choices about aspects of their learning, adjusting difficulty levels to students’ abilities, and adopting the role of facilitator (pp. 142-143). These three strategies can be observed in the findings highlighted in this section. The first example corresponds to the early stages of the project in which upper cycle students were presented with the collection of picturebooks from which they would select one for their own storytelling session. Several class sessions were dedicated to viewing the picturebooks, forming an initial opinion of their content, collectively sharing ideas, and eventually expressing group preferences based on these initial ideas. During the individual stage, after students had had time to look at the different picturebooks, they were asked to rate them in their learning diaries. They were given the freedom to rate them according to their own criteria and in their own preferred style. The results revealed an interesting variety in modes of expression, which reflected the diversity within the group and the different abilities and preferences of the individual students. Some wrote short expressions in L3 (“It’s fun” or “It’s boring”), others expressed their ideas more fully in the L1 (“I don’t like the pictures” or “It’s about a cat. It’s really funny”), as in Figure 3, and others rated their preferences numerically, as we can observe in Figure 4.

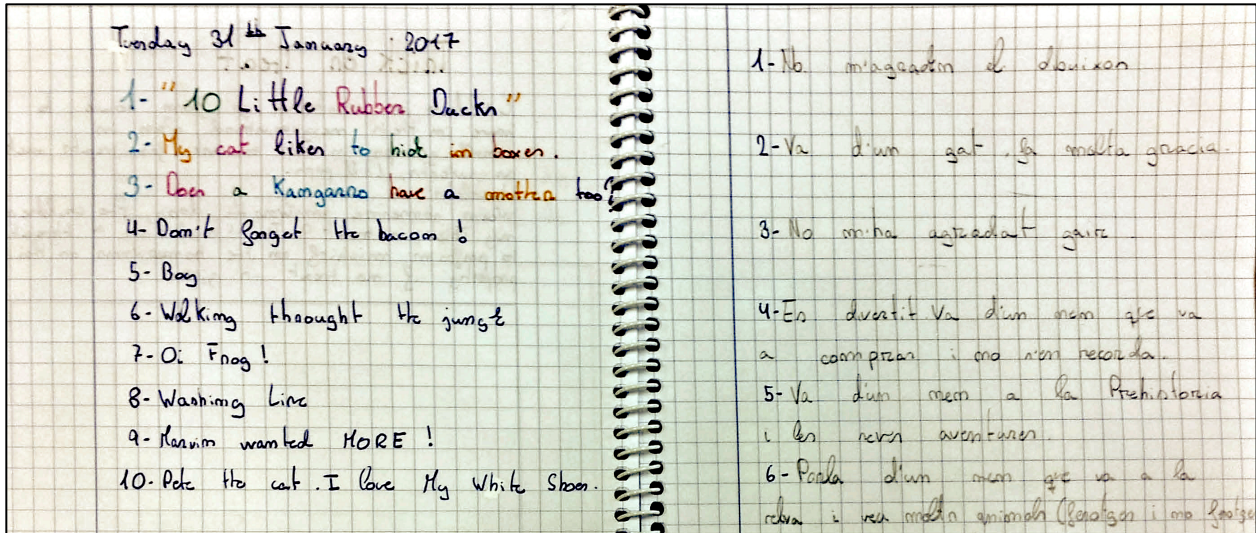


Figure 3. Diary entry rating picturebooks with comments in L1



Figure 4. Diary entry rating picturebooks in numerical order with pictorial support

This initial selection activity gave learners an opportunity to make their own choices that were also adapted to their different abilities, thus setting a pattern for subsequent activities as we will see below.

Reference is made above to the way in which some classes during the storytelling preparation stage took the form of workshops. Aside from the diversity within each student group and the different abilities/characteristics of each individual learner, the fact that each group (or pair) of students worked on a different picturebook meant that the preparation for the storytelling sessions was necessarily diverse. As a result, many class sessions were converted into workshops, with students working in different spaces on their own picturebooks and with the teacher adopting the role of facilitator by guiding them and supporting them in their different preparations. Three examples are provided below to show how this worked in practice and to highlight the key findings that emerged.

4.4.1. *Storytelling preparation workshops*

Example 1: Linguistic focus

Two students were in the early stages of preparing their story. They had selected one of the most linguistically complex picturebooks available, and, after having initially thought they had understood the narrative, they realized that their full understanding was compromised by unfamiliar vocabulary. Although their teacher reassured them that they could proceed since they were to convey the overall meaning of the story to their listeners, the students were determined to fully grasp the narrative. Taking a bilingual (Catalan to English) dictionary from the bookcase, the students started to look up the words they had never previously encountered and to write down the L1 translations in their learning diaries. Eventually, they decided to translate the whole L3 text from the picturebook page they were working on into their L1, writing down their translation sentence by sentence in their diaries. When asked by the researcher why they were spending so much time doing this when their teacher had told them it was not necessary, they explained as follows:

Excerpt 1.

G2a	By doing this we really understand what it is that we're telling [telling the story].
G2b	And we learn more English. We learn some things we wouldn't usually learn.
Researcher	Like what?
G2b	Useful things, like 'it's getting dark now.' Things like that.
G2a	We also learn what some strange words mean.
Researcher	Strange?
G2a	Yes [half-laughing], things like 'grumpy' or 'naughty'.

The exchange in Excerpt 1 highlights the benefits of giving students the space to make their own learning choices and the effect that this can have on stimulating their autonomy. Both students in this exchange reported that although translation was hard work and time-consuming, it was worth it as they learned a lot from the process. On the one hand, this exchange supports calls for a reappraisal of the use of translation practices in the language classroom. Such calls have been gaining ground since the end of the last century, as outlined by Gomes Ferreira (1999) in her review of late twentieth-century resistance to translation in the English classroom and her exposition of the reasons for its potential revival in the twenty-first century. On the other hand, the extended conversation with these students also highlighted the way in which learners can be encouraged to develop critical awareness regarding the potential flaws in automatic online translation tools and the need to exercise caution when using them. This finding emerged when students shared a whole-class experience in which no one had known the word in their own language for a bird (puffin) that appeared in one of the picturebooks. Although knowing the word in the L1 was not necessary for continued preparation of the storytelling session, and although they could all see what the bird was from the illustration in the picturebook, they still felt compelled to fill this gap in their knowledge. Entering the word into an online translator resulted in a word in the L1 that they discounted immediately as it bore no relation to birds. The next search using a paper L1 (Catalan)-to-L3 (English) dictionary (graded for primary classroom use) produced no results, as the word 'puffin' was not listed. Upon further investigation, the students found a more extensive Spanish (L2)-to-English (L3) dictionary, and this time their search yielded the Spanish word 'frailecillo'. On hearing this, one of the students in the group exclaimed 'I've got it!' Hearing the word in L2 (Spanish) prompted the student to recall the word 'cadafet' in her first language (Catalan). What is interesting about this finding is the enthusiasm shown by students when recounting the experience and the fact that they still laughed about it days or weeks after the event had occurred, suggesting quite strongly that the experience had been meaningful and memorable for them. Within a plurilingual

context, this also suggests that learners were becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of being able to draw on different languages and that the teacher, as facilitator, was adopting a flexible attitude to language use, which could have positive effects on the learning process, as argued in recent studies illustrating cases of translanguaging in the classroom (Durán & Henderson, 2018).

Example 2: Artistic focus

While students G2a and G2b were discovering the complexities of translating into their L1, students G2c and G2d were elaborating their own colourful masks to represent each of the animal characters in their story. When asked why they were doing this, they explained that using these masks would help the younger listeners follow their story, by encouraging them to relate the words they were hearing with the visual supports they were seeing. This explanation was followed by an impromptu display of how exactly they would do this, clarifying who would narrate the story and who would act out the characters using the masks, thus showing a well-thought out plan in which each student assumed a specific role. Demonstrating their plan prompted further creativity, as they decided that the mask wearer would also make the corresponding animal noises, thereby adding audio support to their handcrafted visual supports. Although opting to focus on the artistic side meant that less time was spent on linguistic aspects that could have been improved further (pronunciation of some key expressions, for example), the students preferred to invest time and creativity into the artistic and aesthetic dimension of their session, resulting in a storytelling performance which they and the listeners clearly enjoyed. When asked if it might have been better to orientate the pair towards work on linguistic aspects and to deter what could have constituted avoidance tactics (i.e., spending excessive time cutting out paper masks instead of working on language), the teacher highlighted the benefits of allowing students to make their own choices and progress at their own pace. This justification revealed a classroom practice closely aligned with recent motivational theories, which argue for a balanced, learner-centred approach to motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Williams et al., 2016) and contrast with the predominantly teacher-centred/resource-based approach found in a recent study of primary school practice (Waddington, 2018). Further analysis of this experience demonstrated the sagacity of the teacher's decision to allow the students to continue at their own pace instead of pushing them toward more linguistic work at that particular time: firstly, their storytelling session was very positively received by the listeners (first-cycle primary students) and their self-assessments of the experience indicated that this reaction had boosted their confidence and motivated them to continue learning the language; secondly, while carrying out their artistic activities, they were simultaneously listening to the other groups and contributing to some of the conversations taking place (such as the class translanguaging experience with 'puffin' described above), thereby displaying an interest in the language and their growing metalinguistic awareness. This experience highlights the need to protect motivation—as suggested by the wording of this component of the process-oriented approach—by respecting learner needs, allowing students to go at their own pace and viewing learning as an ongoing process.

Example 3: IT focus

In the final example, and during the same workshop session as the previous two examples, another pair of students were working with a laptop. Like the first group, this pair had also selected a linguistically complex picturebook, and, after working through it and understanding it, they were developing strategies to convey the unfamiliar vocabulary and the general narrative to their peers (mid-cycle primary). They had decided in a previous session to create a PowerPoint presentation, asking their teacher for permission and a laptop to do so. In the session analysed, they had already created the presentation and were working on the different slides. When asked by the researcher about their decision to create a PowerPoint, they explained that it would help the listeners follow their story by giving them additional visual support to supplement the illustrations already provided in the picturebook. After typing pages from the picturebook into the slides, they started to experiment with different design options, changing colours, highlighting parts of the text and using animation. They explain the need for this in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2.

Researcher	What's that you're highlighting?
G2e	They're the things that are the most difficult.
G2f	And they're also [first checks how to say the noun in L1] rhymes. We're highlighting all the words that rhyme. [checks the verb in L1]
Researcher	Ah. I see. And what are you going to do with it?
G2f	We're going to ask them to listen to us and repeat the rhymes with us.
Researcher	(looking at other slides) I see you've used some different colours here.
G2e	That's to show different voices.
G2f	When we tell the story we're going to exaggerate the different voices.
G2e	And do you like this? [showing a slide using animation]
Researcher	Oh yes. That's good. How have you done that? [the students show how they discovered and applied the animation options]
G2f	We think it will help to keep their attention.
G2e	Our story is a bit long and they might switch off. This might help.

Apart from developing their own skills (linguistic, ICT, creative thinking), these students showed a high capacity for anticipating interactions with others and for adopting non-verbal communication strategies to facilitate and promote effective interactions. As in the two previous examples, the purpose they were working towards and their imminent role as peer models stimulated their own learning and the future learning of their younger peers. Furthermore, their own decision to create a PowerPoint presentation and their close attention to how the different features and design options would facilitate comprehension support the findings of recent studies that highlight the benefits of ICT-based methods for developing literacy skills at primary-school age as well as the importance of social interactions for making the best use of such skills (Genlott & Grönlund, 2013).

4.5. Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation

The findings already discussed reveal a classroom environment in which students are constantly reflecting on and evaluating their own learning process and that of others. In addition, and after the storytelling sessions had been completed, specific time was designated within class sessions for students to evaluate their own performances and those of their classmates during the storytelling sessions. In the first instance, analysis showed that students tended to evaluate their peers' performances more positively than their own. Regarding self-evaluations, in some cases these were found to be excessively critical, potentially demotivating and inconsistent with teachers' positive evaluations of the work.

In the first session dedicated to evaluating other groups' sessions and providing them with feedback, a "Two Stars and a Wish" activity was designed to help students organise their ideas and highlight at least three points from their peers' sessions: two which they considered worthy of praise (stars) and one aspect they thought could be improved (wish). A rubric was created providing example sentence starters (e.g., "I really liked the way you...", "You did a good/great job...", "Maybe you could...") to help students produce relevant sentences, thus combining language work with the development of evaluation and interpersonal skills. The activity was first developed orally, with students watching fragments of video recordings of the storytelling sessions and then constructing sentences with the help of the teacher. Students then wrote down their evaluations and completed a rubric for their portfolios, which contained all work related to the project (see Figure 5).

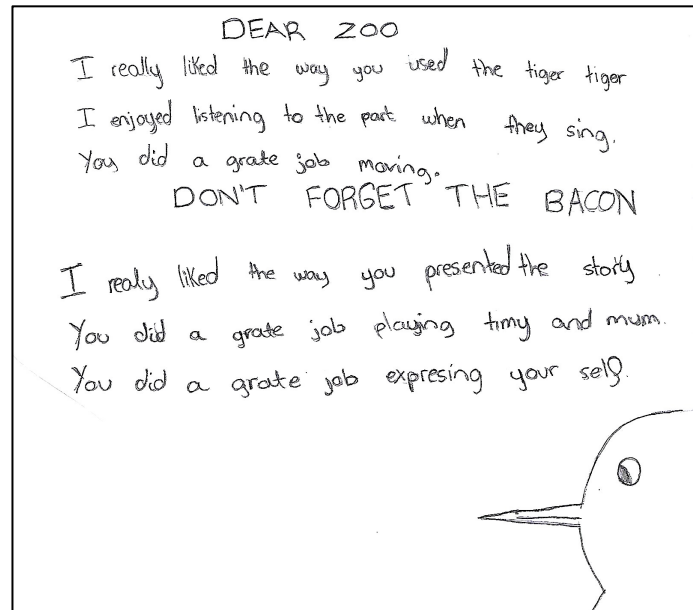


Figure 5. Peer evaluation: "Two Stars and a Wish" activity

While analysis of both teacher and student reflections pointed to the benefits of this activity in terms of building student confidence and identifying specific areas for further improvement (e.g., pronunciation was cited most frequently), it also highlighted the need to dedicate more time to the activity itself and to pre-teach and practice some specific functional language needed for giving feedback. Students expressed clear interest in the activity and confirmed that it was useful for them, but they also indicated that they needed more help to be able to express their opinions in the L3.

As noted above, the analysis of students' self-evaluations indicated that learners were more critical of their own performance than that of their peers and that work was needed to help them carry out a more realistic and constructive evaluation of their own abilities. This finding supports calls by others for more research and practical work to help L2 learners calibrate their self-assessment of own performance (Trofimovich, Isaacs, Kennedy, Saito, & Crowther, 2016). Further analysis of this question, examining and contrasting comments made by students, suggested that watching themselves in the video recordings may have had a negative influence on students' self-evaluations. This hypothesis resulted in a decision being made to refrain from video recording the sessions in the following year and to conduct the self- and peer-evaluations on the basis of student recall and with the aid of evaluation rubrics used to record observations and reflections.

5. Discussion

With regard to the overall aim of this study, the findings suggest that the reading project had a strong motivational effect on the learners. In particular, and considering each of the four dimensions of a process-oriented and holistic approach to motivational practice, we can identify specific learning outcomes generated by the experience. In the first instance (*Creating the basic motivational conditions*), the findings show how the project encourages learners to conceive learning as an ongoing process involving close interactions with others. This growing awareness helps promote collaboration at a small-group level, fostering the acceptance and nurturing of diversity within groups, as well as cohesion on a wider level, which contributes to an interconnected school environment. The promotion of authentic and meaningful language using picturebooks generates positive attitudes toward reading while simultaneously increasing students' willingness to participate in the learning process. In the second instance (*Generating initial motivation*), and in relation to intra- and inter-personal factors, it is particularly worth highlighting the growing awareness among students of the relation between effort investment and successful learning on the one hand (intra-personal) and the importance of inter-personal factors on the other. In relation to the latter, the empathy displayed by the older students and their increasing awareness of the impact of extra-linguistic factors on successful communication is noteworthy. Considering the next component (*Maintaining and protecting motivation*), apart from the

specific language-learning outcomes generated, the project design and workshop format adopted during part of the preparation stage seems to be effective in encouraging students to take ownership of their learning and to become increasingly autonomous in their work. The examples highlighted in the findings also indicate that students' metalinguistic awareness was boosted during the process as they became increasingly aware of the benefits of being plurilingual. Finally (*Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation*), findings show that students consider evaluation to be highly useful and enjoy giving and receiving feedback. Two factors emerge from the findings that deserve particular attention since they could have a negative effect on learning outcomes. The first relates to the lack of correlation between teachers' and students' evaluations of performance and the tendency of the latter to be overly critical of their own performance in contrast to that of their peers. Further research needs to be carried out to explore this observation and a specific study is now underway comparing self-evaluations with and without the use of video recordings. The second point relates to the language development aspect of the self-evaluation activities that were carried out. Results indicate that students find it particularly difficult to express their opinions freely in the foreign language, as would be expected in a low-exposure context such as the one described in this study. In view of this, particular attention needs to be paid to scaffolding student learning and providing sufficient support to enable them to carry out tasks in a way that stimulates further learning and avoids demotivating effects.

Although conceived and discussed separately, the learning outcomes highlighted above are understood as part of a holistic experience comprising different opportunities and challenges that are experienced differently by each learner. Considering the final aim of this study, and in order to highlight the pedagogical implications of the findings, strategies that have been observed to be particularly effective in generating these outcomes have been identified. While in this case they have been detected in activities carried out within the storytelling project, they are considered to be sufficiently generalizable regardless of the methodology employed. Effective strategies include:

- using peer modelling
- stimulating student autonomy
- fostering ownership of own learning process
- having a clear purpose
- generating contact with authentic language
- stimulating authentic language use
- allowing learners to be creative
- allowing learners to set their own challenges and go at their own pace (which can be different even in small working groups or pairs)
- encouraging both self- and peer-evaluation
- stimulating constructive self-reflection

The discussion of the outcomes and strategies identified has mainly focused on the motivational effects on the older learners, in line with the main aims of this study. Although further studies are needed to explore the effects on the younger learners, it is worth noting one point. Reference has been made in the findings section to the difficulties posed by some of the picturebooks and the strategies consequently devised by the older learners to aid their younger peers' comprehension. Observations indicated that although listeners did not understand all the language used in the stories, they still maintained high levels of enthusiasm and engagement and appeared to follow and understand the narrative of the story. This supports arguments that narrative comprehension is fundamental to beginning reading (Paris & Paris, 2003), and suggests that the strategic use of picturebooks can promote positive attitudes not only toward early reading but also to language learning in general.

6. Conclusion

This article contributes to previous work considering reading within a whole-language approach to literacy development (Galda et al., 2016; Martinez & McGee, 2000), paying attention to the motivational aspect of the experience within the context of foreign language learning (Ellis, 2000). In so doing, the present article also contributes to previous work aiming to bridge the gap between theory and practice in motivational studies (Lasagabaster, Doiz, & Sierra, 2016; Ryan, 2016; Waddington, 2018), showing how attention to the different aspects of a process-oriented approach can help create and sustain a motivational climate in the language classroom. The descriptions of classroom experiences provided in the findings section

may interest teachers focused on broadening their understanding of motivation and in implementing similar projects in their own schools. The findings of the study will also be of interest to researchers and practitioners keen on using peer modelling with children and developing storytelling projects with picturebooks in the foreign language classroom. With regard to the former, the findings provide further evidence supporting the use of peer modelling to boost self-efficacy beliefs (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1977), develop positive and situated foreign language learner self-concepts (Waddington, 2019), and promote successful language learning (Cave et al., 2018; Csizér & Magid, 2014). However, in line with arguments advanced by previous authors (Spratt & Leug, 2000), caution should be exercised when attempting to generalise these results. Although data was collected from three different heterogeneous groups over a three-year period, the total sample remains small, and further research is therefore needed to explore the extent to which the positive findings obtained can be replicated in other contexts.

With regard to the storytelling methodology, the findings support the growing body of research advocating the use of storytelling to promote whole-language approaches to reading and language development (Galda et al., 2016; Martinez & McGee, 2000) and the use of picturebooks to generate authentic communication in foreign language learning (Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Fleta, 2015, 2019; Goshn, 2013; Mourão, 2012, 2016, 2017). This study extends this line of research further by highlighting the benefits of placing students at the centre of the interactive storytelling process. From this perspective, the linguistic challenges presented by authentic picturebooks provide the basis for meaningful and purposeful language work, leading to exchanges that generate multiple benefits for the students leading the storytelling sessions and the children interacting with them.

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- EN** | **Julie Waddington** teaches at the University of Girona, Catalonia, in the Faculty of Education and Psychology. Drawing on her previous experience as a full-time English language teacher, she develops her teaching and research in the area of foreign language didactics. Working closely with pre-service and in-service teachers, her current research interests focus on learner identity and the development of learner-centred teaching practice. She is a member of the consolidated research group *Cultura i Educació* (UdG). She previously taught at the Manchester Metropolitan University, England, where she completed her PhD in Literary Studies and Critical Theory.
- ES** | **Julie Waddington** enseña en la Universidad de Girona, Cataluña, en la Facultad de Educación y Psicología. Basándose en su experiencia previa como profesora de inglés a tiempo completo, desarrolla su enseñanza e investigación en el área de la didáctica de la lengua extranjera. Trabaja con los docentes en formación y en formación continua, y sus intereses de investigación actuales se centran en la identidad del alumno y en el desarrollo de la práctica docente centrada en el estudiante. Es miembro del grupo de investigación *Cultura i Educació* (UdG). Anteriormente, enseñó en la Universidad Metropolitana de Manchester, Inglaterra, donde consiguió el doctorado en Estudios Literarios y Teoría Crítica.
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Book Review

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ABSTRACT

ES El volumen *Early Language Learning in School Contexts: Complexity and Mixed Methods* de Janet Enever y Eva Lindgren explora la implementación de los métodos mixtos de investigación para el estudio del aprendizaje temprano en contextos de escolarización. Este volumen incluye estudios recientes y multidisciplinarios que adoptan métodos mixtos para su investigación. Aunque existen otros estudios/colecciones que analizan, por ejemplo, el crecimiento de los métodos mixtos de investigación (Zha & Tu, 2015), este es el primer volumen que incorpora en su totalidad los métodos mixtos para estudios en el ámbito del aprendizaje de las lenguas en tempranas edades.

Palabras clave: MÉTODOS MIXTOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN, APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS EN EDADES TEMPRANAS, CONTEXTO ESCOLAR

EN The volume, *Early Language Learning in School Contexts: Complexity and Mixed Methods*, by Janet Enever and Eva Lindgren, explores the implementation of mixed methods to study early language learning in school contexts. This volume includes recent multidisciplinary studies that adopt a mixed-methods approach. Previous studies and series analyze the growing popularity of mixed methods (Zha & Tu, 2015), but this is the first volume to focus exclusively on mixed methods for studying early language learning in school contexts.

Key words: MIXED METHODS, EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING, SCHOOL CONTEXT

IT Il volume *Early Language Learning in School Contexts: Complexity and Mixed Methods* di Janet Enever e Eva Lindgren esplora l'implementazione dei metodi misti di ricerca per lo studio dell'apprendimento precoce nei contesti di scolarizzazione. Questo volume include studi recenti e multidisciplinari che adottano metodi misti per la ricerca. Sebbene esistano altri studi/collezioni che analizzano, per esempio, la crescita dei metodi misti di ricerca (Zha & Tu, 2015), questo è il primo volume che incorpora nella sua interezza i metodi misti per gli studi nell'ambito dell'apprendimento delle lingue in età prescolare.

Parole chiave: METODI MISTI DI RICERCA, APPRENDIMENTO DELLE LINGUE IN ETÀ PREScolare, CONTESTO SCOLASTICO

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El aprendizaje de idiomas en edades tempranas en contextos escolares es, hoy en día, un tema de gran relevancia a nivel global ya que hay un amplio interés en entender cómo los más pequeños adquieren un idioma (Enever, 2011; Muñoz, 2014; Nikolov, 2009). Las editoras de este libro publicado por Multilingual Matters, Janet Enever y Eva Lindgren, han sabido construir una colección de estudios que abarcan numerosos contextos, exponiendo múltiples aspectos a tener en cuenta y que son de vital importancia para el mundo del aprendizaje, la enseñanza y, por supuesto, para el de la investigación de la adquisición de la lengua. Este volumen, además, aporta una perspectiva innovadora, la del uso de los métodos mixtos de investigación, los cuales pueden ofrecer más riqueza al mundo de la investigación lingüística (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2006; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Riazi & Candlin, 2014). Así pues, esta colección de estudios recientes explora el potencial de los métodos mixtos de investigación, es decir, el uso conjunto de métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos, para profundizar en aspectos esenciales a la hora de analizar y obtener una mayor comprensión de los resultados, más allá de los que se pueden obtener a partir de un sólo método. Es de especial interés saber que el libro incluye estudios llevados a cabo en África, Asia, América Latina y Europa. Además, podemos encontrar investigaciones que abarcan diferentes contextos educativos y lingüísticos, ya que entre los artículos encontramos clases de primaria en las que se instruye AICLE, el inglés como lengua adicional, el francés como lengua moderna o el inglés como lengua extranjera. De esta manera, el volumen resulta extremadamente útil no sólo para investigadores sumergidos en la adquisición y el aprendizaje de la lengua, sino también para profesores y expertos en el área de la enseñanza de idiomas a niños.

Tal como se establece en el primer capítulo, "Introduction: Mixed Methods in Early Language Learning – Examining Complexity", el volumen aquí reseñado se centra en el estudio del aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros, segundas lenguas y el aprendizaje de la lengua en general en aprendices de temprana edad en contextos de instrucción multidisciplinarios. El objetivo de las editoras, Enever y Lindgren, es el de recopilar estudios recientes llevados a cabo en el aula de segundas lenguas con alumnos de edades tempranas y, a través de estos artículos, mostrar las ventajas de trabajar con métodos mixtos de investigación y su aporte para la comprensión de los resultados obtenidos, tal como se viene pidiendo desde hace tiempo (Atkinson, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2011). De hecho, el uso conjunto de los métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos de investigación nació como una necesidad de un mayor y profundo análisis de las preguntas de investigación (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2006), permitiendo aprender desde diferentes dimensiones (Riazi & Candlin, 2014). Debido a la complejidad del aula de idiomas, del aprendizaje en edades tempranas, del papel del profesor/a, de los contextos multidisciplinarios que podemos encontrar y de la motivación, se evidencia la necesidad de estudios que acojan la complementación de diferentes perspectivas.

El volumen consta de cuatro partes bien diferenciadas en las que se atienden diferentes contextos de aprendizaje y de investigación. En la primera parte del volumen, *Overviews of Research Findings*, se describen estudios actuales de diferentes ámbitos pertenecientes al mundo del aprendizaje temprano de la lengua y de la naturaleza del diseño de la investigación. En la segunda parte del libro, "Empirical Studies Using Mixed Methods", se describen diferentes maneras de aplicar los métodos mixtos, a saber: datos recolectados a nivel semanal, secuencial, a través de cuestionarios, secuencia de análisis cuantitativo seguido de cualitativo, datos cualitativos complementados con datos cuantitativos o datos cualitativos combinados con pre y post datos cuantitativos. La tercera parte del libro, "Longitudinal Perspectives Using Mixed Methods", presenta estudios longitudinales que hacen una recolección simultánea de métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos en intervalos regulares. Finalmente, en la cuarta y última parte de la colección, "Evaluating Early Language Learning Programmes", se analizan temas de actual importancia en el mundo del temprano aprendizaje de la lengua, como lo es la interacción en el aula de idiomas, un estudio de impacto implantado en diferentes aulas de primaria en México y el desarrollo de nuevas formas para evaluar el aprendizaje de los idiomas.

A través de esta variedad de aportaciones, las autoras promueven la reflexión sobre la importancia de la integración de métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos de investigación como una gran apuesta en la investigación del aprendizaje temprano de la lengua. Quizás el aspecto más interesante que nos ofrece este libro es la riqueza de los estudios que se incluyen, que no solo presentan el inglés como lengua de aprendizaje, sino que también abarcan el aprendizaje del francés.

La primera parte halla su particularidad en la importancia que se le da a los factores sociales y culturales como clave para el aprendizaje lingüístico. Así pues, en el Capítulo 2 del volumen, *Early Language Learning in Complex Linguistic Settings: Insights from Africa*, van Ginkel describe la necesidad de entender la lengua materna como clave para el buen aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras. El estudio, llevado a cabo en África, explora diferentes perspectivas educativas en contextos multilingües—como lo es África, donde conviven 2500 lenguas de las cuales solo 176 son usadas para el aprendizaje (Gadellii, 2004)— y compara

modelos educativos de otros países multilingües, observando situaciones que se producen al convivir más de una lengua materna en el aula y describiendo contextos que promueven el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera. De esta manera, se demuestra que para un futuro aprendizaje del inglés más independiente y más robusto en países en desarrollo es esencial usar la lengua materna o lenguas más próximas a la materna como medio de enseñanza.

En el Capítulo 3, *Considering the Complexities of Teaching Intercultural Understanding in Foreign Languages*, Discoll defiende el uso de la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras como herramienta para el desarrollo cultural de los aprendices (Cable *et al.*, 2010). De esta manera, tras un estudio longitudinal en Inglaterra en el que se emplean los métodos mixtos para analizar la información recogida tras observar clases y entrevistar tanto a profesores, como directores y alumnos de primaria, y tras examinar el progreso de las diferentes habilidades comunicativas obtenidas por los alumnos con el paso del tiempo, los resultados nos muestran que a pesar de la importancia que se le da a la interculturalidad, pocas veces se le asigna un papel importante en el aula de la lengua extranjera. De esta manera, el artículo critica la falta de profundidad cultural en el aula de idiomas para poder hacer crecer el interés y el conocimiento cultural, propio y ajeno, de los alumnos.

En el Capítulo 4, *Literacy Development in Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)*, Murphy explora la falta de desarrollo de las habilidades literarias (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006) como causante del bajo rendimiento de alumnos de 3 a 12 años que usan el inglés como lengua adicional en Inglaterra. A través del análisis de diferentes pruebas del uso del vocabulario, de comprensión lectora y de habilidad escrita, complementándolas con observaciones y entrevistas a la comunidad educativa, la autora nos muestra que la capacidad lectoescritora y el uso y conocimiento del vocabulario en el habla por parte de estos alumnos es significativamente inferior al de sus compañeros. En un mundo globalizado, en el que más de una lengua se habla en casa y en el aula, hay que presentar especial atención a las necesidades académicas generadas por este contexto.

La segunda parte se enfoca más en la importancia de los métodos mixtos para aportar más riqueza a los descubrimientos hechos en los diferentes estudios empíricos que encontramos, tal como los beneficios en el aula de francés obtenidos a partir de diferentes modalidades de aprendizaje, los factores motivacionales en el aula de primaria en China, los efectos de los cuenta-cuentos virtuales en el aula alemana y la comparación de resultados entre participantes expuestos a metodología AICLE e instrucción más tradicional.

En el Capítulo 5, *Verbal Working Memory and Foreign Language Learning in English Primary Schools: Implications for Teaching and Learning*, Porter explora el papel que ejerce la memoria verbal en la adquisición de la lengua extranjera (Wen, 2011). El estudio tuvo lugar en dos escuelas de primaria rurales en Inglaterra, en el cual participaron niños de entre 9 y 11 años, aprendices de francés. Después de analizar los resultados obtenidos a través de tareas orales y escritas, se demuestra que, efectivamente, la memoria verbal tiene que ser considerada por el equipo pedagógico a la hora de planear el contenido y valorar los resultados. Así pues, en este capítulo se refuerza la idea de que es necesaria una observación más individual y más humana del desarrollo intelectual del alumno.

En el Capítulo 6, *Piecing Together the Jigsaw: Understanding Motivations of English Learners in Chinese Primary School through a Questionnaire and Elicited Metaphor Analysis*, Changsheng, Jie, Xiaohua, Yuan y Qun consideran los múltiples aspectos que influyen en la motivación de los alumnos de primaria a la hora de aprender inglés. Tras recolectar las respuestas de un grupo de alumnos de primaria a un cuestionario sobre sus percepciones del aprendizaje del inglés, los resultados muestran que entre los factores positivos más destacados se encuentran la influencia de los padres, quienes ven el dominio del inglés como un componente imprescindible en la educación de sus hijos, y la percepción que tienen los mismos alumnos del inglés como clave para un futuro exitoso.

En el Capítulo 7, *Codeswitching Your Way to Language Learning? Receptive Codeswitching with Digital Storybooks in Early Language Learning*, las autoras Buendgens-Kosten, Hardy y Elsner estudian las ventajas de aprender idiomas a través de cuentacuentos digitales trilingües en un aula de Alemania (Elsner, 2015). Los datos analizados en este capítulo se obtuvieron a través del proyecto LIKE, en el cual un grupo de niños fue expuesto a cuentacuentos trilingües mientras que otro grupo fue expuesto a cuentacuentos monolingües, y un segundo estudio en el que los participantes valoraron la negociación del significado después de ver una serie de vídeos trilingües. Del análisis de estos datos, las autoras concluyen que el uso de cuentacuentos trilingües, que permite que los alumnos estén expuestos a diferentes idiomas, tiene efectos positivos en la comprensión del contenido y, por lo tanto, en el desarrollo de las competencias de los idiomas.

En el Capítulo 8, *Individual Differences and English L2 Learning in Two Primary Classrooms in France*, Hilton presenta los resultados de un estudio de larga duración (1 año) en dos aulas de inglés de primero y tercero de primaria en París, Francia. Para ello, la autora recurrió a la observación de la interacción en el aula y el análisis de la metodología de enseñanza y de las diferencias individuales. Murphy ofrece, además, cuestionarios y actividades que permiten enfocarse en las diferencias individuales relacionadas con las capacidades cognitivas, verbales, motivacionales y socio-afectivas de los alumnos (Murphy, 2014). La característica especial de este estudio yace en el hecho de que no sólo se presta atención a las comparaciones de grupo, sino también a las características individuales de los alumnos, siempre a través de la combinación de métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos de investigación, probando de esta manera que hay variables de todo tipo que influyen en la adquisición de la lengua extranjera.

En el Capítulo 9, *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): A Panacea for Young English Language Learners?* de Pizorn, se comparan los resultados de dos grupos de primaria AICLE y no AICLE en Eslovenia. Tras varios años de instrucción, los participantes llevan a cabo una prueba de nivel de inglés y un cuestionario administrado antes y después de la prueba. El experimento acaba con una serie de entrevistas. Tras obtener y analizar los resultados, este estudio defiende que el éxito de implementar AICLE en el aula no es automático (Bruton, 2013), ya que los estudiantes en el grupo de AICLE presentan, por ejemplo, dificultades en las actividades de comprensión lectora. Además, el éxito educativo no depende sólo del nivel de inglés de los alumnos, sino también de otros factores como la motivación del alumno, la efectividad de las actividades a nivel cognitivo o las características del equipo pedagógico.

La esencia de la tercera parte yace en la perspectiva longitudinal adoptada por las investigaciones presentadas. Así pues, podemos entender un poco más el funcionamiento del aprendizaje de las lenguas a una temprana edad a través de la motivación en el aula de primaria china, el desarrollo de las habilidades de las habilidades de *reading, listening* y *writing* en Italia, unido a los resultados de los mismos tras seis años de continuidad, y las actitudes, motivación y percepción de los alumnos croatas. El acierto de este volumen viene dado, además, por el carácter actual de los estudios presentados, que nos permiten conciliar actualidad, pluralidad, cultura y lingüística, invitándonos a hacer una reflexión global.

En el Capítulo 10, *The Dynamics of Motivation Development among Young Learners of English in China*, Butler presenta los cambios que sufren los factores motivacionales en alumnos de primaria a través de los años (Kim, 2011). En este estudio, alumnos de los primeros años de primaria en el este de China muestran mucha motivación para aprender inglés, sobre todo infundada por los padres, pero al final de la primaria muestran más signos de ansiedad y más necesidad de independencia intelectual. Este estudio longitudinal basado en encuestas a alumnos, padres y profesores y entrevistas a los alumnos y teniendo en cuenta variables como son la motivación y la confianza en uno mismo, la ansiedad y el nivel educativo de los progenitores, demuestra que el aprendizaje no es proceso estático y que se tienen que tener en cuenta las experiencias externas e individuales del alumno.

En el Capítulo 11, *Young Italian Learners' Foreign Language Development: A Longitudinal Perspective*, Lopriore presenta un estudio longitudinal (Enever & Lopriore, 2014) que tiene como objetivo investigar la evolución de alumnos italianos de inglés en edades tempranas (6-10 años y más tarde 13 años). Con el objetivo de analizar el desarrollo de los alumnos en el aprendizaje de idiomas, teniendo en cuenta que a lo largo de los años hay factores que influyen su percepción de la lengua, las dificultades y su exposición al inglés, al final de cada curso escolar los alumnos llevaban a cabo una tarea para analizar su comprensión y producción de la lengua extranjera y, más adelante, sus destrezas de comprensión y habilidad auditiva, lectora y escrita. Además de observaciones de las clases, un cuestionario era presentado para analizar la percepción de las dificultades y las estrategias de los alumnos tras completar las tareas de comprensión auditiva. En el estudio se resalta el impacto que tienen las actividades extraescolares a la hora de adquirir habilidades orales y también se resalta el desarrollo que se aprecia en la capacidad de los alumnos para entender el inglés hablado a lo largo de los años tras haber sido expuestos durante más tiempo al idioma.

El Capítulo 12, *Employing Mixed Methods for the Construction of Thick Descriptions of Early Language Learning*, de las editoras Lindgren y Enever, remarca la necesidad de apreciar las características individuales de los alumnos a la hora de aprender (Piaget, 1936). El estudio emplea métodos mixtos y perspectivas longitudinales para analizar los casos de tres jóvenes aprendices de inglés durante seis años. A través de diferentes tareas de producción, entre las que encontramos tareas orales y escritas, de recepción entre las que encontramos tareas de comprensión auditiva y lectora, y cuestionarios y entrevistas. Las investigadoras analizan el desarrollo y progreso y la actitud de los aprendices hacia el aprendizaje del inglés y hacia ellos mismos como aprendices de idiomas a lo largo de los años. En este caso se puede comprobar que no es sólo el

contexto escolar lo que define su aprendizaje, sino también el ambiente en el que viven en casa y su identidad social.

En el Capítulo 13, *Developmental Aspects of Early EFL Learning*, Mihalevic Djigunovic se exploran otros elementos, aparte del desarrollo lingüístico, que son clave para entender desarrollo del aprendizaje (Harris & Conway, 2002). Durante cuatro años, se realizan entrevistas a directores y profesores de dos escuelas, cuestionarios a los padres, entrevistas y cuestionarios a los alumnos. Los aprendices croatas nos muestran la fluctuación (normalmente decreciente) de su motivación, actitud y autoestima, las cuales parecen afectar a su desarrollo lingüístico. El artículo, así pues, nos invita a tener en cuenta estos factores más individuales, como las emociones y las experiencias de aprendizaje, a la hora de analizar su desarrollo. Finalmente, se nos presenta un análisis de diferentes temas de relevancia actual en el mundo del aprendizaje temprano de idiomas en contextos de instrucción. En esta sección podemos aprender sobre la importancia y la efectividad de la interacción en el aula de idiomas, la evolución del inglés en una clase de primaria mexicana a lo largo de seis años y una nueva forma para evaluar el aprendizaje de los alumnos en el aula alemana.

El Capítulo 14, *Child EFL Interaction: Age, Instructional Setting and Development*, García Mayo y Aguirre estudian el impacto que tienen diferentes variables como la edad, el contexto de aprendizaje y la duración en la interacción oral (Mackey & Goo, 2007). Este estudio, que examina a alumnos de primaria de entre 8 y 11 años, analiza la interacción en tareas comunicativas (p. ej., descripción de fotografías) como herramienta esencial para el aprendizaje de los idiomas. Podemos comprobar que, efectivamente, estas variantes generan una serie de tendencias, entre ellas el uso de la lengua materna y la repetición. Es importante tener en cuenta que la interacción es esencial para el aprendizaje efectivo de la lengua.

En el Capítulo 15, *Evaluating the Educational Outcomes of an Early Foreign Language Programme: The Design of an Impact Study for the Primary English Programme in Mexico*, Sayer, Ban y López de Anda presentan un estudio de impacto en el aula de inglés de primaria en México, en donde se implementa un programa de enseñanza del inglés. El estudio, hecho a gran escala en diferentes escuelas y estados durante 7 años hace uso de métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos para analizar el desarrollo lingüístico y no lingüístico de los alumnos. Con métodos cuantitativos – pruebas de nivel inglés y cuestionarios -, se estudia el desarrollo lingüístico, y con métodos cualitativos – entrevistas, observación de clases y análisis de documentos -, la conexión que existe entre el aprendizaje del inglés y el aprendizaje en otras áreas dentro y fuera del aula (Sayer & Ban, 2013), respondiendo a una necesidad de saber qué tipos de programas, pedagogías y materiales son efectivos a la hora de adquirir un idioma, ya que hoy en día no hay una respuesta clara. Tras obtener información sobre idiomas, aprendizaje y factores sociales, se nos invita a pensar que, para que un estudio de impacto funcione, se deben tener en cuenta las voces de los integrantes de la comunidad educativa, especialmente de alumnos y padres.

El Capítulo 16, *The Development of a Curriculum-Based C-Test for Young EFL Learners*, de Porsch y Wilden, describe el uso de la combinación de métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos de investigación para estudiar el desarrollo de una nueva prueba de evaluación del aprendizaje del inglés en edades tempranas en 4 aulas de primaria en Alemania. Esta prueba está diseñada como un C-Test que mide la habilidad lingüística en general (Asano, 2014) y que sirve como instrumento para evaluar el aprendizaje de los idiomas extranjeros en diferentes edades a través de textos de diferentes dificultades que contienen espacios vacíos para que los alumnos completen. Este estudio, cuyo objetivo es el de crear un test que responda a los criterios del C-Test, que responda a las necesidades de jóvenes aprendices del inglés y que pueda evaluar su nivel de inglés, busca la posibilidad de analizar la percepción que tienen los alumnos de la prueba. Los alumnos evaluados con esta prueba aportan valiosa información que no sólo se obtiene a través de sus resultados, sino gracias a la combinación de métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos, con los que podemos saber sobre su percepción de la prueba y el procedimiento.

En el último capítulo, *Mixed Methods in Early Language Learning Research*, Enever y Lindgren concluyen con una reflexión sobre la importancia de unir métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos en estudios grandes y de larga duración que ocurren en múltiples contextos dada su capacidad para enriquecer el análisis de los datos recolectados.

En definitiva, se trata de una colección global, actual, plural y por lo tanto un volumen útil y enriquecedor para todos aquellos interesados en el desarrollo del aprendizaje de idiomas en edades tempranas.

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Subhan, Zein, & Garton, Sue (a cura di). (2019). *Early language learning and teacher education*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters

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Book Review

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ABSTRACT

IT Viene di seguito proposta la recensione alla curatela di Zein e Garton, *Early Language Learning and Teacher Education*, una raccolta di 14 capitoli dedicati all'apprendimento precoce di una lingua straniera o seconda. Gli autori dei contributi riportano diverse situazioni di apprendimento, analizzandone le caratteristiche principali e mettendone in evidenza i punti di forza e le criticità. Si tratta per lo più di *focus group* o ricerche molto ristrette che descrivono ambiti educativi molto diversi tra loro seppur riguardanti l'insegnamento delle lingue a giovani apprendenti. La recensione introduce il contesto di riferimento e descrive, poi, i contenuti dei singoli capitoli, proponendo, in conclusione, alcune considerazioni sul volume.

Parole Chiave: APPRENDIMENTO PRECOCE, BILINGUISMO, QUALIFICHE DOCENTI, *FOCUS GROUP*

EN This is a review of an edited book by Zein and Garton, titled *Early Language Learning and Teacher Education*, a collection of 14 chapters dedicated to the early learning of a foreign or second language. The authors of the contributions report different learning situations, analyzing their main characteristics and highlighting their strengths and critical points. These are mostly focus groups or limited research that describe very different educational environments, albeit concerning the teaching of languages to young learners. The review introduces the reference context and then describes the contents of the individual chapters, concluding with some considerations on the volume.

Key words: EARLY LEARNING, BILINGUALISM, TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS, *FOCUS GROUP*

ES Se presenta aquí la reseña crítica de *Early Language and Teacher Education* editada por Zein y Garton. Se trata de un volumen en 14 capítulos dedicados al aprendizaje precoz de una lengua extranjera o segunda. Los autores de los artículos exponen y analizan las características principales de diferentes situaciones de aprendizaje y destacan sus puntos fuertes y débiles. Se trata de un *focus group* o investigaciones pequeñas que describen ámbitos educativos muy diferentes a pesar de que todos conciernen la enseñanza de las lenguas a jóvenes estudiantes. La reseña introduce el contexto de referencia y luego describe los contenidos de cada capítulo, proponiendo, en fin, algunas consideraciones sobre el volumen.

Palabras clave: APRENDIZAJE PRECOZ, BILINGÜISMO, CUALIFICACIONES DOCENTES, *FOCUS GROUP*

Il volume è composto da una raccolta di saggi dedicati all'apprendimento di una lingua straniera o seconda da parte di bambini dai 3 ai 12 anni in diversi contesti mondiali (tra cui Stati Uniti, Indonesia, Giappone, Australia, Turchia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Regno Unito) e si inserisce all'interno della collana della Multilingual Matters, *Early language learning in the school context series* dedicata all'apprendimento linguistico in contesto educativo. Il panorama di riferimento è quello della nuova politica linguistica rivolta all'insegnamento precoce delle lingue, inteso come uno dei maggiori strumenti di sviluppo nell'educazione (Johnstone, 2009). Tale visione ha necessariamente posto l'attenzione sulla formazione del docente (Copland, 2014; Ellis, 2010; Rixon, 2017) e sulla struttura dei vari curricoli di riferimento, non sempre adeguati. I vantaggi di un accostamento precoce ad una lingua seconda o straniera, seppur dimostrati da tempo in campo linguistico e neurolinguistico (Fabbro, Cargnelutti, 2018; Gullberg, Indefrey, 2006) solo di recente trovano accoglimento in contesto educativo e vengono presi in considerazione in misura diversa, a seconda della politica linguistica locale di riferimento. In un'ottica di internazionalizzazione e di sviluppo educativo (linguistico, cognitivo, personale) è d'obbligo pensare a percorsi formativi che includano una o più lingue già dai primi anni di scolarizzazione (Novello, 2018) pianificando un'adeguata formazione degli insegnanti (Daloiso 2009; Santipolo, 2012).

Lo scopo del volume è quello di informare sui recenti studi e sulle buone pratiche riguardanti l'insegnamento delle lingue a giovani apprendenti sottolineando l'importanza della formazione dei docenti basata sulla ricerca. Come specificato anche nell'introduzione, la finalità della raccolta è anche quella di dimostrare come il lavoro dell'insegnante di lingue a bambini vada al di là della semplice proposta di strategie e tecniche didattiche adatte, e comprenda anche la volontà di mettere in atto un processo educativo in continua evoluzione. Per questo motivo i saggi inclusi riportano una varietà di esperienze di apprendimento che mirano a stimolare la riflessione basata sulla collaborazione e il confronto dei bisogni tra docenti.

Per conferire uniformità ad una struttura composta da diversi contenuti, il volume è diviso in quattro parti, precedute dall'introduzione di Subhan Zein e da un contributo di Yuko Goto Butler che sintetizza le recenti ricerche sulla formazione degli insegnanti di inglese nell'est e sud-est asiatico, prendendo in considerazione in particolar modo: le qualifiche, la condizione di madrelingua o di parlante non nativo, la supervisione dei docenti, la ricerca in classe. Butler mira a descrivere lo stato dell'arte dell'insegnamento dell'inglese in Cina, Giappone, Indonesia, Korea del Sud, Taiwan, Thailandia e Vietnam, delineando i tratti principali delle politiche linguistiche dei diversi Paesi volte a definire la qualità della professione docente. La studiosa mette in evidenza come il livello di competenza adeguata sia linguistica che didattica non sia di semplice definizione ed, inoltre, variabile tra le realtà indagate. La distinzione tra insegnanti generalisti e insegnanti specialisti, porta, per di più, ad un atteggiamento diverso nei confronti della lingua straniera, la quale, nella maggior parte dei casi è ancora insegnata con metodologie tradizionali e poco inclini all'approccio comunicativo. Manca una formazione specifica dei docenti, che, come suggerito dall'autrice, andrebbe pensata in un'ottica a lungo termine.

La prima parte del volume, *The complexity of teacher learning*, è dedicata alla complessità del percorso di apprendimento dei docenti, è introdotta dal saggio di Le Van Chan che propone uno studio di caso che esplora il percorso professionale di un docente di scuola primaria in Vietnam. Attraverso la narrazione dell'insegnante, l'autore evidenzia come l'apprendimento di un insegnante sia il risultato della combinazione di più fattori, individuali (cognitivi ed emotivi) e professionali (stipendio, carico di lavoro e opportunità di sviluppo). Emerge come la preparazione dell'insegnante dipenda molto dalla volontà dello stesso di aumentare le proprie competenze, considerato che la politica linguistica tende purtroppo a non implementare la formazione dell'insegnante di lingue straniere che vive una condizione di solitudine professionale.

In maniera analoga, vale a dire attraverso uno studio di caso che ha coinvolto quattro insegnanti di scuola primaria, Zein analizza le caratteristiche del parlato dell'insegnante in classe. Dall'analisi dei risultati ricavati dall'osservazione di brevi spezzoni video di parlato in classe l'autrice suggerisce di immedesimarsi nel bambino di scuola primaria al fine di sviluppare un buon grado di flessibilità nel discorso. Parlare nello stesso modo in cui un bambino si rivolgerebbe ad un suo pari, può, secondo la studiosa, essere vantaggioso nell'insegnamento della lingua straniera.

Nel capitolo successivo, Yuefeng Zhang descrive l'esperienza nello studio delle modalità di apprendimento di sei insegnanti di lingue ad Hong Kong. Attraverso discussioni, osservazioni e analisi di documentazioni, viene dimostrato come, grazie agli studi sull'apprendimento da parte degli insegnanti, il loro approccio si evolva dall'essere basato sulla loro figura alla focalizzazione sulla centralità dello studente.

Con considerazioni simili, Gee Macrory suggerisce una formazione specifica per gli insegnanti che favorisca la dimensione cooperativa nell'apprendimento dell'ortografia in lingua straniera. Per arrivare a tale conclusione la studiosa ha proposto a 55 insegnanti generalisti un questionario sulle opportunità di osservazione e insegnamento della lingua straniera e dell'ortografia in classe unitamente al ruolo della stessa all'interno del curriculum. La scarsità di esperienza sull'argomento emersa dai risultati fa emergere, secondo l'autrice, la necessità di un modello di formazione che promuova l'apprendimento cooperativo.

La seconda parte, *Innovations in mentoring and supervision*, riguardante i mentori e i supervisori degli insegnanti, si apre con la descrizione da parte di Chou Chiou-Hui di un modello di supervisione volto a migliorare le pratiche di insegnamento. L'autrice, attraverso la raccolta di dati sui metodi utilizzati nella scuola primaria a Taiwan, mira ad aumentare la consapevolezza della qualità nella professione docente attraverso la pratica della supervisione. Dopo una parte introduttiva sulla formazione degli insegnanti di inglese a Taiwan, vengono esposti i dati della ricerca basata sull'osservazione di lezioni tenute da 14 insegnanti. Tali dati dimostrano come diversi aspetti osservati durante una prima lezione siano migliorati durante una seconda lezione grazie alla discussione di ciò che era stato osservato e analizzato.

Nel capitolo seguente Yasemin Kirkgoz riporta la propria esperienza nella supervisione di cinque insegnanti nella valutazione della propria pratica didattica e nell'identificazione di un *focus group*, rimarcando la necessità della collaborazione tra formatori e insegnanti per il miglioramento della didattica.

Nettie Biovin nel capitolo successivo, dopo un'introduzione sul contesto della scuola primaria in Kazakistan, analizza l'apprendimento co-costruttivista tra apprendente e docente nell'inserimento della lingua inglese alla scuola primaria, proponendo un *framework* sperimentato con otto docenti e otto studenti basato su: collaborazione, costruzione e riflessione. L'autrice sostiene che la formazione degli insegnanti dovrebbe essere accompagnata da un tirocinio in classe, osservato e discusso, oltre che da un aggiornamento continuo sulle metodologie didattiche più innovative.

La terza parte, *Strategies in programme development*, consta di soli due capitoli ed è focalizzata sullo sviluppo delle programmazioni in contesti bilingui. Il primo capitolo, di Valentina Carbonara, descrive un *framework* per il docente basato su: competenza linguistica, qualità personali e competenze professionali. L'autrice suggerisce l'uso di tale *framework* come una sorta di guida per gli insegnanti di italiano operanti in una scuola d'infanzia bilingue, nel suo caso: italiano e turco. Il *framework* nasce da due domande di ricerca sulle competenze dell'insegnante di lingue e le implicazioni di quest'ultime nella formazione dei docenti. Da questo campo di indagine sono stati, difatti, somministrati dei questionari a nove insegnanti e tre coordinatori scolastici. Dai questionari sono emersi gli aspetti che i partecipanti all'indagine ritengono fondamentali per un insegnante di lingue operante in una scuola bilingue; tali aspetti includono, appunto: empatia, attitudine, uso della lingua, conoscenza delle metodologie didattiche e dei bisogni pedagogici.

Nel secondo capitolo Junko Matsuzaki Carreira e Tomoko Shigyo descrivono uno studio condotto con 34 futuri insegnanti di inglese in Giappone, impegnati nella frequenza di un corso di formazione universitaria per docenti; l'indagine mira, attraverso dei questionari, ad indagare l'insegnamento curricolare della lingua inglese, che è recente per il contesto della scuola primaria giapponese e a studiare come inserire la programmazione didattica nella formazione dei futuri docenti.

L'ultima parte, *Perceptions, knowledge and assessment*, descrive due contesti specifici: quello dell'apprendimento precoce bilingue dell'Australia e degli Stati Uniti. Larissa Jenkins, Elisabeth Duursma e Catherine Neilsen-Hewett descrivono le percezioni e le conoscenze sul bilinguismo degli educatori, evidenziando le diverse opinioni tra gli insegnanti monolingui e bilingui e come queste possano influenzare il rapporto con i bambini bilingui. Nello studio sono stati somministrati questionari a quattro insegnanti, due monolingui e due bilingui, i quali hanno evidenziato, nonostante numerosi punti in comune sull'importanza dell'insegnamento precoce delle lingue, la resistenza degli insegnanti monolingui legata alla convinzione di uno sforzo troppo elevato dal punto di vista cognitivo nell'acquisizione di due lingue; sulla base di ciò le studiose affermano l'importanza di formare adeguatamente tutti gli educatori sullo sviluppo linguistico dei bambini mono- o bilingui.

Nel capitolo successivo Katherine M. Griffin, Alison L. Bailey e Rashmita S. Mistry riportano le consapevolezze raggiunte dagli insegnanti da un approccio bilingue alla valutazione, riportando dati e discussioni derivanti dallo studio condotto con cinque insegnanti. Vengono, inoltre, riportati esempi e linee guida per la valutazione nel contesto bilingue.

L'ultimo capitolo, di Sue Garton, si propone come una sorta di riassunto delle conclusioni tratte dagli studi descritti nel volume e fornisce spunti per ricerche future, tra cui la ripresa delle ricerche descritte, magari con un campione d'indagine maggiore.

La conoscenza di diverse situazioni in cui prevale un approccio orientato alla continua messa in discussione delle modalità di insegnamento al fine di creare contesti educativi migliori rappresenta indubbiamente un supporto per gli insegnanti di lingue. Oltre alla formazione in glottodidattica, la riflessione sul proprio contesto, operato, risultati ottenuti e ambiente di apprendimento dovrebbe essere al centro di un processo educativo in costante miglioramento. La lettura delle esperienze riportate nel volume può essere d'esempio e fungere da spunto per docenti e formatori. Le ricerche presentate sono nella quasi totalità degli studi di caso e coinvolgono un bassissimo numero di soggetti: ciò toglie spessore scientifico alle conclusioni tratte, ma può essere da spunto per riprendere i concetti, sicuramente interessanti, da indagare. Inoltre, l'apprendimento precoce di una lingua straniera o seconda è un fenomeno recente e in crescita, la lettura del volume, perciò, può rivelarsi interessante per focalizzare sugli aspetti fondamentali nell'insegnamento a giovanissimi apprendenti.

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