



*THE LINGUISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS FROM
MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS*

STUDIES AND RESOURCES

N° 4

Capitalising on, activating and developing plurilingual
and pluricultural repertoires for better school
integration

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LIST OF STUDIES AND RESOURCES ACCOMPANYING THE CONCEPT PAPER ON

The linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds

1. *Language diagnostics in multilingual settings with respect to continuous assessment procedures as accompaniment of learning and teaching* – Drorit Lengyel
2. *Languages of schooling: focusing on vulnerable learners* - Eike Thürmann, Helmut Vollmer and Irene Pieper
3. *Migrant pupils and formal mastery of the language of schooling: variations and representations* – Marie-Madeleine Bertucci
4. *Capitalising on, activating and developing plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires for better school integration* – Véronique Castellotti and Danièle Moore
5. *Professional development for staff working in multilingual schools* – Jim Anderson, Christine Hélot, Joanna McPake and Vicky Obied
6. *Co-operation, management and networking: effective ways to promote the linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds* - Christiane Bainski, Tanja Kaseric, Ute Michel, Joanna McPake and Amy Thompson

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Introduction

This study, as part of the project to produce a *European document for the linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds*, aims to shed light on the educational principles, concepts, orientations and goals behind capitalising on the plurilingual repertoires of children from migrant backgrounds at school. At the same time, it aims to provide policymakers and practitioners with practical ways of activating and developing plurality on the basis of respect for persons and needs, as part of an ethical approach geared to commitment and social cohesion.

European countries which become home to migrant children and adolescents aim to integrate them more successfully into their education systems. In so doing they adopt differing approaches and methods, depending on their political choices and the educational and linguistic traditions resulting from their histories and societal development. Over and above such disparities, it is important to reflect on how to develop common general guidelines for treating integration not as an attempt to comply with a pre-existing fixed, stable and standardised model but rather as an encounter between the different traditions, values and practices that emerge, not without difficulty, from a comparison and joint interpretation of experiences and usages. Such an encounter is beneficial to all, bearing in mind that individualities develop in a relationship to otherness (Byram, 2009).

This does not mean comparing value systems, which often amounts to putting them in a hierarchical order, but giving the players involved reciprocal keys with which to compare and contrast interpretations and clarify each side's mutual expectations, roles and responsibilities in the education of young people in order to promote their success.

- Teachers and educators must be able to recognise the value of the practices and educational value systems of the families of pupils entering the school system and take steps to help them integrate, in ways that are respectful of diversity;
- parents and, more generally, communities must be able to understand the school's educational practices and values, and give their children greater help in making the transitions from one set of experiences to another;
- pupils' experience and knowledge repertoires should be mobilized and stimulated to engage their participation, and to support their plurilingualism as an asset for learning and socialisation.

This approach stems from the way plurilingualism is defined: as consisting of competences of different types and levels within a repertoire of usages and linguistic and cultural practices; it integrates the idea that learning skills, linguistic and intercultural experiences and the different forms of knowledge are transferable and thus, constitute assets and tools for better learning (Dabène, 1994; Coste, 2002; Coste, Moore and Zarate, 1997). These options are part of a wholistic view of learning and competence and represent a politically more fundamental view that plurilingualism is a condition of participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies (Beacco and Byram, 2007).

The study is divided into two sections.

The first section outlines the guiding principles underlying the proposals in this paper and is based on approaches already pursued in Europe over the past few decades to ensure that migrants' experiences are taken into account in their school integration.

The second section presents and discusses different educational scenarios involving the establishment of plurilingual and intercultural training based on thoughtful integration and linguistic economy and on the development of cultural and social skills leading to better appropriation of the language of schooling.

1. Benchmarks and action principles

Awareness and recognition of the plurality and diversity inherent in schools and society are nothing new in themselves. What is new is how linguistic and cultural diversity and the valorisation, activation and development of plurilingualism in conjunction with the language(s) of schooling are woven into class routine and pupils' everyday lives. Plurilingual and intercultural¹ education is based on humanist values, which are built on access to citizenship, openness to diversity and otherness, the contextualisation of knowledge, and a focus on pupils as social actors. Because it takes democracy as its lodestar, plurilingual and intercultural education is aimed at all pupils, and is not reserved for a specific category of the population.

The basic principle behind this educational vision is that plurilingualism is an asset, under certain conditions the school has a duty to develop, in the interests of integration and of developing civic participation by everyone. There is a particular need to strengthen:

- the interrelationship and complementarity of languages and learning;
- the transfer of knowledge and competences;
- the recourse to experience (linguistic and cultural) as a cognitive support;
- the critical enhancement of plurality, diversity and heterogeneity;
- the emphasis on reflexive activity, decentration and distancing as tools for better school learning.

These educational approaches can be constructed only by fully taking into account the new diversity factors present in Europe, the intensified mobility and migration and their increasingly varied forms, and the wide range of populations involved. We must therefore not devise compensatory policies for situations viewed as marginal but, instead, rethink the aims and methods of education in/by diversity for all.

In such a situation it is important to look beyond the migrants' "origins" (see forthcoming work by Castellotti), which often bear little relationship to reality, and to harness the complexity and variability of the paths they have followed in relation to the evolution of the societies through which they travel and to which they contribute.

Providing plurilingual and intercultural education along these lines thus entails:

- capitalising in practice on the plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires of young people from migrant backgrounds;
- understanding what they can offer and what they need in the way of learning, particularly as regards the language(s) of schooling;
- for curricular development and class routine, deliberately promoting plurilingual strategies and intercultural dialogue;
- viewing their pluriliteracy development as a continuum, from the viewpoint of cognitive economics and the mutual enrichment of knowledge and practices.

In Europe the work of the Council of Europe since the 1970s has been directed at defining and attempting to harmonise the basic principles and ethical values on which language

¹ Plurilingual and intercultural education means an educational project whose purposes are to protect the fundamental right of every learner to a high quality education and are based on values designed to help the learner develop as an individual and citizen: social cohesion and solidarity, participatory democracy, mutual understanding, respect for and enhancement of linguistic and cultural diversity (Cavalli *et al*, 2009).

education policies are based, in particular the idea that education and, especially, language learning are aimed at all, are learner-centred and reflect the mixed nature of needs, encourage openness to the plurilingualism of others and are a lifelong process. Despite these shared principles reflected in different national programmes, observation of various educational situations reveals usages which in the main still make little use of the diversity of the linguistic and cultural repertoires found in schools.

Research work over the past few decades, some of whose conclusions have been adopted by the Council of Europe, is mostly aimed, however, at stressing the importance and value for the success of children of a positive awareness (by others and by the children themselves) of the plurality of these dimensions. Mainly since the 1980s, orientations and approaches have been devised and applied in certain places, in varying degrees and on varying scales, in order to fill this gap. Systems and approaches of this type chiefly follow two basic orientations:

- One, tried out at the time of the older wave of migration (such as that of the Italians and Poles who went to work in France in the first half of the 20th century), assumes that (often partial) schooling in the first language eases the transition to the major language of schooling, before full immersion in the latter. Languages spoken in families are regarded only as intermediaries and used simply as an interim means of hastening learning of the language of school and society and will then be rapidly abandoned.
- The other started at the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s with the development of increasingly mandatory measures designed to control immigration into European countries and to encourage the more settled establishment of many migrants. Public policies to integrate new migrants were then gradually introduced, and led to construct intercultural approaches which accord a recognised place to migrants' linguistic and cultural usages at and by school.

This period marked the beginning of the introduction, mainly in Europe and Canada, of a range of methods for teaching children and adolescents the languages (and "cultures") of their countries of origin. Known as ELCO (Enseignement de langues et cultures d'origine – Teaching of Heritage Languages and Cultures) in France and HLP (Heritage Language Program) in Canada, these systems, which were developed both in and outside the normal school day and financed either by the host countries or countries of origin, exist in many European countries (for an overall view see the Eurydice study, 2009, page 22). At first they were viewed positively by most parties concerned but have lately received a number of criticisms.

The first criticism is that the linguistic and cultural elements taught usually bear little relation to migrant families' experiences: they generally refer to "standardised" versions of languages and cultures as they are taught in the countries of origin, and take no account of variations (e.g. in varieties of Arabic) or developments and innovations brought about by migrants' experiences of mobility, and interlingual and intercultural contact as a result of migration.

The second criticism concerns the frequently noticed hiatus between the educational orientations, teaching methods etc. of these programmes, which does not encourage smooth interlinking. The main criticism, however, is that such programmes are aimed only at certain children. Far from enhancing their status or integrating them, this frequently leads to a differential treatment or even greater stigmatisation of such children by their "assignment to the language of origin" (Jacqueline Billiez, 2002).

Other methods of enhancing the status of these languages must be devised so as not to reserve them for “migrant” children but instead make them attractive to all pupils, and so as to include plural cultural dimensions in renewed forms of civic education and responsibility.

Some “languages of migration” are also taught as modern foreign languages in various European countries, generally at the secondary level and usually as options (for details, see the Eurydice website²). However, these are not really attractive to pupils because of the low esteem in which they are still held.

Various forms of bilingual teaching also employ languages of migration for the complete or partial teaching of one or more non-linguistic disciplines, particularly when those languages are common in border areas where local mobility occurs. In the Slovak Republic, for example, some schools use Hungarian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and German as languages of instruction. Bilingual school curricula are provided in German and Lithuanian in Poland, and in Finnish and Russian in Finland. Similar examples are found in many border regions (Basque Country, Alsace, Slovenia, *etc.*). The programmes may receive official support from the education ministries of the countries on both sides of the border concerned. They also greatly depend on the teachers’ engagement and constant efforts (McPake and Tinsley, 2007). These programmes, often primarily designed for minority groups in various countries, can be extended to migrant populations. In some cases they take the form of renewed ways of teaching languages “of origin” and they facilitate the expansion of such learning well beyond the “origins” concerned.

These methods are based on principles of integration (or “embedding”) of languages and school subjects, reciprocal immersion (through the presence of pupils speaking the two or three target languages and collaborative peer-learning techniques) and plurilingual education, in which school subjects are taught through national and migration languages and/or English, which may then play a specific pivotal role in the learning process (see Brohy and Gajo, 2008).

Above and beyond these relatively well-known and listed systems which are decided on at institutional level (see the Eurydice summary, 2009), ideas and research have been carried out on devising different methods of raising awareness of, mobilising, and capitalising on plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires. These methods are disseminated and tested in classes and schools, the aim being to link them to the language of instruction in order to improve the latter’s development. They vary according to the political choices made, educational traditions, goals set, environment concerned, chief activities, *etc.*, and to how they are applied.

2. Capitalising on plurality and developing plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires at school

We present below a fairly wide range of approaches and/or programmes which may be used to encourage schools to take account of diverse plural linguistic and cultural usages, raise the awareness of children and adolescents to the opportunities offered by plurality, and develop diversity-oriented repertoires and attitudes (Castellotti, 2008b) in the interests of all. Some of the approaches are global in nature and are aimed at the educational community as a whole, while others are devised specifically to take account of the repertoires of already plurilingual children and adolescents, in cases, for example, where the linguistic and cultural aspects of these repertoires are undervalued.

² http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

The approaches are grouped to reflect three orientations, depending on the roles they play in the backgrounds of the children and their socialisation in the host country. Most of them, it should be stressed, are in no way “reserved” for migrant children and are designed to strengthen ability in the language(s) of the school and plurilingual education for all.

Neither the proposed examples nor the models are exhaustive. They are simply illustrations of the principles and orientations defined above as applied to different situations. As such they should be regarded as tentative proposals which can be taken as suggestions but need adapting to prevailing conditions according to the type of issues and the aims of the education systems and pupils concerned. Different environments and publics mean that the appropriate methods and tools for them must be rethought and contextualised.

2.1 Acknowledging the legitimacy of mobility/diversity backgrounds and paths

We shall deal initially with processes and approaches linked to individual, family and social experiences that played a part in the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural itineraries.

These approaches call into question the stable, settled and usual situations often regarded by children as “the norm”. They encourage thinking about what appears on the surface as familiar and, subsequently, lead to questions about the full range of experiences of mobility, and also about confrontations, both pleasant and unpleasant, with plurality.

In this way, they help to provide new value to existing competences and give them an important role in the development of the new abilities needed for successful school integration.

In this orientation, the best-known example (employed in many countries under various forms) is the portfolio approach, which encourages reflection and commitment by the pupil in his/her learning process. We stress the idea of a portfolio “approach” to highlight the emphasis on the process, rather than on the evaluative aspects of the results obtained.

Among the different types of educational portfolio, the *European Language Portfolios* developed in various European countries under Council of Europe auspices possess several original features:

- A single portfolio is used to record all the learner’s languages throughout a whole key educative stage and validates learning paths and the idea of lifelong learning;
- All European language portfolios share a similar structure, the same reference grid and same competence scales to encourage mobility, transparency of expectations and multiple forms of cohesion and belonging;
- The portfolio is a tool incorporating interlingual and translingual functions, development of language bridging strategies, inclusion of the pupil’s different places of linguistic and cultural socialisation and correlations between them.

“*Language and learning biographies*” listing plurilingual experiences and strategies are also used and include questions, incentives to reflection or proposed tasks for individual or group performance which aim at encouraging an understanding of plurilingualism and reflection on how languages and language operate, communication strategies and learning strategies in ordinary and varied sociolinguistic environments. Carrying out these activities encourages learners to link their linguistic and cultural experiences with different in-school and out-of-school ways of acquiring language, knowledge production and skill construction, the idea being to develop their thinking about their linguistic and cultural paths, analyse and interpret new linguistic and cultural environments and develop reflexive appropriation usages. This

biographical work is based on the principle of enabling the learner to develop “an awareness that his/her linguistic learning processes gain from correlation with others” (Molinié, 2006, p.6) and, among other things, to provide a firmer foundation for their competence in the language(s) of the school (Haas, 1995).

Language portfolios have recently been supplemented by the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*, which aim more directly at creating awareness and constructing cultural-diversity management abilities so as to develop active citizenship by placing an emphasis on intercultural encounters and dialogue, tolerance in respect of ambiguity and misunderstandings, and on recognising plural experiences, decentration and empathy capacity (Byram *et al*, 2009).

Processes of this type can therefore constitute a powerful means of revealing abilities which usually go unrecognised by the school and in some cases are even denied or under-valued, and transforming them into assets.

A second example of account being taken of plural paths is the one proposed under the general title of language awareness, aiming, through reflexive work on linguistic diversity, at contributing to the construction of solidarity-based and linguistically and culturally pluralist societies (Candelier, 2003, p.21). Mention may be made in particular of one of these activities entitled “I live in New York but ... je suis né en Haïti” and published in a work which includes a number of language-awareness activities (Kervran, 2006). This teaching activity, whose main aim is to “take on board the existence of plurilingual family situations and be aware of their evolving nature”, suggests as a starting point for reflection and the proposed tasks a presentation in the form of a story and songs of the path taken by a child born in Haiti who emigrated to New York at the age of 12. The song focuses on plural methods of communication (switching between English, Creole and French, together with different forms of bilingual speech involving the different languages of the repertoire) depending on the child’s communication networks in various situations. Through the life history of another child, this activity invites learners’ reflection on plurilingual practices and migration experiences, whilst encouraging a similar process through his/her own life history and its implications on the linguistic and cultural levels. This process engages pupils in critical reflection, which leads them to a better understanding of migration and integration issues seen from the viewpoint of a newly arrived young person or from that of a young person encountering this form of otherness.

A third type of illustration of this historical/biographical dimension is provided by biographical journals and activities using different media (written, oral, audiovisual, drawings, photos etc) and forms (writers’ workshops, blogs, videos, school projects, etc.). One can narrate one’s own story or, if this is too painful or embarrassing, relate the paths taken by others, close acquaintances (ancestors, friends), public figures (sportsmen/sportswomen, actors/actresses etc), who share parts of their life stories with the pupils concerned. Here the training aspect highlights the process of decentration and displacement of the viewpoint. It provides an opportunity to question one’s own plurilingualism and plurilingualism in general and its relations with otherness, and to alter learning behaviour. For examples, reference can be made to the “Letters to the past” project (FDLM-RA No 39, p. 149), or to the work done by the pupils of a primary class which combines drawings and accounts of migration experiences published on their [school website](#)³, or to the pluriliteracy project developed using “identity texts” produced by young plurilingual pupils in [Canadian schoolrooms](#) (Cummins & Early, 2010; Cummins *et al*, s.d.⁴).

³ <http://demonssaumonde.free.fr/>

For young learners in particular, drawings, videos or photos are an especially suitable means of expressing and reflecting plurilingualism (Molinié, 2009). It is also a method which, because of its familiarity, is a source of reassurance to children, even those who (like newly arrived students) still lack verbal competence, and does not imprison them in a pre-determined standard educational or verbal category. In this sense, it is a productive and inclusive method, which capitalises on all the potential and diverse abilities of children, particularly children perhaps destabilised by migration (see Castellotti and Moore, 2009; Moore and Castellotti, in press). Other examples can be found in the work of Fabienne Leconte and Clara Mortamet with non-French-speaking adolescents educated at collège (lower secondary level) in France who, through their portraits of persons speaking several languages, have been able to clarify, re-read, interpret and give value to their own linguistic, school and local histories. This ability to express one's knowledge and skills also makes pupils more confident and willing to undertake new learning tasks (see Leconte and Mortamet, 2008; Leconte, 2009).

Such biographical approaches, whether made individually or collectively, can reveal the plurality, in different forms, inherent in all the pathways of a group or class, map both their individualities and their points of connection and intersection, place children and adolescents on the basis of their histories within a conscious learning process and, in particular, enable them to acquire the language of schooling. They also enable teachers to better perceive certain key moments in these pathways, and to provide improved guidance for pupils' learning processes.

However, revealing these pathways is insufficient in itself. They must be exploited and extended with the aim of creating, in a more precise fashion as part of school routine, activities that directly facilitate the educational integration of the children and adolescents concerned.

2.2 Constructing and developing plurilingual and pluricultural competence at school

A number of teaching approaches explicitly cover the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence at school. Generally grouped together under the heading of *plural approaches to languages and cultures*, their main characteristic is a global rather than compartmentalised concept of language education which, using different methods, applies several linguistic and cultural varieties (Candelier, 2009). These approaches lay stress on competences which are valid regardless of the languages and cultures considered, including those in the school environment and/or competences concerning relations between those languages and cultures. They cover different forms of *intercultural education*, in its establishment of relationships between persons, in their activities; *integrated didactics*, which aims to help the learner establish links between a limited number of languages already known or being learnt; *intercomprehension*, which proposes parallel work on several languages, laying particular stress on the proximity asset; the different forms of *awakening to language* (*Language Awareness, Eulang, Jaling, Edilic*, etc.), which encourage critical exposure to languages and cultures which the school would not normally teach, in order to promote the development of informed perceptions of the plurality of languages and cultures, plurilingualism and learning. These different models implicitly or explicitly encourage reflection about the languages of school and a strengthening of aptitudes in those languages.

⁴ <http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/files/ELLidentityTexts.pdf>

An initial structuring of these approaches is proposed in the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures*⁵ (CARAP, 2010, in the form of a reference framework designed to co-ordinate synergies and goals. This framework proposes a series of descriptors specifying the competences, knowledge, skills and attitudes concerned in order to facilitate the development and continuous enrichment of learners' plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

Above and beyond their specific features, these different approaches, which may be combined with one another and with other forms of bi- and plurilingual education, have several common principles: their transversal dimensions, their effort to articulate language and content learning, their reliance on learners' multiple resources and transfer of competences, to facilitate reciprocal cognitive strengthening, an openness to otherness, and a social positioning open to mediation (Moore, 2006).

The chief advantage of these approaches is that they give renewed recognition of children's usages and experiences, multiply perspectives and viewpoints and thus help to develop their aptitudes for critical reflection so that they become aware that the under-valuing of their linguistic and cultural practices is not a "natural" aspect automatically attached to them but reflect historical and social ideologies. They encourage reliance on pupils' known languages, decentration and reflection on standards and the transfer of knowledge, competences and strategies from one language to others. They thus fit into a wholistic, experiential, reflective, ecological and economic vision of learning, taking into account the plurality of skills and facilitating their activation in different environments by different methods in pursuit of better learning in school.

2.2.1 Knowledge transfer and interlingual supports

One proposal is therefore to develop intercomprehension capacities, i.e. aptitudes for constructing strategies leading to an understanding of others (at least partly) without necessarily speaking "their language". Such strategies may concern verbal aspects based in particular on lexical transparency in related languages, but also on non-verbal or para-verbal aspects in the case of languages less immediately "transparent". For example, mutual understanding can be facilitated by making use, in the written form, of common conventions on the layout of texts and documents, punctuation, construction of types of text or, in the oral form, on transversal aspects of mime or gesture or shared intonations.

Teaching activities make particular use of these aptitudes, as shown in the [European textbook EURO-MANIA](#)⁶ (Escudé, 2008), which is the outcome of a European Socrates project. Its focus is the integrated construction of learning activities in various school subjects (science, technology, mathematics, history) in six Romance languages (French, Italian, Occitan, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish)⁷.

Other more specific intercomprehension activities are to be found in teaching materials on language awareness (see, e.g., "Moi, je comprends les langues voisines" in Volume 2 of the *Eole* textbook). Work on establishing links between related languages may also be done with Romance (French, Italian, Romanian), Scandinavian (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), African (Linguala, Kikongo, Kidinga, three central African Bantu languages) or regional and national languages (Gascon Occitan, Catalan and Portuguese) (see CREOLE magazine No 5, 2001). Over and above the implementation of bridging strategies between unknown but related

⁵ <http://www.ecml.at/> : Activities → Programmes 2004-2007 → C → [C4. ALC – Across Languages and Cultures](#)

⁶ <http://www.euromania.eu/index.php>

⁷ see also <http://www.eu-intercomprehension.eu/activities.html>

languages, the aim is simultaneously to promote learners' awareness of their own resources and encourage them in meta-linguistic reflection, whilst spurring them into an active process of discovering meaning through a flexible methodological route based on inter-language circulation (see too Conti and Grin, 2008). These approaches are extremely important for integrating migrant children by giving value to their competences and encouraging them to harness them, use them to activate their reflective capacities and simultaneously construct bridges so as to facilitate their access to the common language of communication and schooling.

In switching from reception to production, transfers and support are also constructed using integrated didactics methods, which can be applied in different ways. Reference has already been made to institutional methods of bilingual teaching and to various degrees of immersion used in many countries but at class level, different teaching scenarios also aim to promote integrated learning. Mention may be made, for example, of the integrated didactic process used longitudinally for children by A. Feunteun and establishing links between the language of school (in this case, French), the foreign language in the early learning stages (usually English) and linguistic/cultural awareness activities, making particular use of the diversified resources of children (for example, those of migrant background) and their families. This type of method has a twofold aim which covers both reliance on previous knowledge and skills and better appropriation of the languages of school (language of schooling and modern language) (see Feunteun and Simon, 2009). The explicit reflexive aspect of these activities is a substantial contribution to getting children to work on their perceptions of difference and on their abilities to see themselves as "the other's other" (Feunteun, 2007).

2.2.2 Decentration and detour

The use of "third languages" which are neither the major language of schooling nor the family languages of the children concerned but a knowledge of which, even if only partial, constitutes a bridge facilitating communication in the classroom, and is therefore a method which should not be ignored.

English, which is the internationally widespread language par excellence, is certainly the leading (though not the only) language capable of playing this role: newly arrived pupils, particularly the older ones, have increasingly acquired some ability in that language, thus facilitating:

- initial contacts and the management of school tasks (simple instructions, recommendations, explanations, *etc.*);
- quicker access to a language of schooling which uses the same alphabet and, in the case of certain languages, shares certain lexical similarities;
- recognition of its value in modern-language classes where the children concerned can for once use their knowledge in the same way as others. Certain teaching methods used, for example, in English classes in secondary school can even take advantage of the abilities acquired in L2 English to propose suitable exercises. Existing knowledge in English may be utilised through suitable exercises as a basis for constructing skills which can then be used in the language of schooling while other pupils do the reverse (see Castellotti, 2008a; Forlot, 2009).

This "detour" function in which attention is first focused on a less important but better known object and then shifted to the core of the learning process which, for every non-native

speaker, is the principal language of schooling may also be fulfilled by previously acquired knowledge in other subjects. Even if educational traditions differ, the knowledge and skills gained in, for example, mathematics, biology or geography during education in another country can be a bridge to acquiring the new language of schooling in which the underlying concepts are reformulated. This movement is opposite to the one which we are accustomed to, from content to discourse, from subject-based knowledge and skills to language skills.

2.2.3 Interlinked learning processes

Most of the approaches described so far utilise languages (and often “cultures” as well) as clearly differentiated and separate systems. However, in migrants’ daily lives (as also in the “ordinary” multilingual environments constituting by far the majority worldwide), these systems are inter-related. Plurilingual people live, communicate and identify themselves using a combination of different linguistic and cultural resources and linking them according to their situation and that of those with whom they are speaking. They do not separate these resources into boxes but “mix languages”. It is therefore important that such practices should be acknowledged and justified both in the classroom and elsewhere, especially as they constitute tools for learning and play important roles in shaping identity (Castellotti and Moore, 1997; Moore and Castellotti, 1999).

Seeking pupils’ diverse experiences and their skills and knowledge, not stigmatising their composite or approximate efforts and acknowledging the value of their plurilingual resources in everyday life is thus extremely important for their social and school integration.

Furthermore, such an approach can also lead to plurilingual learning sequences which turn the strategic assets of these children and adolescents to account by seeking and accepting their interlinguistic production and showing them in concrete form how they can build on what they already know and practise in order to make progress and use all their skills.

In such a case, teachers, without necessarily possessing any great competence in many languages, may themselves employ known elements in pupils’ languages to legitimise such plural production and clarify the possible linkages which those elements can constitute. Observations in multilingual and multicultural classrooms show that just allowing pupils to utilise their abilities in several languages at the same time and encouraging such cross-production prompts them to communicate at school and gives them confidence in their ability to also acquire the language of schooling (see Gajo and Mondada, 2000). A further step forward can be made by organising explicit reflexion about the different language varieties present in the classroom, for example through contrasting grammatical activity rooted in pupils’ production, as proposed by N. Auger (2005).

Over and above the actual content of exchanges, it is important to reflect also on the para- and non-verbal aspects of identification and communication, which depend among other things on different traditions and can lead to misunderstandings in practice: the meaning of glances and gestures, manifestations of respect and politeness and forms of commitment to others depending on status must be explained in order to encourage an appropriate look at otherness and its meanings.

All the approaches mentioned must be organised and dovetailed from the curricular viewpoint in order to construct a general education in/to plurality (Castellotti, Coste and Duverger, 2008); such education should also include approaches which, whilst partly applied in the school framework, are focused more on relations between the latter and out-of-school life, the emphasis being placed on methods of bringing both these aspects closer together

so as to establish links with families and to take advantage of pupils' social and, more broadly, cultural skills.

2.3 Forging links between school and environment so as to acknowledge diversity and promote social cohesion

2.3.1 Bringing families, school and social partners closer together

One of the challenges facing teachers and parents is communication either because the parents do not speak the teachers' language or because the values attached to education and to the reciprocal roles of the various school actors give rise to cultural misunderstandings. It is therefore important to provide keys for interpreting the school to the parents of children from migrant and/or minority backgrounds, just as it is important to help teachers to obtain a better understanding of their own values and educational practices as well as those of the parents of the children whom they teach. In the case of war refugees other factors must also be taken into account: the fact that the children may not have attended school before they arrived at the school in the host country or may have been taught in a language other than that of their family or their country of origin and reception (this is the case, for example, of child refugees from French-speaking African countries at war who were held for several years in camps in English-speaking Africa before being accepted by French-speaking countries in Europe or North America).

Tools of value to parents and teachers must be easy to use and apply, provide a picture of the salient features of the educational traditions and values of parents and the school, lead to an understanding of reciprocal needs and expectations and put forward strategies for encouraging parental involvement and co-operation between families and the school, as well as with community bodies and those providing migrants with integration support. Use of these tools is of central importance for the successful schooling of children from migrant backgrounds.

Commitment by parents (and their children) depends on their reception by the school and their participation in the school's activities and in planning decisions on diversity integration. It is also important for parents to feel involved in homework and competent to help with it, particularly in the case of literacy and numeracy activities in primary school. It is therefore essential to be able to involve them in support for reading in their languages and in the language(s) of the school, even where parents cannot read or write in any of the languages considered.

Lastly, it is of central importance to involve not only teachers and parents but also internal or external partners whose actions and services affect young people and their families in reflections and decisions concerning the reception of young migrants, turning their knowledge and competences to account and possible links with other school actions. It must therefore be possible to put into effect collaborative strategies between the different parties involved in the child's education, including the social and reception services and health services, in the interests of better planning and co-operative action. Various instruments are available for assisting teachers and administrators in this task of bringing the parties together. For example, the companion guide entitled *Bringing families and elementary school closer together* (2004), developed in Quebec offers two tools which can be downloaded online, one aimed at teachers and designed to perform an inventory of school practices and the other at parents, comprising a questionnaire in several sections whose purpose is to facilitate communication between parents and school and encourage their

participation in school life. These documents are accompanied by user guides (with scenarios on the handing of questionnaires to parents) and by analytical and summary sheets to assist interpretation. The purpose of these instruments is to help schools develop their own model for working with parents, promoting better mutual acquaintance and a better knowledge of what each side needs and expects. The guide stresses four focus areas for co-operation:

- school-family communication
- role of parents
- parent participation in school life
- cooperation with the community to meet the needs of families.

A wide range of teaching materials (text books, films, documentaries, *etc.*) for the use of teachers has been developed and invites reflection on current migration and its consequences for the classroom and day-to-day teaching. For example, Perregaux (1994, German version Nodari *et al*, 1998) proposes in the *Odyssea* handbook a teacher-training tool based on a series of migration-linked scenes in Switzerland and presents factual information, case studies, extracts from interviews and suggested actions facilitating the reception and integration of the new pupils in the class. Practical questions are put to teachers such as “A new pupil is arriving in my class. Why? Why should I get to know the pupil and his/her family and how do I do it? I do not understand the new pupil’s behaviour and reactions, nothing seems obvious to him/her. Why? As regards the place of languages and cultures in school, how can I accept the pupil’s language(s)? How can I recognise the pupil’s knowledge?” Teachers are encouraged in particular to understand better the implications of migration and of status in the new country (refugee, asylum seeker, *etc.*) in conjunction with socialisation networks, language practices and the greater or lesser cultural and social distance from school norms. Although the work focuses primarily on reception of new arrivals it aims to encourage critical reflection and changes in teacher practices. Developments of this type of work can be found in the teaching magazine CREOLE (*Cercle de réalisation et de recherche pour l’éveil au langage et l’ouverture aux langues à l’école* – Creation and research circle for language awareness and openness to languages at school). For example, Issue No 11 of the magazine (2005) presents a teaching file on first names giving their linguistic, cultural and identity-related associations and enabling, among other things, investigation of life histories, links between family memory and the future direction of parents (and their children), together with the inclusion and exclusion processes that may be attached to use of those names in different contexts, particularly school.

2.3.2 Encouraging a plural learning culture

It is also important to include in ordinary class practices different thought paradigms and knowledge systems (not Eurocentered) transmitted in many different ways so as to promote a plural learning culture.

For example, various groups promote educational cultures based on a broad distribution of responsibilities, which in European societies are attributed to parents and the school, and on children’s independence and their autonomy at an early age. For many parents of migrant backgrounds social models are transmitted by example and the use of storytelling. It therefore becomes important to recognise the different parenting role models at school, both the extended family (which may include members who are not automatically regarded as “parents” seen from outside the group), the role of other significant persons in the

transmission of knowledge (such as grandparents) and the place of the narrative approach in the collection and interpretation of information.

One example is the establishment of intercultural multimedia libraries in school and of intercultural and plurilingual reading areas in class and the creation of school projects through which the family-school link can be developed and strengthened around literacy activities. These activities typically require greater involvement of parents, who are expected to participate in the creation of the class intercultural area and in the translation or creation of books and are invited to attend classes where they can read or recount stories, act them out and put them in oral or written form. They represent an opportunity for non-native children to have their languages and experiences valued in the school framework and, in the case of other children, they are likewise an opportunity to discover the universe of story via other languages and writing systems, together with various discursive forms of narration, cultural forms of illustration and dialogue, and to understand their structures and characteristics through comparison.

2.3.3 *Developing pluriliteracy at school*

The development of literacy is one of the school's central aims and it is therefore very important in this area to reflect on what methods are best suited for making use of plural knowledge and skills. For most children the first contacts with the written word concern family events in a wide range of forms. The night-time fairytale read to a child is a cultural practice particularly favoured by Western societies. But books are not necessarily the only vehicle for the written word. Relationships with writing are matters of cultural practice, often at odds with those of the school, either because families encourage intensive learning of the written word even before their children enter school or because, for various reasons linked among other things to migration histories, books do not form part of the family universe. Family literacy practices also employ different forms of writing often overlooked in schools (Penloup, 1999) (e.g. shopping lists, words stuck to refrigerators, advertising in letterboxes, text messages, e-mails, etc.) and different languages and alphabets (e.g. alphabet and logographic systems) which are used for different purposes (French and English for news, Punjabi for family letters, Arabic or Urdu for sacred texts, etc.). The written word therefore serves a very wide range of functions and parents also employ strategies that differ from those preferred by the school to put over lessons to their children (learning of word lists, text copying, varying degrees of importance attributed to handwriting or the new technologies, etc.).

While for most children the learning of reading and writing coincides with entry to primary school, it is important to recall that migrant children may arrive at school at different learning stages and different times in the year. Their paths before arrival at the school may be complex and involve various degrees of exposure to languages and school. For example, young French-speaking Africans fleeing their war-torn countries may spend several years in refugee camps in English-speaking Africa (such as Tanzania) before they start at a European school (French-speaking, English-speaking, etc.). Literacy may therefore have been acquired at schools using different languages and possibly different written forms according to different objectives and in schooling conditions which are difficult to compare. Such periods represent difficult hurdles, especially as such appropriation of the written word then takes place according to unfamiliar linguistic and cultural usages.

Various formulas for pluriliteracy development (Moore, 2006) in majority and minority languages are designed to utilise the different experiences of the relationship of young migrants to the written word. We note, for example, the simultaneous bilingual literacy

campaigns involving German and a language of migration (Turkish, Italian, Croat, *etc.*) on an equal basis and developed in classes half of which consist of German-speaking children and children speaking the minority language, which have been run, for example in Frankfurt. In these projects, all children learn to read and write simultaneously in both languages with no specific separation or grouping, which from the learning viewpoint helps to equalise languages of different sociolinguistic status and thus acknowledges minority languages as legitimate educational resources (Budach, 2008). This can also lead to the enhancement of contextualised language usages by using out-of-school materials, such as from the family circle, to the establishment of forms of plurilingual co-operation not only between teachers and learners but also among pupils and to acknowledging the value, by cross-fertilisation, of the different types of sociocultural knowledge contributed by the children.

Another example is the *Sac d'histoires* (Bag of Stories) project originally initiated by Montreal schools to support the literacy of children from migrant backgrounds and adopted some years later by Geneva schools as part of their approaches to language awareness and openness to languages at school (EOLE). *Sac d'histoires* is aimed at promoting the languages of migrant pupils in access to school literacy, openness to others for all class pupils and co-operation between families, especially newly arrived families, and school. The project is based on the varied literacy standards of families, which include different relationships to books, the written word and preferred modes of expression. At the same time, the project forms a bridge that involves parents and grandparents directly in the preparation of stories (for example by inviting them to translate and read them in their own languages) and the accompanying games, suggesting that they all sit down together to read the stories (an activity made easier even for non-reading parents through the recordings supplied, which indicate by sounds when to turn the pages⁸). This inclusive and collaborative task makes for better integration of parents unfamiliar with the school, acknowledgement of the value of all the languages represented in the class, interest and curiosity regarding the language of others, discovery of the different ways of writing, reliance on one's own language for learning to read and write in the language of the school, socialisation in accordance with different models of readers and different forms of relationship with family and school literacy (reading with an adult, group reading, independent reading, reading for oneself, reading for others, *etc.*), assigning shared responsibility for success at school and shared pride in the plurilingual capital of the class as a whole.

2.3.4 Incorporating multiple viewpoints in learning processes

The incorporation of different viewpoints in learning acknowledges the various knowledge-related experiences as opportunities to become acquainted with otherness involving civic and social goals. The teaching of history and geography in particular makes it possible to draw on the experiential knowledge of young people from migrant backgrounds and give rise to negotiation on the basis of joint and compared interpretations of events or semantics of place. This work facilitates transitions from one space to another whilst giving value to multiple knowledge systems and work on the language of the school (by comparing, for example, the cultural and semiotic scripts attached to the concepts). The incorporation of diversity through the subjects and curriculum as a whole, however, happens more rarely.

⁸ http://www.geneve.ch/enseignement_primaire/sacdhistoires/

There are some exceptions, particularly in Canada, where the question of the integration of languages of migration is tied in with the issue of indigenous languages and cultures.

For example, the Ministry of Education of the Canadian province of British Columbia, where there is considerable linguistic and cultural diversity as a result of migration (particularly Punjabi and Chinese) and a large aboriginal presence (over 30 indigenous groups in the province), published an education guide in 2006, accessible free online, which contains resources, lesson plans, user suggestions and teachers' notes for each subject according to the pupil's level (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006). It deals, in the social science field, with the provincial and federal systems of government and the justice system compared with tribal systems of governance and justice and representations of leadership in the different socio-political contexts considered. These documents supplement a curriculum which devotes a prominent part to the cultural knowledge represented by local migration. Another example of the incorporation of different educational viewpoints which takes account of other systems of knowledge in curricular reflection is given on the website of the Canadian Council on Learning/Conseil canadien sur l'apprentissage (CCL/CCA). Three interactive graphic models (First Nations, Métis, Inuits) are presented online in the form of trees of life (First Nations and Métis) and of a "life blanket" (circular for the Inuits) which describe the essential values of holistic lifelong learning for each group and define the interrelations. This site also gives resources and documents useful for a better integration of indigenous knowledge in official education curricula and emphasises the importance of an experiential and holistic approach⁹.

Similar reflection has begun in other contexts where languages of migration and indigenous languages are in close contact in the majority school system in order to improve the symbolic and practical integration of the plurality of languages and cultures. New Caledonia, for example, has recently developed history and geography textbooks which present better-contextualised school curricula which incorporate the different languages spoken locally, not only French as schools' principal language but also a number of Kanak languages such as Drehu, Nengone, Païcî and Ajië. Choosing plurality in this way enables subjects to be learned in the local languages while promoting critical historical analysis, landscape reading and understanding how societies organise space, together with openness to diversity, learning how to "live together" and education for citizenship. These programmes advocate an oceanic approach to local and international history, colonisation and decolonisation, and sustainable development and thus reflect the introduction of learning of the Kanak languages since 2006 in primary school (Ministry of Education of New Caledonia, 2009¹⁰).

Such approaches suggest that educational contents must be linked to epistemologies which are familiar to young people and their families, must take account of their cultural footholds such as their day-to-day knowledge which can be incorporated in regular activities and must be based on the knowledge and skills implicit in ordinary practices not only in the "traditional" aspects of the latter but also in the mixed and developing forms developed during migration paths. These orientations encourage a shift in perspectives and thus re-enable classes to give a voice to long ignored or stigmatised forms of knowledge (Dasen and Akkari, 2008). Here too, the idea is not to favour one knowledge system over another but to multiply viewpoints through a process of confronting relationships enabling a break to be made with the universalist options of education so as to foster greater recognition for the complementarity of approaches and goals and give greater encouragement to the successful

⁹ <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl>

¹⁰ www.prim.edu.gouv.nc

integration of young people from minority and migrant backgrounds as part of a process of mutual enrichment.

Numerous researchers thus agree today on the importance of recognising the mathematic and scientific resources developed by pupils out of school and of asking questions about the logic behind, for example, certain pupils' numerical system or apportionment of time and about how they appropriate this type of knowledge in another cultural-linguistic space (Gajardo and Dasen, 2007), irrespective of whether these logics concern ways of counting, mathematical procedures, systems of denomination by language or ways of measuring, situating themselves in time and space, drawing and building, constructing methods of explanation or visualising problems.

This work is useful to all pupils in that it is a help in understanding the diversity of spatial and temporal organisations, social practices and any associated rites and rituals. At the same time, it must be linked to the goals of study plans in science, history or geography, while making it possible to develop cross-curricular competences and strategies useful for all school subjects, such as research, the reading of tables and maps, classification of information, summary of results, etc.

An illustration is provided by the *Sharing the Skies* project (2005), a document in English and Navajo, published in partnership with NASA (Maryboy and Begay, 2005). The teaching activities presented there in the form of data sheets and a bilingual CD entitled *Winter Stories* are designed to train secondary pupils in space science from the viewpoint of integrated astronomy. An alternating presentation is given of Greek and Navajo cosmology and of planetary systems and stars by recourse to the mythological stories attached to them in the two cultures, relationship to animals, harmony and chaos, spirituality, rituals and social values. A comparative intercultural look is taken at the history of astronomy and at the role of Greek, Sumerian, Babylonian and Maya astronomy as seen by space science today. Approaches of this type may take place in different contexts so as to include learning activities of significance to different groups of learners.

Conclusion

The educational models chosen here, based on respect for and enhancing the value of plurilingualism and culturally diversified methods of learning and knowledge transmission, encourage the development of links between family, social and school expertise and the resources from which every child should be able to benefit: an experiential, integrated and holistic approach to plurilingual and intercultural education resting on the enhancement and sharing of learners' life knowledge and a reflexive stance concerning those aspects so that pupils will be better prepared to succeed at school. They call for the relationship between languages and knowledge at school to be viewed differently in order to encourage the interlinking of knowledge systems and the taking into account of different competences and traditions, promote constructive development, reflect on contacts and construct plurilingualism as a learning tool of use to all. The challenge is thus to construct an explicit educational project in which access to social and school resources gains from being conducted in several languages for mutual benefit in knowledge appropriation. Enhancing the value of linguistic and cultural diversity helps in this way to strengthen social cohesion and integration in order that "everything practised outside and in addition to the language of schooling may benefit the latter and, conversely, that the manner in which the latter is exercised and developed may also lead to an open-minded attitude to plurality" (Castellotti, Coste and Duverger, 2008, p.12).

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