



Teaching language and teaching *with* languages is what is called for in contemporary classrooms, be they language classrooms or otherwise. When the learners' plurilingualism and societies' multilingualism have social, cultural and political implications, becoming aware of language matters is a necessity both for non-specialist teachers and language teachers alike. This book thus presents a variety of research-based perspectives on the cultural-political and social-educational domains of language awareness. Context, both historical, socio-economic, political and cultural has an undeniable impact on language attitudes and awareness, and the variety of different contexts contained in this volume – the Basque Country, Catalonia (Spain), England (UK), Finland, Germany, Hong Kong (China), Japan, Portugal, Scotland (UK), and Turkey – testifies to this. As each chapter outlines the specificities and the impact of context upon language policies, attitudes and beliefs, the authors in this book focus on language awareness as a multi-faceted concept fit to play a major role in the reform processes of teacher education in the 21st century.

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Breidbach / Elsner / Young (eds.) · Language Awareness in Teacher Education



**Stephan Breidbach
 Daniela Elsner
 Andrea Young
 (eds.)**

LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

**Cultural-Political and
 Social-Educational Perspectives**



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Multi- and plurilingualism in teaching and learning *(Mehrsprachigkeit in Schule und Unterricht, MSU)*

Multi- and plurilingualism

Multilingualism is a social reality in most contemporary societies, plurilingualism is a part of many if not all people's lives. Multi- and plurilingualism are an everyday experience.

Additionally, the notion of being plurilingual also describes a personal attitude: Next to the ability to communicate competently in languages, plurilingualism comprises the awareness of the world as multilingual and the willingness to live and participate in multilingual contexts. Against this backdrop, multi- and plurilingual education clearly has a political as much as a pedagogical dimension.

Schools

One of the primary responsibilities of schools is to enable young people to act competently in a multilingual world. Therefore, school needs to make multilingualism live through valuing it as a pedagogical aim and ethos alike. *

Teaching and learning

There are numerous ways to experience multi- and plurilingualism in teaching and learning. Learners may be or become plurilingual individuals, schools are situated in multilingual communities. Even in classroom teaching multilingual settings abound: from 'traditional' foreign language teaching to content and language integrated learning, and all variations in between. Seen from a semiotic perspective, even subject-matter teaching can be multilingual in placing other symbolic systems alongside language and teaching subject-related discourse through language.

Multi- and plurilingualism in teaching and learning (*MSU*) addresses the complexity of a multilingual world, multilingual societies and plurilingual individuals. The editors intend to offer a forum for research representing the whole spectrum of scientific enquiry into multilingual education. Contributions are welcome from all disciplines and methodological backgrounds.

Stephan Breidbach (managing editor)
Gerhard Bach
Dieter Wolff

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Engaging with diversity in teacher language awareness: teachers' thinking, enacting and transformation

*Ana Sofia Pinho, Lurdes Gonçalves, Ana Isabel Andrade and
Maria Helena Araújo e Sá*

Educating language teachers in the scope of pedagogies for linguistic diversity and in the fields of plurilingual and intercultural education has been a challenge to language teacher education. In this paper, we draw on a humanistic and ethical perspective of language teacher education and argue for the need to raise language teachers' awareness of plurality and grasp of otherness at several levels, and to transform such a commitment into pedagogical actions. The paper describes two research and education projects that assume the concepts of intercomprehension and plurilingualism as ontological and epistemological transformation anchors and organising tools for education programmes. It is believed that these concepts may contribute to the expansion of teachers' language awareness and to processes of professional re-socialisation into another discourse about languages and cultures in general, as well as to changes in representations of language teaching. Based on a narrative analysis, we look at the participants' voices in search of discursive reconstruction over time, taking it as a sign of transformations resulting from awareness processes and professional knowledge construction. The findings are the basis for reflection upon processes that seem to lead language teachers to commit to diversity-based teaching, articulated with their development as language educators.

1 Introduction

Language teacher education faces the challenge to prepare teachers to carry out their pedagogical functions in more complex and creative ways, namely in the context of ever more multicultural and multilingual societies. Several recommendations in the European political context have pointed out the development of language teachers' professional and linguistic repertoires as strategic springboards to a language education that assigns competence and value to plurilingualism, and considers intercultural dialogue as a way of living together (Beacco/Byram 2007; Council of Europe 2008). These approaches to language education are seen as pathways to otherness and more respectful societies, and also to the development of more diverse, integrated, creative and innovative citizens. As some authors point out, there seems to be a connection between plurilingualism and creativity as plurilinguals evidence a "higher capacity for generating new (creative and innovative) processes", to develop "alternative ways of perceiving the surrounding world" (European Union 2009), and to mobilise their creative thought and "multiple linguistic and cultural lenses" in problem-solving (Furlong 2009).

From this standpoint, our opinion is that the focal point of teacher education should be the development of opportunities for educating language teachers in the scope of pedagogies for diversity and in the fields of plurilingual and intercultural education. In the context of Language Didactics as an academic field of study and a curricular area of teacher education (Alarcão 1997), and under the framework of a Didactics of Plurilingualism (Billiez 1998), we have witnessed a growing concern with the development of powerful learning environments in which language teachers can build their own “structures of meaning, knowledge and action” (Buchberger/Buchberger 1999: 68), and thus develop a more expanded language awareness.

Motivating and educating language teachers for diversity responsive teaching has become the core purpose of our own education practices and has attracted our attention as a domain of inquiry. Our line of inquiry gives attention to how teachers learn to draw on linguistic and cultural diversity in their teaching, focusing on language teachers’ professional knowledge, thinking, acting and learning over time. In particular, the interest has been to study and understand teachers’ representations of language teaching, how these change, and the factors contributing or constraining such transformations, namely in the context of courses that intend to foster teachers’ professional development and awareness of diversity. In this paper we present two research-education projects that assume such a perspective.

We begin our contribution with a background outline of our understanding of teacher language awareness in relation to pedagogy for linguistic and cultural diversity in teacher education, identifying the underpinning theoretical and ideological stances. We then present two simultaneous research and education projects, by referring to their educative scenarios (guiding principles, aims, contents and strategies). After explaining the methodology, and presenting and discussing the findings, we reflect upon the processes that seem to lead language teachers to commit to diversity-based teaching and simultaneously to develop themselves as language educators.

2 Teacher language awareness: a pathway to engagement with diversity

Our reflection about teacher language awareness (henceforth, TLA) is framed in a humanistic and ethical perspective of language teacher education and considers diversity as a challenging component of teachers’ work (Pinho/Andrade 2008). We follow a *socio-political* dimension of TLA, which involves the capacity to think and “read” the world of languages and cultures, and to critically analyse one’s own experiences. In particular we build on Freire’s perspective (1996) and his idea of the world of communication as a site of human

interpretation and of collaborative creation of meaning, and the concept of *conscientisation*, i.e. language teacher’s self-awareness as professional in the world. For this reason, TLA regarding linguistic and cultural diversity is rooted in a reflective perspective of teacher education (Schön 1987) and overlaps critical language awareness, since it assumes criticality and reflexivity to be pivotal to more knowledgeable language teachers. This process is sustained by a *meta* dimension of TLA, i.e. teachers’ awareness of their language awareness (James/Garrett 1991).

As we see it, TLA is grounded in a multidimensional standpoint of language education rooted in the dialogic relationship between subjects and society. This means that language education is implicated in issues of social justice and set within the logic of social change and emancipation (Phipps/Guilherme 2003). Therefore it may contribute to the building of a dialogic and intercultural citizenship (Byram 2008). From this perspective, it becomes relevant for language teachers to become critically reflective about the ethical and social stances of their work, and about the consequences that flow from it. Such consciousness becomes an engine and disposition for action, contributing to pedagogical self-constructed guidelines and practices that understand diversity as a value and a resource.

In this panorama, TLA is to be found in all education practices that intend to raise language teachers’ awareness of plurality and grasp of otherness at several levels – individual, societal and interpersonal –, seeking to sensitise and motivate language teachers to engage with language/diversity, and to transform such commitment into pedagogical actions. Such TLA can be divided in two articulated spheres: (i) TLA *of* diversity, which means a language teacher who is diversity-sensitive and notices diversity as a phenomenon, as well as having declarative knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity; and (ii) TLA *about* diversity, which implies an action-oriented professional that takes linguist and cultural diversity as a pedagogical resource to language teaching practices that value and prepare for plurality and otherness.

In our opinion, a diversity-oriented TLA is more particularly grounded in the development of teachers’ (i) socio-linguistic awareness, (ii) socio-cultural awareness, (iii) linguistic culture, and (iv) self-awareness as speakers, learners and teachers. To be more specific:

Socio-linguistic awareness is enhanced in knowledge of the many uses of language and that

(...) language variation, both within and across languages, is a natural phenomenon; that no language variety is inherently better than another; and that the dominant position of a language or language variety within a particular social context derived from the power of the speakers of that language rather than from any linguistic factors. (Lucas/Grinberg 2008: 613)

TLA is then situated in the realm of a humanised image of language and language teaching, which considers individuals as constructors of language (Bahktin, 1988), and symbols of diversity and bearers of otherness, i.e. persons holding a variety of different knowledge, experiences and languages to be capitalised upon.

Socio-cultural awareness, which builds on a broad knowledge of self and others, and consists in knowing of the existence of multiple cultural realms, which means different systems of interpreting and relating (Byram 2008). This would mean language teachers realising that each persons' worldview (including their own) is not universal but influenced by their life experiences and backgrounds, and that "people from different sociocultural backgrounds are likely to have different and equally valid worldviews" (Lucas/Grinberg 2008: 613). Sociocultural awareness also means being conscious of power relations within and between communities. From a pedagogical point of view, such consciousness enables language teachers to mediate, build bridges and establish linkages across and between cultures, and to inquire and capitalise on their learners' backgrounds. In this sense, TLA enables teachers to become *linguaging* actors in the world, to rebuild pedagogy to explore diversity and plurality within human principles, to follow Phipps and Gonzalez (2004: 34). Therefore, diversity-aware language teachers pedagogically favour human processes of developing understanding or intercomprehension, by creating opportunities for students to get involved in plurilingual collaborative and dialogic constructions of meaning (Bakhtine 1979), in which each person uses his or her own language and is able to understand that of the other(s). In this sense, the teacher will be facilitating the development of intercomprehensive capacities at the level of functional linguistic intelligibility in exolingual and intercultural situations, that is to say the intellectual understanding of linguistic information as a whole, even though the subjects have not learnt the languages mobilised in interaction. In addition, such learning situations would also enhance inter-subjective understanding which emerges in the construction of "knowledge from individual to individual" (Morin 1999) (see Pinho/Andrade 2009: 316). As such, diversity-sensitive teachers will be placing the focus of their pedagogical practices on the learning subject, his/her self-enrichment through diversity and adaptation to a diverse environment.

Linguistic culture, which can be viewed as an evolving repertoire of knowledge (*savoirs*) of and about the world of languages and cultures, and constitutes a set of references which facilitates a more comprehensive insight into the plurilingual and multicultural world (Candelier 2003).

Self-awareness as speakers, learners and teachers, that is teachers' awareness of themselves as discoverers of and bridge-makers between multiple worlds, as well as of their abilities to evaluate appropriate methodologies that contribute to

the building of the language classroom as a site of encounter with difference/diversity, where readiness to embrace it is fostered. Consequently, TLA is intermingled with diversity-related qualities of language teachers and with their "language-related experiences, attitudes, knowledge and skills" (Lucas/Grinberg 2008: 607), including their representations of languages and language teaching.

To conclude, TLA can be translated into an engagement with language and such an engagement "can be intellectual, affective, social or political or, usually, a combination of the above" and, as such, it can "encourage, facilitate, discourage or hinder particular types of engagement with language [and language teaching]" (Svalberg 2007: 302). TLA can contribute to expanded subject matter knowledge and foster teachers' professional repertoires in ways that develop their capacities to recreate and innovate practices appropriate to new contexts, situations and learners.

3 Intercomprehension and plurilingualism: portals to diversity-oriented teachers

The development of pedagogical practices that value linguistic and cultural diversity requires a process of professional re-socialisation into another discourse about languages and cultures, and the construction of other worldviews and representations of language teaching. In fact, teachers' definitions of linguistic and cultural diversity (cf. Merchant 1991), as well as their perceptions of their preparedness to embrace and enact a diversity-engaged education are crucial in processes of professional engagement. As Borg (2003) stresses, representations about language teaching/learning are prompts for pedagogically acting in particular ways and filters in the face of new approaches and theories of language education. These also interact with the language teacher's sense of professional identity and idealised project as an educator (Pinho 2008).

The standpoint in our research is that concepts such as intercomprehension and plurilingualism, because they present other possibilities of be(com)ing language teachers, may contribute to transformations in the ways teachers understand language teaching and themselves as professionals. We follow Pinho and Andrade (2008) who consider that these concepts may be portals to new ways of thinking, acting and being within a language teacher education that values and prepares for dialogue and diversity. As such, without developing professional knowledge, meaning, and action about these concepts, language teachers cannot progress to transformed ways of teaching languages. The authors highlight the transformative nature of such concepts, since meaning-making and enactment resulting from learning of plurilingualism and intercomprehension may bring about a change in the perception of languages and cultures and of the teaching

profession. This may in turn lead to a transformation in teachers' personal and professional identities.

Such transformative potential is also found in (i) the public utility of plurilingualism and intercomprehension, since underlying such concepts is the perspective of language education as a path to the development of a better understanding between peoples; and in (ii) the meta-dimension of such concepts. As meta-concepts (Puren 1997), that is complex concepts which regroup other isolated concepts, notions or terms that gravitate in the realm of language education (such as repertoire, transfer, partial competence, strategic competence, intercultural communicative competence...), plurilingualism and intercomprehension allow language teachers to construct conceptual networks which can be transformed into a global pedagogical theory that guides their pedagogical practice. Moreover, as these concepts mobilise and draw together several discourses about languages and the profession, they may provoke intellectual shock and conflict with personal representations about teaching/learning processes and unchain an affective response from the language teacher.

The hypothesis is that intercomprehension and plurilingualism are crucial in TLA, since they call on the dimensions of TLA mentioned in the previous section, and can become mobilising concepts which provide language teachers with theoretical anchors for developing new ideas and practices. As such, intercomprehension and plurilingualism are considered ontological (*being*), epistemological (*knowing*) and praxiological (*acting*) reconfigurators (Pinho and Andrade 2008). To conclude, as organising concepts of education programmes, they may contribute to the expansion of teachers' language awareness and to the development of knowledge for building pedagogical practices that not only value and resort to diversity, but also capitalise on the different cultures, languages and varieties that make up the learners' plurilingual and intercultural repertoire and competences.

4 Paths for transformation: the example of two education projects

In the following paragraphs we present the case of two education-research projects, by portraying their education scenarios (topics, strategies, tools and duration). These projects take intercomprehension and plurilingualism as conceptual tools for TLA and the development of a new intelligibility about language teaching. Broadly speaking, the projects' general aim was to raise language teachers' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, through the creation of learning opportunities to reflect upon, engage with, and pedagogically enact such commitment. Both projects are framed by a particular vision of language teacher education, translated in a dialogic, transformative, empowering perspec-

tive that values diversity. This is visible in the common principles guiding the design of both education scenarios, as specified below:

- Humanistic, political and ethical perspective of language teacher education
- Awareness of language multidimensionality
- Consciousness of the role of the individual as a constructor of language
- Didactic concepts as epistemological and ontological transformation anchors
- Professional development as a continuous process, involving the reconstruction of:
 - professional identity
 - representations of language teaching
- Diversity of experiences
- Multi-dimensional reflexivity
- Collaborative-focused and context-situated work
- Practice-oriented and research-based projects as spirals of learning

Though in the realms of both theory and practice, the projects adopted and fused particular purposes and perspectives of teacher education. Each one was based on a particular didactic concept - intercomprehension (project 1), and plurilingualism (project 2), which were used to design each education path and confer on them a certain identity.

4.1 Project 1 – “Education path in intercomprehension”

This education project occurred in the context of initial language teacher education and involved a group of four student teachers who were taking a degree in the teaching of Portuguese (mother tongue) and English (foreign language) at the University of Aveiro, Portugal¹. They were all female, between 21 and 22 years old and had begun their degree course in 1998/1999. All participants were native speakers of Portuguese and non-native speakers of English. Up until the 5th and final year of the degree course (2002/2003), the participants had never had any teaching experience. The “Education path in intercomprehension” was not part of the official curriculum of their teaching degree. It took place in the 5th year of the student teachers' degree course (2002/ 2003), when they were engaged in the teaching practice at an urban secondary school. It intended to bridge the gap between the subjects of study of Language Didactics (4th year)

¹ This project was developed by A. S. Pinho, funded by FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology), POCI 2010 Programme.

and the teaching practice (5th year), as student-teachers consider the latter a key moment of their professional developmental path.

The education scenario built around the concept of intercomprehension resorted to the expertise developed in the Project ILTE² and was organised as follows (see Pinho 2008):

Title	Education Path in Intercomprehension
Key-concept	Intercomprehension (IC)
Specific formative objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to foster student-teachers' understanding of the formative/educational value of linguistic and cultural diversity; - to enhance their knowledge of the world of languages and cultures; - to raise their consciousness of the role of language at several levels (individual, societal...); - to transform their representations of language teaching; - to develop their: (i) plurilingual and intercultural awareness, (ii) theoretical and didactic knowledge of IC; - to promote their identity as teachers of intercomprehension, - to raise their awareness of a personal professional project of development as language teachers.
Contents / Topics	<p>Thematic Modules (Project ILTE)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Linguistic and cultural diversity:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diversity in the world of today; languages of the world and endangered languages; status and functions of languages; European and Portuguese language policy; - plurilingual scenarios, linguistic and professional biographies (analysis of); communication and learning strategies; - didactic tasks and materials on intercomprehension. 2. <i>From communicative competence to intercultural competence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obstacles to intercultural communication; lingua franca; the intercultural speaker and intercultural communicative competence; intercultural communication strategies; myself as intercultural speaker and teacher (self-profile); interaction in plurilingual chats. 3. <i>Language awareness and pedagogical grammar</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language and languages; grammar; metalanguage and grammatical terminology; interlinguistic awareness; language acquisition/learning path; activities of (meta)linguistic reflection. 4. <i>Reading strategies and intercomprehension</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the concept of reading and the comprehension of written texts; literacy in Portugal; activity for the development of plurilingual reading strategies. 5. <i>Transversal topics:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contact with/analysis of didactic materials and tasks. 6. <i>Action-research:</i> principles, methodological procedures and instruments.

² ILTE – Intercomprehension in Language Teacher Education (1998-2002) was a project Socrates – Lingua Action A (56290-CP-3-1998-LINGUA-LA) (see www.lett.unipmn.it/ilte). The Portuguese team developed education modules aiming at the development of language teachers' didactic knowledge about intercomprehension.

Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness sessions about intercomprehension (modules): individual and group tasks - Conception, development and assessment of mini action-research projects - Narrative biographic tasks
Tools	<i>Portfolio</i> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learning journals - reflective notebooks - individual and group reports and assignments - lesson plans and didactic materials
Duration	One school-year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 sessions (2 to 3 hours), equivalent to about 30 hours of contact time, plus about 30 hours of autonomous work.

Table 1: Scenario of project 1

4.2 Project 2 – “Working with the portfolio, developing plurilingual competence”

This education project concerned all language teachers (mother tongue and foreign language) of a secondary and upper secondary school³, where all the sessions were held, and was framed within the Portuguese system for continuing professional development. It was attended by five female English teachers between 30 and 38 years old. Four participants were native speakers of Portuguese and non-native speakers of English and one participant was bilingual. They were experienced teachers knowing four to six different languages: Portuguese, English, German, French, Spanish and Italian, thus having a common plurilingual basis considered as a “rich background in language learning” (Ellis 2004: 105). The first phase of the programme dealt with relevant educational concepts, such as plurilingual competence (Coste/ Moore/Zarate 1997; Andrade et al. 2003; see Oliveira/Ançã in this volume), disclosing the ‘professional landscapes’ (Clandinin/Connelly 1996) of the group and fostering awareness on practice towards a self-analysis and knowledge discussion in the group that could enhance knowledge and, consequently, practice reconstruction. In the second phase we followed and monitored the effects of the first phase through practice oriented projects.

The education scenario summoned the teachers' plurilingualism, enhancing a practice which valued plurilingualism and implemented the students' portfolio as a privileged pedagogical tool and was organised as follows (Gonçalves 2010):

³ This project was conducted by M. Gonçalves, teacher of the referred school, on investigation licence by the Portuguese Ministry of Education and funded by FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology), POCI 2010 Programme.

Title	Working with the portfolio, developing the plurilingual competence
Key-concept	Plurilingualism (P)
Specific formative objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to raise awareness about what being a language educator involves, - to motivate collaborative and reflexive work, - to reflect upon the role of the teacher in their classroom practice, - to propose a reorganization of ways of working, attitudes and roles, - to promote practice which is organized around projects, - to develop the competence of managing and valuing linguistic diversity.
Contents / Topics	<p>Two Phases of the work (2 school years)</p> <p><i>1. First phase (school year one)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concept discussion/clarification (language, language teacher, teaching, learning, curriculum, professional knowledge, competence, portfolio, plurilingual and intercultural competence) - documental analysis (national curriculum, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), European Language Portfolio (ELP)) - discussion and preparation of implementation proposals <p><i>2. Second Phase (school year two)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - examples of classroom practice focusing on language diversity and fostering plurilingual competence - didactic proposals (unit plans) and class observation
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness sessions about plurilingual and intercultural competence: - narrative / reflexive tasks - Analysis and discussion of reference texts - Reflection upon peer and own practice - Discussion of possible activities to foster plurilingualism - Conception, development and assessment of didactic units - Peer observation and discussion
Tools	<p><i>Portfolio</i>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual reflections - unit plan and didactic materials - individual reflection on observed classes
Duration	<p>Two school-years:</p> <p>first school year: 10 sessions (two and a half hours), corresponding to about 25 hours of contact time, plus about 25 hours of autonomous work.</p> <p>- second school-year: 9 sessions (two hours and forty-five minutes), corresponding to about 25 hours of contact time plus about 25 hours of autonomous work.</p>

Table 2: Scenario of project 2

5 The study: methodological details

As mentioned before, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the formative potentialities of two didactic concepts – intercomprehension and plurilingualism – in the context of language teacher education, particularly in Language Didactics. Our interest is to understand how these concepts may act as epistemological and ontological transformation anchors (see above Pinho/Andrade 2008), and lead to an expanded teacher language awareness which

pedagogically values linguistic and cultural diversity. As such, the questions guiding our inquiry are: (1) How have concepts such as intercomprehension and plurilingualism been a determining factor in teachers' language awareness, from a linguistic and cultural diversity viewpoint? (2) Which transformations do such TLA and the knowledge about intercomprehension and plurilingualism provoke in teachers' representations of (i) language teaching and (ii) of their own professional identity?

Given the nature of the study, the adopted methodological standpoint considers that the comprehension of such processes requires the interpretation of the voice of the participants involved in both education paths, assuming it to be illustrative of the teachers' thinking and of their knowledge both for and about their own practice. Thus, the inquiry follows a "discursive notion of the teaching self" (Beijard et al. 2004) and is framed by a narrative approach which envisages reflexivity, and the provisional and historical nature of each individual (Clandinin/Connelly 1994). Consequently, the study takes language teachers' narrative accounts as the major sources of data: interviews and written narratives. Our viewpoint is that discursive reconstruction over time is a sign of transformations resulting from awareness processes and professional knowledge construction. In the present research the analysis follows a hermeneutic perspective and looks for cues of discursive reconstruction in order to depict language teachers' developmental path with regard to two main categories: (i) representations of language teaching (which includes all aspects related to language as an object of teaching and learning) (epistemological dimension) and (ii) professional identity (which translates teachers' representations of themselves as professionals and their learning project) (ontological dimension).

6 Findings

In order to highlight intercomprehension and plurilingualism as powerful learning catalysts, this section is organised according to each didactic concept and tries to provide some glimpses of the transitions and transformations that occurred in teachers' thinking as regards their representations of language teaching and their own professional identities. Due to the limits of the article, our purpose is mainly to provide an illustration of our presuppositions and of the potential of the formative work described earlier.

6.1 Intercomprehension

6.1.1 Representations of language teaching

When analysing the reflective discourse of the four student teachers along the education path, it is possible to find indicators of a changing image of language

teaching. Such indicators are deeply rooted in the construction of knowledge about the concept of intercomprehension (IC) itself, here understood as interfacing and interweaving with several other themes and topics (see Table 1). On the whole, student teachers' awareness of diversity occurred in regard to two inter-related spheres: society and individuals. The awareness in terms of society and communication in general is particularly due to the perception of socio-linguistic and sociocultural issues occurring in several places and countries in the world (e.g. when knowing about issues such as Spanglish in New York, or about South Africa's language policy). This has contributed to the expansion of their socio-linguistic horizons and the understanding of the societal relevance of diversity and IC:

IC presupposes, above all, the conscientiousness by the individual of several aspects, such as the need to preserve the linguistic and cultural diversity we encounter on a daily basis, the pertinence (or not) of a *lingua franca*, the importance of the status and functions of languages, embraced language policies, ... (AL)⁴.

The awareness of diversity in social contexts has enhanced beyond doubt student teachers' insight into an ethical dimension of language education, translatable into formative, political and cultural aims, and the beginning of a more humanised vision of language teaching. Such vision gains expression also in student teachers' awareness of the inner diversity of each person (in terms of plural evolving linguistic and communicative repertoires), and of the need to pedagogically explore learners' linguistic biographies, previous knowledge, language repertoires and learning potential. Intercomprehension highlighted "the importance of transference of competences and strategies in language learning" (AL). Over time, such reconfiguration is visible in their questioning a taken-for-granted representation of language teaching, strongly biographical and tacit, and linked with the powerful established idea of language as a ready-made system of rules to be transmitted:

I began to realise that this is a very wrong idea [...] language is not simply linguistic aspects, it also involves a strong cultural component...it involves direct contact with the language and with the people that speak it. (JO)

Intercomprehension has shown ways of overcoming a strong centeredness on the language itself (as a system) to a focus on learners as speakers, users, analysts and creators of language in more meaningful ways. Student teachers didactically understand intercomprehension as a valuable asset, and a tool to work on other dimensions of language and communication and to transform the language classroom into a place where diversity is cherished and pedagogically valued. When learning about the concept of intercomprehension, there is a recon-

⁴ Henceforth these letters correspond to the abbreviations of the names of the language student teachers or the in-service teachers involved in the research studies and teacher education programmes depicted in the previous sections.

figuration of their representation of language teaching, since it "can operate at several levels: in terms of personal education (development of values and attitudes favourable to intercultural communication) and in several domains of language learning (written and oral comprehension, writing and speaking, language functioning)" (AL). These more diversity-aware teachers develop a more complex understanding of school reality as well:

our schools and our classes are evermore a reflection of the world we live in, characterised by diversity, difference, heterogeneity. [...] this reality poses problems, raises questions and, above all, prompts us to re-dimension our role as language teachers. (AL)

Altogether IC has contributed to a more multidimensional representation of language teaching.

6.1.2 Professional identity

Knowledge of the concept of intercomprehension lead to a socio-affective response from the teachers regarding issues of plurality and otherness, and to a better understanding of the ethical aims of language teaching. As such, it became a mobilising concept for such student teachers, particularly in relation to their idealised professional project within a more diversity responsive teaching approach: "I remember how I progressively changed my conception of what a language teacher should be, and of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in the process of teaching and learning" (JO). Intercomprehension has contributed to the development of a greater capacity to "read" the world and critically think about it as well, which deeply influenced student teachers' perception of themselves as plurilingual and intercultural speakers and of their professional identity. As one of them explains, now more conscious of the multidimensionality of her role as language teacher

I think [this education path] was essentially important for me as a person and then as a teacher; to reflect upon my attitude and the individual I am, in the society where I belong, and about the position I am going to adopt in the future, and see that there are changes to be undertaken. [...] as a linguistic individual it was important to reflect...as a person in the world, who lives together with the diversity of otherness; I had never done that before, at least not so spontaneously. (JO)

The highest point of such engagement with diversity and intercomprehension happened during the development of the student teachers' action-research projects on the theme of intercomprehension. This moment was extremely relevant to their professional developmental process. The possibility of enacting their idealised project as "teachers of intercomprehension" was crucial to the student teachers, since they could understand how such an approach could be developed in practice and thus envisage the possibility of enacting a new representation of language teaching. As the student teachers' voices illustrate: "the crucial point

was to understand that the passage from theory to practice is possible" (JO); "I became more self-assured about working in the classroom with languages I don't know; the pupils and I were on equal terms" (AL); "I learnt that we should never close the door to new experiences" (JO). Yet, such transformation processes, inherent to the passage from theory to practice, were not without some difficulties, of which students seem to be aware. These had mainly to do with student teachers' lack of teaching experience, an embryonic professional repertoire, and a certain lack of a linguistic culture: "The main difficulties were in the realm of competences that would help me to put into action in the classroom everything I had learnt. [...] Such kinds of activities demand a good cultural and linguistic knowledge and most of all an interactive strategic competence (to manage all the activities) that I didn't have at all" (AL).

Student teachers believe that the education path in IC has provided them with a theoretical basis for developing intercomprehension both inside and outside the classroom, and has made them more conscious of what they still need to learn in order to develop practical activities on a continual basis: "I know that there is much more to learn, but I feel that the steps taken so far, though only a few, are meaningful and will be determining for my future professional life" (CL).

To conclude, the professional knowledge developed about intercomprehension has shown to be potentially transformative not only regarding professional identity, but also concerning representations of language teaching and pedagogical practices. As such, intercomprehension as an organising concept of teacher education processes has assumed a formative nature since it has contributed to raising student teachers' consciousness of the need to identify a personal professional project for education in a lifelong learning perspective. As one of them stressed: "I feel I have just started and...I should continue to work on this...and talk about this experience with other teachers" (AL).

6.2 Plurilingualism

6.2.1 Representations of language teaching

At the beginning of the programme teachers believed that their teaching repertoires included many diverse and different types of knowledge. However, they also felt the need for new knowledge as far as language teaching was concerned to which they could also link new working approaches and strategies, thus indicating there could be a place for plurilingualism. They were concerned about their learners' personal development, and in this way approached their role as educators from a humanistic and ethical point of view. Thus, by analysing the reflective discourse of the teachers along the two year programme, indications that the first year gave the teachers a chance to (re)construct their represent-

tations of language teaching can be identified. The teachers showed some signs of giving up their vision of languages as segmented objects in the curriculum pointing to the real possibility of an integrated development of the plurilingual competence in class. Teachers showed a growing sensitivity for plurilingualism, diversity and awareness of language multidimensionality: "I would like to develop plurilingual competence (...) analyse how the subject reacts to the other and to analyse the potential that this contact creates in social, cognitive, affective and communicative development" (ZE). The importance of reflection and discussion are issues which made a major contribution to fostering the process of understanding plurilingualism as a concept and of developing responsive practice which could go beyond the consideration of superficial aspects of diversity :

During these two years of work I learned a lot about issues which I have always considered important but upon which I had never reflected much; language being the link between those various aspects – language as a dynamic construct, as a learning tool, as part of personal and national identity. (CE)

Teachers also became more secure in their practice as a broader understanding of the concept of plurilingualism acted as a theoretical anchor: "this Programme gave me a new sensation of comfort when using other languages in the English class, namely the mother tongue" (ZE). The value accorded to the concept became a possibility in practice in spite of the difficulties because teachers started looking at their learners as speakers, users and creators of language in more personal and meaningful ways: "whenever I was able to overcome some of those obstacles and I conducted activities within this Programme, I felt very rewarded, not only because I had attained a goal, but also because I could confirm how pupils grow and appreciate these types of approaches and that it is really worth insisting on this change" (IS).

Teachers started (re)constructing their representations of language teaching not only by discussing the concept of plurilingualism itself but also by observing their practice and reflecting on what they had done, how they had done it and how it could have been done differently, thus realising practice-oriented and research-based projects as spirals of learning and empowerment. Teachers became aware of the importance of plurilingualism and realised that it was possible to develop it and work following a different and renewed approach to language teaching. They also felt the need for sustained and collaborative work over a period of time to overcome some context-bound obstacles:

Previous methods and deeply rooted pedagogical practices, an overloaded timetable, heterogeneous pupils with very different skills and competences who force me to make an additional effort, or very big classes, pupils' and teachers' lack of willingness or intellectual availability towards innovative practices are some of the obstacles I frequently face and that sometimes constrain and demotivate me. (IS)

6.2.2 Professional identity

The work developed around the new (to the teachers) concept of plurilingualism also led to a reflection about each participant's role as a language teacher in an expanded way which had consequences on the way they saw themselves as professionals. Thus, collaboration and reflection on plurilingualism-oriented practice became keystones in their discourse:

It was crucial to watch our practice and reflect upon it. (...) Becoming conscious of my work as a teacher motivates me to consider my work framed within collaboration, reflection and innovation. I have concluded that it is fundamental to reorganise my attitudes and practices (...) this Education Programme has allowed me to enlarge my horizons; I became a better person and a better professional, more aware of my practice, aware of the need to reflect to improve. (EU)

A year after the end of the programme the discourse of the teachers in their final interviews (FI) highlighted the importance and the effects of the two-year programme as laying a valuable and reliable basis for practice "now we are more aware (...) / of that plurilingual aspect (...) / maybe more attentive / and with more reasons to do it / (...) more secure / more certain that what I was doing I was doing well" (IS). The setting of a theoretical basis, which gave confidence to the teachers, as well as the developed work, facilitated and fostered a process of professional (re)configuration towards a more diversity responsive approach to teaching:

some years ago I taught English / and now besides teaching English I teach many other things (CE) (...) I teach them much more than the language / teach them a culture, a way of life / different" (CE); "maybe the idea I had of what being a teacher is some years ago doesn't have anything to do with what I think today. (EU)

Reflecting together on plurilingualism and on different aspects related to context bound language teaching also stressed the importance of the need to stop to think, to question what was taken for granted and discuss it openly: "I think it is essential / for example the work you have done / which made us think / reflect / think about our attitudes and question what we took for granted / (...) / most of the time it has nothing to do with what we think it is / (EU) (...). In other words, teachers stressed the need to take some time out just to look at themselves as professionals and at their practice of language teaching in order to trace and plan the future, something that the daily pressure of work did not allow. The importance of these kinds of education programmes was underlined, as a means of facilitating a collaborative-focused, reflexive and context-situated work:

This year we have worked alone (...) last year we had the education programme (...) though it was sometimes compulsory (...) and we worked together / we discussed many things / we also had different people in the group / this year they are not here / (...) so it was not easy to work collaboratively. (GE)

To conclude, we could say that this programme provided a diversity of experiences and fostered a multi-dimensional reflexivity which laid foundations and helped teachers to understand and deal with new knowledge and convert it into practice. This programme also assisted teachers in a process frequently characterised by isolation and lack of support by empowering committed individuals to take a step towards making a difference,

the lesson I learned is that if we want to create an optimal work environment / even in terms of continuing education we have to fight for it / we can't be passive / if we are waiting for the school to give it to us / we don't go far. (EU)

On the evidence of this brief illustrative description of the participants' reflections, the next section sets out to draw some concluding notes.

7 Discussion and concluding remarks

In the former section, we sought to provide an overview of both student and experienced teachers' development of TLA, illustrating the importance of concepts such as intercomprehension and plurilingualism to epistemological and ontological transformations in view of a societal, professional and personal engagement with linguistic and cultural diversity. In this final part we discuss our findings and reflect upon some of the challenges language teacher education faces when preparing teachers for diversity-based teaching.

On the evidence of language teachers' voices, we conclude that both education paths led to diversity-sensitive language awareness and to the wish to expand and transform such engagement into pedagogical practices. Findings reveal that we are in the presence of a moment of professional sensitisation to linguistic and cultural diversity through issues related to intercomprehension and plurilingualism. The themes, processes and tools underlying the education paths offered opportunities for rethinking and enacting other possibilities of be(com)ing language teachers, which seem to have positively contributed to the development of teachers' new understanding of their professional identity. Yet, teachers' voices also highlight the complex relationship between engagement with diversity-oriented teaching and pedagogical intentionality and action. These dynamics are not straightforward and interact with each teacher's professional developmental trajectory and contextual factors, as described in the previous section.

A more articulated interaction between thinking and enactment in TLA as far as processes for diversity-oriented teaching are concerned can be assumed as one of the challenges of teacher education. A major conclusion to be drawn is then that the transition in teachers' thinking and the predisposition for action is to be followed closely with pedagogical guidance and involvement in collaborative projects. Moreover, the education paths enabled by both projects underline the importance of framing TLA within principles such as diversification of

experiences and flexibility of trajectories, according to the different moments of language teachers' development. In fact, as findings indicate, although both student teachers and experienced teachers face similar difficulties when dealing with new approaches to language teaching, such as discrepancies between planning and classroom interaction, due to the different moments of their professional development, they highlight particular needs. On the one hand, findings primarily point to student teachers needing to have learning opportunities that allow a closer convergence with the context of practice and thus develop situated and strategic knowledge. Since they are at the beginning of their professional lives, they need to try out and research new perspectives, and thus build the foundations of their professional repertoire and TLA. This seems to be crucial to overcoming default representations of language teaching, and to enriching them with a more multidimensional and realistic view of language and the profession. More experienced teachers, on the other hand, with their professional lives in a process of consolidation, stress the importance of pausing to rethink their practice and to renew their language awareness with new frameworks. In other words, they need to restructure their professional repertoire in order to integrate diversity-sensitive teaching practices and discourses. The relevance of conceptual anchors for such renewal seems to be fundamental.

Particularly relevant in TLA processes for diversity-oriented teaching is teachers' availability to operate transformations, to acknowledge personal resistances and to recognise the significance of assuming the responsibility for their own professional development. As regards this particular topic, we conclude that working with concepts which have a strong political and ideological stance is potentially favourable to processes of positioning and commitment to the development of learners and to the fostering of a school community more aware of and engaged with plurality and otherness. As this article indicates, intercomprehension and plurilingualism seem to fit such features, since they comprise a conceptual and ideological richness which impel language teachers to (wish to) act differently.

Finally, with specific reference to this transformative potential, an important conclusion from the present study relates to the importance of considering the dimension of *time* in teachers' professional development, which is a strong determining factor with regard to the development of ideas and revision of practices or to processes of metamorphosis as language teachers. In this sense, we believe that the concepts of intercomprehension and plurilingualism articulated with the contents, strategies and tools described in this text can be considered a rich resource to processes of transformation in TLA.

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