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Translanguaging for linguistic and cultural pluralism: a study in the context of immigration

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Introduction

During my course of studies I have developed a particular interest in the topic of the promotion of multilingualism, together with multiculturalism. When I came across “translanguaging” I found it admirable and impressive. The term “translanguaging” comes from a Welsh word and was coined by the educator Cen Williams to indicate an innovative approach to bilingualism in education. This pedagogical practice consisted in encouraging students to alternate between languages for different purposes within the school lesson, for example by using one language for the receptive use and another for the productive use. Translanguaging was born as a strategic way of teaching that supports the fluent language practices of bilingual students and fosters children’s entire linguistic repertoire in order to maximize their learning. Many scholars appreciated and gave value to this innovative strategy, by keeping on studying and deepening this topic and experimenting the practice in multilingual classrooms. The meaning of the term was then expanded to refer to the complex language practices of multilingual people and communities in everyday life. In particular this dissertation will focus on this meaning of translanguaging. I will investigate translanguaging as everyday practice, which corresponds to the use of the speaker’s full linguistic repertoire and of all the resources he/she has at his/her disposal to communicate. Translanguaging is indeed a multimodal practice, that is different modes of communication are involved and accepted, for example non-verbal communication has a fundamental role, and we will notice in my case study. I will concentrate on translanguaging as natural practice among people who speak different languages, who manage in this way to catch and produce a message and to construct effective meaning.

I will focus my attention on the following research questions: how translanguaging as everyday practice maximizes communicative potential and why it is an effective practice to construct meaning. In order to answer these questions, I will present some data collected during my research in a trade union office, which is frequented for the most part by migrants, including refugees. These data include excerpts of the conversations that I observed, in which people, first of all migrants, asked for different kinds of services, such as asking for particular paperwork, filling a document,

requesting citizenship, asking for information about work, writing a CV, applying for the guaranteed minimum income, and so on.

With my research conducted in the context of immigration, I wish to demonstrate that translanguaging is spontaneous, since for migrants it is essential to negotiate meaning, understand each other and break down the barriers that can hinder the communication when they arrive in a new country. I will also show that translanguaging is effective, since it brings advantages to the speakers in the achievement of the communicative aim. In the case study we will observe how the employees of the office where I carried out the observations are always ready to adapt to the real situation in which they have to serve and to be flexible in language practices according to the language known by the migrants and the need that led them go to the office.

Supporting translanguaging as pedagogy and as everyday practice is a way to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity. This linguistic and cultural pluralism becomes possible thanks to the fact that in translanguaging no language is considered dominant or more superior to others, and the original cultures of people involved are not forcibly buried, rather they are given the chance to freely express themselves. Multiculturalism is nothing but a resource. The promotion of linguistic and cultural pluralism must be considered from the perspective of social justice. A social just and democratic society is indeed a society that gives value to the different realities of a territory, different languages, included those named “minority languages”, different ethnic groups and their cultures. Translanguaging opposes the idea of the strict separation of languages in language practices and resists the boundaries of named languages imposed by the nation state. It does not designate the languages spoken as L1, L2, and so on, but promotes the speaker’s full linguistic repertoire for the effective achievement of their communicative aims.

The first chapter will deal with globalization, multilingualism and migration. These topics are closely related since the multilingual and multicultural world develops in the context of globalization, which is a set of phenomena that make the world a continually changing place, where processes are in rapid movement. The development of technology and of digital communication in the globalized world has deeply

transformed the modern societies and has increased the movement of people across borders. The chapter will then concentrate on the topic of mobility and migration. Migration moves in many directions and regards a wide range of people of all ages and from many countries. People move from one place of the world to another for various reasons, which correspond to the so called “push” and “pull” factors. People are no longer tied to one geographical area, and the same is true for languages, which are dislocated from time and space attributed to them by traditional language norms. The last part of this chapter will regard monolingual ideologies, which are the starting point to understand why translanguaging was conceived as innovative linguistic pedagogy in education and why it is still difficult to accept such a multilingual practice in many educational contexts. Then I will present some progresses made in linguistics concerning the development of bilingual education, with the aim of questioning monolingual ideologies. These are fundamental premises to understand the origin of translanguaging and to grasp its essence.

The second chapter will focus on translanguaging, the origin of the term, how it was conceived and what it is in theory and practice. I will then explain why translanguaging constitutes a multimodal and transformative practice, why creativity and criticality are two important related concepts and why it is different from code-switching, unlike what people might think. In this chapter, translanguaging will be presented from both the perspective of pedagogy in education and the perspective of everyday practice. As far as translanguaging pedagogy is concerned, I will deal with the way in which this strategy is employed at school and why it is so advantageous and effective for language and content knowledge in classes made up of bi-/multilingual students. Concerning translanguaging as everyday practice, I will describe this language practice as a natural attitude of bilingual and multilingual people and I will present the advantages produced by the speaker’s use of the full linguistic repertoire, which allow him/her to maximize the communicative potential and to construct a clear and effective meaning. I will also explain in greater depth the concept of “social justice” with reference to translanguaging and the way this practice gives value to linguistic and cultural pluralism.

In the third chapter I will present my research and the data collected at the trade union office. I will then analyze some excerpts of the case study according to the functions of

translanguaging in that particular situation and the characteristics reflecting the theory and pedagogy of translanguaging practice. As mentioned above, through my case study I will seek to highlight the efficacy of translanguaging in an everyday context, such as that of immigration. Furthermore, my aim is to claim that performing and sustaining translanguaging practice is an efficient way to promote both linguistic and cultural pluralism, which is a prerequisite to open to new realities, enable a dialogue with new ways of thinking and being and constructing a more social just society.

1. Globalization, Multilingualism and Migration

In this chapter I will present globalization, its main causes and in particular the way it has impacted on the city. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are central aspects of the globalized world. Mobility and migration increase, so that society is transformed and new attitudes arise to face its changes. As far as multilingualism is concerned, society may need to adopt new language policies that can question monolingual ideologies and give value to the various languages spoken in a place, in order to promote the inclusion of the different groups of people living there.

1.1. Living in a globalized and multilingual world

The world we live in is becoming more and more global. Living in a globalized world means acting in a continuous dialogue with other people, cultures, ways of thinking and different realities. The wide use of the media, commercial exchanges, the growth of financial transactions, the job market, migrations flows, multicultural societies, intercultural relations and wars are all aspects that characterize the present global world. Various scientific disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, pedagogy and economics study the processes of globalization (Premoli, 2008: 11). But what is globalization? Globalization is a set of phenomena that make the world a continually changing place, where processes are in rapid movement (Geertz 1999 in Premoli, 2008: 13). Robertson (1992) asserts that “globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992: 8). Globalization has been under way for a long time but it took a new form in the late 20th century when the discussion on this phenomenon intensified. So the term “globalization” has developed quite recently. In the second half of the 1980s its use increased enormously and now, even if it is often used in generic and contradictory ways, it has become part of global consciousness (Robertson, 1992: 8). In the concept of globalization we do not only have to consider the global dimension of the world as interconnected at a high level, but also the fact that we live in a “world in fragments”, as the anthropologist Geertz said (1999 in Premoli, 2008: 13).

The end of the period of tension between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, with the following fall of the latter and territorial and political changes, caused confusion at a global level (Premoli, 2008: 13). This fragmented world was characterized by ethnic or religious civil wars, nationalistic conflicts, linguistic conflicts, internal tensions, and so on, so different realities in different places that have established step by step stable interconnections at regional and global level. Globalization is not a phenomenon only concerning economics but regards various aspects of the human life, especially culture (Premoli, 2008: 12-16). These two dimensions of globalization can be called *geopolitical* globalization and *geocultural* globalization. The former deeply affects society from a political and economic point of view. The latter refers to developments fostered by the emergence of new communication technologies, growing global capitalist processes and increasing global inequalities resulting in new migration flows. In the field of language these geocultural processes affect sociolinguistic patterns and produce new multimodal forms of communication (Blommaert, 2010: 13-14).

Researchers believe that globalization is leading to a more and more homogenized culture: people of different countries wear the same clothes, eat in *fast food* restaurants present in various cities of the world, listen to music and songs in unknown languages, meet new people of different cultures and ethnicity in their own town, listen to real-time news about far places, etc. Isolated areas of the world that are not affected from technological, commercial, media and cultural effects are very rare nowadays (Premoli, 2008:12-16). Mobility increases and the new migrants can easily maintain contact with their countries of origin, thanks to satellite and internet providers. Therefore, while people maintain their cultural origin, there is a constant exchange of information from one part of the world to another (Blommaert, 2010: 7). Globalization has a strong impact on cultures, so that identities and lifestyles also take the shape of a whole of aspects typical of the own culture and the cultures “imported” from other parts of the world (Premoli, 2008: 12-16).

The global dimension can easily be seen in urban society and the multicultural city. The city has been the “key driver of the multilingual future, a concentration of different, changing cultures that somehow, together, manage to create a new identity” (King & Carson, 2016: ix). The city is the destination of migrants, people searching for a job and

professionals trying to climb the career ladder. People from different parts of the country or overseas workers come in the city, so that this becomes the center of multiplicity of ethnicities and cultures. An inevitable consequence is the fact that multilingualism takes hold in the city (King & Carson, 2016: 2).

The term *multilingualism* has a broad meaning and is applied to people who can speak various languages and to places where many languages are used. The Council of Europe (2001) makes a distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism. Multilingualism consists in the knowledge of a number of languages, or indicates the co-existence of different languages in a given society. We also talk about multilingualism with reference to different languages offered in a school or educational system, when pupils are encouraged to learn more than one foreign language, or when the dominant position of English is reduced in international communication. The term *plurilingualism* instead refers to the entire repertoire of varieties of languages spoken by an individual. Among the language varieties, the mother tongue and all other languages or varieties known are included. Plurilingualism emphasizes the fact that multilingual speakers do not keep their languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence on the basis of all their knowledge and experience of language and in which languages are interrelated and continuously interact (Council of Europe, 2001: 4).

People are not only used to hearing different languages in urban centres, but they also see written languages and always read them in advertisements, on posters and on signage. Signs in the city represent forms of multiculturalism. This is a way to give a contribution of the origin culture to the city and at the same time to catch the attention of other people of the same culture living there. Multicultural signs act as markers of the collective identity of groups (Gorter, 2013: 197). As has been mentioned above, the multilingual dimension of the city is a new identity that derives from the various identities of groups living in the city and interacting with one another. The various visible written languages in the city, especially on signs, constitute the *linguistic landscape* that surrounds people everyday. Using the words of Landry & Bourhis (1997: 1), “linguistic landscape refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region”. The concept *multilingual cityscape* is

also used and it is even more precise because most researchers study the linguistic phenomenon of multiculturalism in urban settings (Gorter, 2013: 191). Since language territories are certainly not homogeneous, the linguistic landscape reflects the sociolinguistic composition and the diversity of the various language groups existing in that area. The predominant use of one language on signs relative to other language groups shows the power and status of that language in comparison with the others (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 26). The linguistic landscape allows one to grasp the vitality of urban multilingualism, that is “the degree to which multilingualism and plurilingualism are able to thrive and flourish in an urban conglomeration” (King & Carson, 2016: 17-18).

Multilingualism in the city can be explored and studied thanks to its *visibility*. The *ethnolinguistic vitality* determines the quantity and quality of the opportunities for language groups and different communities to be in contact. A sufficient degree of ethnolinguistic vitality gives the opportunities to experience the network of linguistic contacts to speakers (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 30). According to LUCIDE’s research on urban multilingualism (King & Carson, 2016: 7), visibility and audibility are important to understand the dynamics of language contact and exchange. Some languages are indeed more visible or audible than others. The study proved that when the governance and policy commit to encouraging multilingualism, linguistic diversity is promoted and can emerge. In the multicultural city there can be also challenges to language diversity. There are some aspects of real life, like costs, inconvenience, lack of linguistic policy promoting multiculturalism or prejudices, that can impede true and effective communication between bilingual and multilingual people. This fact sometimes causes a discrepancy between policy and practice in everyday reality (King & Carson, 2016:7).

The lack of openness towards diversities is due to the belief that an ethnic identity exists, which has to be preserved. In his book *The Ethnic Identity*, the anthropologist Ugo Fabietti criticizes the objective view of the concept of ethnicity, which is based on the existence of one group of people who speak the same language, have the same traditions and live in the same territory. He asserts that the ethnic identity is a cultural category that is not static and closed, but is based on the relationship between different groups and consequently on the comparison and the exchange between them. According to

Fabietti (2002: 13-24), ethnicity is a cultural construction and is the product of historical, social and political events. The identities of ethnic groups derived from the processes that started from outside or inside the groups. This is caused by the fact that, even if cultures and human societies have developed in different geographical areas of the world and in different historical periods, the relations between them have always been very close, more than what we can imagine. This phenomenon helps to understand that multiculturalism dates back to ancient times. Thanks to technology and media the multicultural dimension has become global (Fabietti, 2002: 13-24). In this field also the term *glocalization* is used. The term indicates the fact that global processes also have strong effects at a local level, so that the cultural and local traditions conform to the logic of globalization (Premoli, 2008: 19).

The phenomenon of globalization has encouraged multilingualism and multiculturalism through the diffusion of information, culture, lifestyles, linguistic exchanges. Today very few societies are homogeneous. They are diverse in different ways, from the language spoken to the way people live and culturally express themselves. The linguist David Crystal (2006) asserted that multilingualism is the normal human condition. As a matter of fact three-quarters of the global population speak two or more languages in their everyday lives. But in parts of Europe governments do not promote multiculturalism and a dominant language has a strong power as a consequence of colonialism (Crystal, 2006: 409). Some languages are heading for extinction and some are spoken by fewer and fewer people. Furthermore some linguists think that this trend is accelerated by the expansion of English in many fields of life, like education, global market and communication. Nevertheless, the world remains multilingual, especially with the growth of international migration. Migrants import many languages and therefore language policies should change and assure the promotion of the different languages spoken in a certain area. This is fundamental for the inclusion of all people living there, since English is no more enough to do this. There is the need for a language policy which provides to learners the language skills useful to communicate at home and in the future professional world. The current language policies that still focuses only on English, should rather ensure that English is taught in an effective way without disadvantaging the mother tongue, the identity and the origin culture of those who learn English (King, 2018: 2-7).

As regards language education, for some decades now plurilingualism has been promoted from the Council of Europe. In the 1990s the European language education policy clearly promoted linguistic diversity, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. According to the Common European Framework of References for Languages, the plurilingual approach highlights the multiple linguistic experiences and sociocultural relations of a person as everyday practice. There are also some scholars that have a critical view of the Council of Europe's approach to plurilingualism, because, in their view, it focuses only on colonial European languages, especially English as a foreign language (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 4). They think that this reality leads to neoliberal goals, so that language education and plurilingualism are connected to efficiency, productivity and flexibility in the field of global market. As a consequence these critical voices propose a new way of conceiving plurilingualism and language education. This approach is based on the concepts of language sustainability and social justice and acknowledges the fact that all languages and varieties are important and have to be valued (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 3-4). *Language sustainability* does not simply mean *language maintenance*, that is the tendency to use the own minoritized language in order not to be dominated by the majority language. Ofelia García, a professor in New York, who has published extensively on multilingualism and bilingual education, explains that language practices need to be sustained in interaction with the social and economic context. The concept of sustainability is "dynamic and future-oriented" and aims to renew past language practices according to the needs of the present. It relocalizes past practices in time and space and leads to a "creative emergence, a new and generative becoming" (García & Wei, 2014: 72). Instead *social justice* is a concept related to a multilingual pedagogical approach that promotes the common good and the participation of all learners in a democratic process and in respect of cultural diversities. In this context the pedagogy investigates the barriers which obstacle effective results of language learning and looks for strategies that facilitate students and avoid every kind of discrimination through sex, language, culture, ethnicity, religion or disability. Reflecting on a social just approach leads to critical questioning and resistance, the attempt to understand systems and relations of oppression and the effort to apply a clear democratic practice (Hurst & Mona, 2017: 131-132).

Even if globalization increases multilingual communication, it also encourages the

spread of English at high levels and in every field. English has become a lingua franca that facilitates the relations between people and countries and its influence is unprecedented in world history (King, 2018: 7). The spread of English all over the world is sometimes seen favorably and positively as a homogenizing characteristic of globalization. Others do not agree with this homogenization and consider the spread of English unfavorably because it leads to linguistic imperialism and therefore to the detriment of small minority languages (Baker, 2011: 83-87). As far as English linguistic imperialism is concerned, Phillipson (1992) asserts that “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Phillipson, 1992: 47). In this definition the adjective *structural* refers to material properties, such as institutions and financial allocations. *Cultural* instead refers to immaterial or ideological properties, for example attitudes and pedagogic principles. The structural and cultural inequalities ensure that more material resources are allocated to English, in comparison to other languages, and those who are proficient in English have more benefits. In relation to educational language planning, English linguistic imperialism makes use of two main mechanisms: anglocentricity and professionalism. The term *anglocentricity* has been coined by analogy with ethnocentricity, which is the practice of judging other cultures by the standards of one’s own, in this case English. *Professionalism* refers to the fact that methods, techniques, and procedures followed in English Language Teaching, including the theories of learning and language teaching, are considered sufficient for understanding and analysing language learning (Phillipson, 1992: 47-48). The critical voices see the role of English as a means of dominance by the US and other English-speaking countries, a way to produce structural, cultural, educational and economic inequalities and to maintain power and control on weak minority languages and the people who speak them (Baker, 2011: 83-87). Researchers and linguists try to understand the reality of English language as a lingua franca in the actual multilingual context.

Globalization factors, such as the new economy, new forms of communication, mobility and migration and the diffusion of English as a lingua franca, represent long-term shifts in the economy and society and they have a strong impact on language policy. But the globalized world also has to deal with other factors, such as the economic downturn.

For example the global economic decrease in 2008 led to the reduction of public support for policies of intervention on diversity and multilingualism. Economic swings have a considerable impact on society and can increase the tensions related to social and cultural changes determined by the new global economy. Mobility, and in particular immigration, are controversial issues today. At the moment some state governments which have promoted inclusion are changing idea about their previous policies and so the multicultural dimension seems to be taking a different and sometimes critical turn (King, 2018: 7).

1.2. Migration and Mobility

Studies on the multicultural world and cities have been encouraged by the growth of migration and mobility all over the world (King & Carson, 2016: 2). In policy and public discourse these two terms are used with reference to different scopes: the term migration concerns less privileged people, while mobility refers to privileged people who benefit from resources and access for travel. Migrants seek opportunities and refuge in new places of the world; mobile people are welcome everywhere and can freely move across borders. Here the term mobility will be sometimes used as a general term indicating the movement of people (Canagarajah, 2017: 5).

Migration moves in many directions and regards people of all ages and from many countries. The development of technology and new forms of work supported the migration flow and the exchange of information. The phenomenon of globalization advances thanks to the continuous flow of potential workers who meet the demand of economic progress at various stages and in different countries (King & Carson, 2016: 2). Transnational movements are a real fact in the globalizing world. People are no longer tied to one geographical area. There are many reasons that encourage people to move from one place to another one (Wei, 2010: 12). The terms *push/pull* factors have been traditionally adopted to explain the reasons of human movement. Push factors are the lack of opportunities in the context of social and economic progress, while the pull factors consist in the possibility of progress in a new destination. But many migrant

groups experience only push factors, since they do not move voluntarily (Canagarajah, 2017: 5). This is the case of forced migrants, among which there are refugees and asylum seekers. The swing of forced migration flows depend on the transformations determined by wars and conflicts on a large-scale. In 2010 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees attested that 43.3 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2009, resulting as the highest figure since the mid-1990s (Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 97-99). This kind of migration can be a big challenge for the host countries, particularly in the last years, when many people flee conflicts, violence and poverty, and move to reach Western countries. These countries become increasingly multicultural and the presence of new populations call into question the relatively homogeneous national identities.

Sometimes migration flows introduce new tensions and new political dynamics in the host society, for example the challenge of Islamophobia or other social issues, like the wearing of face-covering veils in public (Sisk, 2017: 2). An important aspect related to immigration is represented by religious diversity, which can be a factor of strong cultural belonging. Migrants have a wide variety of socio-cultural backgrounds and they naturally import the specific culture of origin of their families. Language is one of the main aspects: sometimes migrant people do not even represent a single culturally homogeneous group because they have different origins, and then they speak different idioms. The presence of this variety of backgrounds is a challenge for host countries, in terms of policy and language support (Canali, Geron, Innocenti, Vecchiato, 2015: 30-32).

According to Gold & Nawyn (2013), migrants often have to face social inequalities due to disadvantages derived from the lack of citizenship, language skills, and contacts in the new setting. It is not surprising that the terms “migration” and “race” are often linked. The association of the two terms is based on historical events when, especially after World War II, the most part of migrants moving to Western societies were the non-white people from post-colonial societies. The lack of openness towards cultural diversities leads to consider the migrant as the “other” and increase racist dynamics (Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 167-169).

Those considered “economic migrants” move to a new destination with the goal of

increasing their standard of life or at least accessing a survival income (Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 129). But scholars like Richmond and Coutin (1993; 2007; in Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 97) have criticized the different senses attributed to forced and economic migrants, arguing that many migrants have few chance when they decide to migrate and some migrants have even no option at all, because of political, environmental, or economic reasons (Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 97).

For European migrants, employment is the first reason of immigration, so that most of them can be considered economic migrants. However it is not easy to understand the dynamics of mobility within Europe and the weight of influence on populations, because the right to freedom of movement supports mobility on a very large scale (King & Carson, 2016: 99-101). With the Treaty of Maastricht the notion of the EU citizenship was indeed introduced. Every national of a EU member state can enjoy the EU citizenship, which recognizes the right of persons to move and reside freely within the territory of the European Union¹.

In global cities, where the presence of groups of migrants is more visible, there are heterogeneous individuals. Apart from migrants who permanently move to another country, we also have to consider transient city inhabitants, such as tourists and foreign students, who play an important role in shaping the multicultural and multilingual context of the city. Tourists contribute to the enrichment of the multicultural dimension of the city because they constitute a large group of people that is constantly present in urban areas (King & Carson, 2016: 99-101). The large presence of foreign students is also becoming an important factor for linguistic diversity in the city. Universities attract a lot of international students thanks to mobility programs, double degrees or degrees available in English and in other languages. Student exchange programs are considered an indispensable part for a good higher education. Furthermore foreign language education, apart from providing the linguistic abilities, supports understanding and emotional attachment to the culture of the host country (King & Carson, 2016: 99-101).

In the group of the transient city inhabitants some migrants and refugees could be counted. In this case they are people who are living in the first country they entered but

¹ www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/147/free-movement-of-persons

the destination is different, so they will soon move to another place. A group of people among the transient inhabitants are the border workers, who have the residence in a country but everyday go to work across the border (e.g. workers from Strasbourg go everyday to Germany or Switzerland for work reasons). In this cases knowing the language of the work country is essential and is the key to success (King & Carson, 2016: 99-101).

The flows of migrant people is different from the migrations of the past, it has changed in terms of gender, status, age and work, and also the impact is different. Of course current migrations are a continuation of past movements and a consequence of past events, but today migration flows are global, and therefore multicultural and multilingual. Directions have also changed and countries of past emigration are countries of immigration today, for example Ireland and Italy. In 2009 the BBC news online reported that “at the start of the 21st century, one in every 35 people is an international migrant” and “if they all lived in the same place, it would be the world’s fifth-largest country”. The impact of migration on general policy is strong. Sometimes it generates planning and inclusion policies, other times rejection and hostility intensify. Today migration is a real challenge for some host countries (King, 2018: 7).

Migration processes transform the cities and their image, whose multilingualism and multiculturalism are the new point of start for welcoming migrants workers and promoting hospitality. For example the city of Toronto is one of the most particular and diverse cities of the Western world (King & Carson, 2016: 99). In Europe, London is a striking example of a city transformed by enormous waves of economic migrants and refugees, with Huguenots from France, Jews from central Europe and Russia, Bengalis and others from the Indian subcontinent, etc. Economic migration from outside Europe increased as a consequence of special campaigns that attracted needed labour in the period after the war, for example “guest workers” from Turkey and Marocco or Afro-Caribbean immigrants in London. Mobility in Europe also had an important role in introducing new languages to the big cities, e.g. groups of Italian workers settled in Hamburg and Dublin.

Most 21st-century migration flows are a consequence of EU enlargement with eleven Eastern and Central European countries joining the EU in 2004 and 2007. Romanians

are the largest migrant group in Rome and are also the largest group, together with Maroccans, of non-Spanish speaking populations in Madrid (King & Carson, 2016: 98-99). Different flows of diasporas in past years have encouraged the meeting of cultures and so multiculturalism is a characteristic aspect of the period of postmodernity. The importance and impact of multiculturalism can be found in everyday life and is consequently permeated in education (Premoli, 2008: 52). The growth of multilingual realities and the recognition of cultural diversities among the populations has led to considerable studies and applied works in opposition to monolingual ideologies as “one-language-only” and “one-language-at-a-time”, but I will discuss this further on (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 5).

Cultural pluralism is an essential point and is at the base of actual global society. Multicultural societies have always existed, but the modern processes of globalization and migration claim an official recognition of cultural pluralism by the governments and an equal treatment of cultural diversities (Premoli, 2008: 52).

In contexts of migration and language contact, a new and interesting linguistic phenomenon is spreading out in the city: the birth of *multiethnolects* (King & Carson, 2016: 76-77). Multiethnolects result from the interplay of languages and cultures. They are new kinds of urban communication that are common in big cities like Utrecht and London. A multiethnolect is a linguistic style used by speakers of more than two different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, it is made up of features of different languages but has a single base-language which is generally similar to the dominant language spoken in place where the multiethnolect is used. For example in Hamburg some people speak a German-Turkish, a variety of Turkish influenced by German syntactical and lexical features. In Germany it is called *Kiezdeutsch* (King & Carson, 2016: 76-77). The multiethnolect spoken in London has been defined by linguists as *multicultural London English*, which involves innovative phonetic, grammatical, and discourse-pragmatic features. There is a new pronoun, *man*, a new quotative expression *this is* +speaker, and many other innovative characteristics (Cheshire, Nortier, Adger, 2015: 3-4). Multiethnolects usually appear among young people and in sites of high-density housing inhabited by many people of diverse origins learning a second language. Multiethnolects demonstrate that language practices in European cities are

constantly changing and new urban styles of communication continue to emerge (King & Carson, 2016: 76-77).

1.3. Facing monolingual ideologies

1.3.1. From the multilingual realities of the past to the monolingual ideology of the nation states

Multilingualism has been present since ancient times: for example in Greek, Roman and Egyptian societies. Some of the languages used were Hebrew, Aramaic, Egyptian, Lycian, Greek, Latin (King, 2018: 10). Evidence of multilingualism and multiculturalism has been found in various materials, such as tablets, obelisks, rock faces, coins, coppers, papyrus and parchments. Thanks to these objects researchers could study the linguistic dynamics in Europe and Middle East from the Proto-Elamite period of the 3rd millennium BC, through the civilizations of the Egyptians, Sumerians, Persians and Aramaic people, up to the Hellenistic Greek and the Roman period. The Rosetta Stone reveals the multilingualism during the Ptolemaic period: it contains two texts in Ancient Egyptian and the other in Ancient Greek, so that the texts could be understood by the Egyptian population and the Greek-speaking administration and immigrants living in Egypt. Another example is Latin-Greek bilingualism, which was common among intellectuals; both languages were also widely used by government officials and the Church during the 5th century (King & Carson, 2016: 17-20).

As mentioned above, multilingualism was widely accepted in ancient times and it has been normative for millennia. Yet the historical desirability of monolingualism can also be noticed: supporters of this trend claimed that monolingualism could solve the “problem” of the confusion caused by the co-existence of many languages and the interplay between them. This trend is frequently represented by the Biblical Babel myth (King & Carson, 2016: 17-20). The Tower of Babel is a conventional image that highlights the idea of linguistic primordially and sanctity. Between 1550 and the early seventeenth century many representations of the Tower appeared and that period corresponds to the time of the emerging nation state, which produced anxieties related

to the matter of the contamination of national identity and national language (Bonfiglio, 2017: 623-624). The monolingual ideology of “one language, one nation” spread with the formation of European nation states, which started in the 15th century but is especially related to the French Revolution and the birth of the nationalist movements of the 19th century. Communications technology, in particular the printing press, supported this process, together with the standardisation of the vernacular languages of European states (King, 2018: 11).

1.3.2. Language ideology

At this point it is worth asking what “language ideology” means. This concept represents the values, practices and beliefs associated to a language and closely related to the nation where that language is spoken. These beliefs about a language try to justify the superiority or inferiority of specific languages. Language ideologies do not merely concern languages but are tied to the construction of identity (Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 25-26). Then social, cultural, political and economic values and contexts influence the field of language in order to acquire or maintain power. As a consequence, public life, linguistic practices, language politics, attitudes towards languages, dialects and registers are affected by a dominant ideology conceived by dominant groups, who claim to serve the interests of the community, which are presented as universal interests (Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 25-26).

Language ideologies are however often not explicit. They are tacit and sometimes work against official language policies. A situation like this can be seen in Sweden. The model of Sweden is very interesting. Here the official language policies promote the use of various languages and support the citizens’ right to develop and enhance their linguistic repertoire by providing various opportunities and projects (Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 25-26). In 1995, when Sweden entered the EU, a national committee for minority languages published a report which recognized three minority languages: Saami, Finnish and Romani Chib. In 1999 the Swedish parliament recognized official minority language status also for Yiddish and Meänkieli. The Swedish minority language policy was a response to the European Charter for Regional

or Minority languages, signed and ratified by Sweden in 2000 (Norrby, 2008: 64-65). Yet here monolingual ideologies act in a tacit way, since in schools the mother tongue of students who use a language other than Swedish at home is not taught to all eligible students, even if this is an educational right for them (Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 25-26).

Since the standardization of a state language is fundamental for the formation of a national identity, different languages or mixed language practices within the national territory were often dominated, devalued, or repressed in the past, but this can happen still today. That is because power relations, based on the nation-state and colonialism, play a central role in the construction of language ideologies. Various historians and sociologists, such as Benedict Anderson, James Scott and Pierre Bourdieu, have described the processes of language planning, which served for the consolidation of national power (Posa, 2017: 105-106).

As asserted by the German philosopher von Herder (1784 in King, 2008: 11), a language includes the history, the traditions, religion and basis of life of a people, and therefore its heart and soul. Therefore the deep culture of a people can not be expressed through a foreign language (King, 2018: 11). Kramersch (1998: 3) expresses three aspects of language and culture. Firstly she states that “language expresses cultural reality”. Every individual indeed conducts their social life through language. When we communicate, our language is bound up with culture in multiple ways. Through language we talk about our experiences, facts, ideas and beliefs that constitute a part of knowledge of the world that our interlocutors share with us. Secondly “language embodies cultural reality”. This point refers to the fact that members of a community do not only express experience, but they also create experience through language. This happens through different means of communication, which can be verbal and non-verbal. Finally Kramersch (1998: 3) states that “language symbolizes cultural reality”. Language is indeed a system of signs with a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and other people through their use of language and consider their language as a symbol of social identity (Kramersch, 1998: 3). The view of the close relationship of language and culture and the idea of the language as social identity was at the basis of the search for monolingualism, which continued after World War I in central and

eastern Europe and more recently with the formation of nation states in the area of the Balkans, after the fall of former Yugoslavia. Nationalism has been the main cause of the establishment of monolingual ideologies spread in Europe and elsewhere (King, 2018: 11).

1.3.3. Monolingual norms and bilingual norms

According to Vallejo and Dooly (2018: 2), as regards education, persisting ideologies based on monolingualism aim to limit the speaker's fluent and hybrid communication and try to contain linguistic practices inside "one-language-only" parameters. These parameters are often found in formal and informal learning contexts. Deriving from this way of teaching is the limitation into strict parameters and the fact that the crossing "standard" language practices and other communicative strategies are seen as a mark of deficiency. Tests and assessments at school are usually conducted using the national or curriculum language (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 2).

Jørgensen (2008 in Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 26-27) identifies two monolingual norms in society: the *monolingualism norm* and the *double monolingualism norm*. They both claim that using only one language at a time is the ideal, natural and correct behaviour. Monolingual norms are common in many modern societies, where languages are kept separate in schools, planning, schedules and everyday practice. Languages are considered to have a unique system that should be kept free of language mixing. Bilinguals are often seen as two monolinguals in one body and so they should have equal knowledge in both their languages. As noted by Heller (1999 Paulsrud et al., 2017: 27), Creese and Blackledge (2010 in Paulsrud et al., 2017: 27), double monolingualism norms prevail in most bilingual schools and complementary schools. Complementary schools are "created and led by the members of a community that seeks to support the development of their children and young people"². In these schools languages are separated in policy and practice (Paulsrud et al., 2017: 25-27).

² www.lcst.org.uk/about-complementary-schools/

Blackledge (2008 in Paulsrud et al., 2017: 26) asserts that these monolingual norms reflect ideologies of homogeneity that ignore or do not give value to linguistic diversity. Therefore, those who do not agree with this ideology and tend to refuse it, are consequently excluded or marginalized. Yet today there are also language norms which challenge and contest monolingual norms, such as the *integrated bilingualism norm* and the *polylingualism norm* identified by Jørgensen (2008 in Paulsrud et al., 2017: 27-28). Both the integrated bilingualism norm and the polylingualism norm accept the use of features of different languages in the same linguistic production. The former involves the two or three languages commanded by the speaker. The latter allows for the use of any languages known by the speaker and any linguistic features at their disposal even if they are not well commanded. The polylingualism norm allows the use of the whole linguistic repertoire in order to maximize communication (Paulsrud et al., 2017: 26-29).

Even though the multilingual reality is evident in all over the world and bilingual education is spreading more and more (García & Li, 2014: 68), many state schools continue to insist on teaching programs based on monolingual academic standard practices, so that language-minoritized students remain silent and do not receive an effective and equal education. Furthermore, bilingual programs often lack methods of collaboration between school-based practices and home-based ones. Autochthonous, indigenous and immigrant language minorities continue to suffer injustices and discrimination (García & Li, 2014: 68). In addition, the use of home language practices is often punished and bilingual or multilingual students feel inadequate, so that they have lower grades and fail in school (García & Li, 2014: 56). Furthermore assessments are not able to evaluate their real knowledge. This limit is evident in school testing, but is also visible in other life contexts such as citizenship, higher education and employment access (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 2).

1.3.4. Different approaches deconstructing monolingualism

Despite the obstacles that multilingual people face in using all their entire linguistic repertoire, in real linguistic practices they naturally reject the boundaries imposed by the idealized “standard” language and instead make use of complex linguistic systems and

features to negotiate meaning and communicate effectively. Researchers have analyzed these kinds of linguistic practices in which the speaker's experience and use of language is the main concern. This viewpoint was called *heteroglossia* by Mikhail Bakhtin and it gives value to multiplicity of languages and meanings in communicative interactions (Posa, 2017: 107). Heteroglossia is defined as “a diversity of voices, styles of discourse, or points of view in a literary work and especially a novel³”. But heteroglossia refers to a wide context, not only concerning literature. It considers the social and political consequences that derive from different types of speech and interactions. Heteroglossia is about “intertextuality” and it focuses on a linguistic process developed in a specific social, cultural, political, and historical context. According to this viewpoint language is no longer seen as an autonomous system that comes before its use, but as “a product of the embodied social practices that bring it about” (García & Leiva, 2014: 201). Heteroglossia rejects the monolingual ideologies and the native speaker paradigm for language proficiency.

The expression *flexible bilingualism* has also been used by Creese and Blackledge (2011b in Posa, 2017: 107) to describe the language practices of bilingual students in many British complementary schools in which linguistic flexibility is a normal attitude (Posa, 2017: 107). In the United Kingdom these schools are voluntarily established and run by community members, in order to focus on language, culture, and heritage teaching. Complementary schools are outside the state sector of control. Creese and Blackledge (2010) have realized projects aimed to explore the social, cultural, and linguistic significance of these schools and investigate how linguistic practices of students and teachers are used there to negotiate their multilingual and multicultural identities (Creese & Blackledge, 2010: 103). Other expressions used to define practices that contest monolingual norms are *hybrid language practices* (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Álvarez, Chiu 1999; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Tejada 1999; in Posa, 2017: 107-108), concerning bilingual students attending an after-school program that supports meaning-making processes and encourages identity works through communication; *polylingual languaging* (Jørgensen 2008 in Posa, 2017: 108) refers to speakers who use whatever linguistic features at their disposal in order to achieve their

³ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heteroglossia

communicative aim; *transidiomatic languaging* (Jacquemet 2005 in Posa 2017: 108) has been used with regard to *languaging* in times of modernity and globalization (further on I will talk about languaging). Similar practices in writing and composition have been named as *codemeshing* (Young & Martinez 2011, Canagarajah 2009, 2011 a in Posa 2017: 108). There are also *traslingual practices* (Canagarajah 2012 in Posa 2017: 108), a term used to define more multimodal communication, and *metrolingualism* (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010: 243-245), referring to the complex language practices that can be found in the urban centre.

1.3.5. The ideology of the “native language”

As García & Li (2014) assert, using terms like “first language” and “second language” (L1 and L2) reveals an ideology of bilingualism that is monoglossic; this conception collides with the flexible language practices that have been described above. Using denominations like L1 and L2 means that even if an individual is bilingual, the two languages spoken are always kept separate because cross-contamination has to be avoided. Yet García and Li (2014: 55-56) argue that the real language practices of multilingual people are in contrast with this ideology, because language mixing is normal and spontaneous for them.

Similarly Bonfiglio (2013) asserts that the use of “native speaker”, “native language” and “mother tongue” is an invention that aims to empower one language and disempower the others. These locutions spread with the nation states in the early modern period, as sign of ethnolinguistic nationalism. Those who legitimize the use of these designations, believe in the concept of the birthright of linguistic authority, so that the abilities related to the first language are infallible and innate and therefore superior (Bonfiglio, 2013: 29-31). Likewise some linguistic trends affirm the existence of language identity, that is the belief that every individual has a genetic ownership of language, so that the dominant language of a host country could never be the first language for second language speakers (García & Li, 2014: 53-54). Yet in linguistic practices the borderline between L1 and L2 is vague and permeable and it is not intrinsically linguistic. According to Bonfiglio (2013: 29-31), the ideology of the native

language nationality is based on psychological, historical, social, political and cultural anxieties that have been attributed to the question of language. There he argues an ethnolinguistic prejudice built on the fear that the “native” language could be endangered or contaminated by the presence of an other one, perceived as threat to the principles of nation and ethnicity. This means that certain linguistic expressions contain notions of race and ethnicity.

The designations of “mother tongue” and “native language” as a genetic component were not present in antiquity. For example the Romans and Greeks used standards of Latin and Greek, but they were not articulated in ethnic contexts. According to Bonfiglio (2007: 621-625), the discourse of language at that time did not contain references to the ideology of race and ethnicity. The genesis of ethnolinguistic prejudice can be traced back to Benedict Anderson’s work *Imagined Communities*. Anderson argues that the modern nation state as a community is based on the existence of a common language that unites all the population. This vernacular language is at the heart of the formation of a nation and therefore of nationalism and it is considered as “private property” by the sociologist. Dante Alighieri’s *De vulgari eloquentia* is the first work in the west in which the superiority of the vernacular over Latin is asserted and images of nativity and maternity are used in relation to language. For the Italian writer it was not simple to claim the superiority of the vernacular, since it has no aesthetic and philosophical tradition. For this reason he conceived an ethnic ideology of language in order to justify the fact that the vernacular is the first language originally used by humans, and therefore it is natural, imitative and indeliberate. Soon after this reflection Dante used for the first time the phrase “mother tongue”, making explicit the idea of the mother attributed to the language (Bonfiglio, 2007: 621-625).

Some studies on the image of the native speaker have tried to deconstruct this metaphor. For example Paikeday (1985 in Bonfiglio 2007: 621) in his work *The Native Speaker is dead!* mentions researches in which linguists assert the acceptability of marginal sentences and their inability to understand whether or not the mistakes had been made by a first-language or second-language speaker. Paikeday (1985 in Bonfiglio 2007: 621) claims that the L1 speaker intuition comes with training and experience, and not from birthright or infancy. Other linguists showed that L2 speakers can often be recognized as

L1 speakers and that an individual is not an L1 speaker of a language per se, but of a specific sociolect or dialect. So there are various linguistic trends claiming that the native speaker is only a political construct (Bonfiglio, 2007: 640-641).

Regarding the matter of prestige attributed to the first language of a state and related to power relations, as mentioned above, one example is that of English in Anglophone countries, where the other languages spoken suffer from marginalization. In 1968 in the USA the Bilingual Education Act was issued to recognize the needs of limited English speaking ability students. This law supported elementary and secondary students who were not fluent in English, in particular language minorities, but at the same time it strictly separated English from the other languages in order to avoid any kind of language mixing (García & Li, 2014: 55-56). The Bilingual Education Act was indeed heavily criticized from the beginning, because it was not clear if it aimed to speed up the transition to English or to promote bilingualism. Over its years of tenure, the Act has been the object of political and ideological campaigns. The regulations concerning bilingual education were weakened in favor of greater support for English-only education programs. Today the continuing need for effective bilingual programs persists, as well as informed policy makers (Escamilla, 2018: 5-15). The tendency of separating languages and sustaining the supremacy of English language can be seen still today in the US and this is the cause of the lack of translation in many fields of society (García & Li, 2014: 55-56).

1.3.6. Bilingualism and bilingual education

Bilinguals are people who have developed competences in two languages. According to Grosjean (1989), a bilingual person is an integrated whole and a unique speaker-hearer. He or she is not the sum of two monolinguals and can not be separated into two separate parts. In a bilingual the two languages coexist and constantly interact with each other. The interaction between them produces a unique and complete linguistic entity. Bilingual people use the two languages separately or together, according to different purposes, situations, domains and interlocutors. The level of fluency in a language depends on the need of that language and is specific for a particular domain (Grosjean,

1989: 6). Baker (2011) points out that the ownership of two or more languages is not so simple as bicycles having two wheels or people having two eyes. The type of bilingualism depends on language abilities (productive and receptive) and language use (domain of language). Some people actively speak and write in both languages, while others are more passive bilinguals and have receptive abilities. The use of these languages, together or separated, has different purposes according to the context. In a bilingual individual one language is often dominant. Bilingualism is defined as simultaneous when children learn two languages from birth, and consecutive or sequential if they learn a second language after about three years of age. There is also the definition of circumstantial bilingualism which refers to people, such as immigrants, who learn another language to function effectively because of their circumstances (Baker, 2011: 2-4).

In our society it is often believed that becoming bilingual as a child is something disadvantageous (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 99). François Grosjean (2010) declares that there are myths about bilingualism that have to be dispelled. For example the myth that bilingualism delays language acquisition in children is wrong and researches have proved this statement. Another myth is based on the idea that the language spoken at home has a negative effect on the acquisition of the school language, when the latter is different. Instead the home language has been seen to have positive effects since it can be used as a linguistic base for acquiring aspects of the other language. Another disadvantage that is usually and wrongly attributed to bilingual children, according to Grosjean (2010), is the tendency to mix languages. Bilingual children learn to mix languages at certain times only and they speak just one language with monolinguals⁴.

Bilingualism can be accompanied by frustration and emotional crisis when the two languages spoken are not given value at the same level. Most schools persist in developing monolingualism and try to assimilate the students who speak minority languages, but this attitude does not definitely help to face this situation. This way of acting will not solve the “problem”, on the contrary it may even increase for the individual, as well for the society (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 99).

⁴ www.francoisgrosjean.ch/myths_en.html

One of the principles at the base of a successful bilingual education proposed by Cummins (1986) is called “first things first”. This principle focuses on the fundamental role of the child’s first language in all aspects of the educational development. The development of the first language should be a priority in school because the first language contributes to the emotional and academic well-being of the child, so that, before insisting on the progress of a second language, the child’s home language must be adequately developed. Asserting that one’s own language and the language spoken at home with the family is non-functional at school, means explicitly negating your sense of self (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 99-102). Acceptance of the home language at home and school is the first step to creating a relaxed and stimulating environment which facilitates learning and promotes feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. Cummins (1986) believes that children should be encouraged by teachers to use their home language at school. For example using the home language as a medium of instruction would highlight the usefulness and value of speaking a new language for the whole class. Other supportive activities are those that involve the parents: in these assignments the family cooperate in order to prepare tasks concerning their culture, traditions, country of origin, folk tales, family histories, etc. Most research attests that children from linguistic minority groups whose bilingualism or multilingualism is given value in these ways, feel better about themselves, their language and their culture than children attending English-only programs (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 99-102).

As far as bilingual education is concerned, Baker (2011) makes a distinction between an education that fosters the use of two languages, and a relatively monolingual education in a second language, typically for language minority children, in which bilingual children are present but bilingualism is not actually promoted. The term “bilingual education” has been used to refer to both situations, but this fact leaves the term ambiguous and unclear. An important distinction that has to be made in the bilingual education context is that between transitional and maintenance types. Transitional bilingual education aims to shift the child from the minority language, spoken at home, to the majority language, spoken in school and social contexts. Maintenance bilingual education aims to foster the minority language of the child, together with the related culture and identity (Baker, 2011: 207).

It is frequently argued that minority students that are less competent in the dominant language used at school, need intensive instruction in that language in order to achieve the desired competences. This assumption is based on the belief that only maximum exposure to that language can help to succeed academically. But many studies contest the simplistic idea of “maximum exposure”. According to Cummins and Swain (1986: 80-81), sufficient exposure to the language is certainly essential but it is not the main cause of success. The fundamental aspect is the extent to which students understand the academic input they receive. These issues are related to two different conceptions of bilingual proficiency: separate underlying proficiency (SUP) and common underlying proficiency (CUP). According to separate underlying proficiency, minority children who lack competence in an L2 need instruction in that language, not in their L1. This is based on the assumption that proficiency in L1 is separate from the L2 and that the exposure to a language (at home or at school) and the achievement in that language are directly related. The separateness between the two languages implies the fact that content and skills can not be transferred from L1 to L2 (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 80-82).

1.3.7. Premises of translanguaging

Cummins (1986) advanced the theory that people who are learning a second language are not faced with two completely separate linguistic systems. He proposed the common underlying proficiency, that is a model according to which these people possess a common framework of linguistic structures and functions that are created from the person’s knowledge of one language to help them learn the other language. Experience with both languages and exposure to both of them can promote development of bilingual proficiency based on common and interdependent aspects of the two languages. The CUP model is illustrated in the metaphor of a “dual iceberg”: the part below the surface contains common cross-lingual aspects, while the two visible peaks of the iceberg represent the different manifestations of each language. Findings from important studies strongly support the CUP model of bilingual proficiency (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 80-82). Furthermore neurolinguistic studies on bilinguals have confirmed

Cummins' hypothesis: even when one language is being used, the other one remains active and can be accessed.

After Cummins other linguists, such as Ofelia García, who extensively investigated and published works on translanguaging, went beyond the notion of interdependence. García proposed that bilingualism is not just additive but dynamic. This means that there are not two monolinguals in one person but one linguistic system with integrated features. García makes use of the image of a banyan tree, which proves extremely efficient to explain the reality of dynamic bilingualism. The banyan tree is a fig that grows on another plant when its seeds germinate in the cracks and crevices of a host tree. Then roots are sent down towards the ground which envelop the host tree, also growing horizontal roots. These horizontal roots then fuse with the descending ones (García & Li, 2014: 15-16).

“Dynamic bilingualism emerges in the same way, in the cracks and crevices of communication with others who language differently, gradually becoming in and of itself a way of languaging through complex communicative interactions. Dynamic bilingualism is then both the foundation of languaging and the goal for communication in an increasingly multilingual world” (García & Li, 2014: 16).

When we talk about *languaging*, we have to imagine it as the process in which language practices do not constitute an autonomous and pre-given system and they are not separate from the context where they develop. These practices are the product of social ones. The concept of *languaging* is related to the theory of *autopoiesis* ascribed to the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1998 in García & Leiva, 2014: 201). According to *autopoiesis* our biological and social history, that determines our actions, influences the way we perceive the world. Our life experience is strictly related to our structure and the processes that constitute our structure and make us represent our knowledge. This concept can be summarized by Maturana and Varela's expression (1998 in García & Leiva, 2014: 202) “All doing is knowing, and all knowing is doing”. This expression means that knowledge develops through the act of languaging, that is the process of continuous becoming of ourselves and of our language

practices, through the interaction and the meaning-making in the world we live in (García & Leiva, 2014: 201-202). Common underlying proficiency, dynamic bilingualism and the concept of languaging help to understand the context from which it will be necessary to start in order to introduce the theme of translanguaging.

2 . Exploring Translanguaging

This chapter will deal with translanguaging, the origin and the meaning of the term, and the features that characterize it and that differentiate it from other multilingual practices. Then the chapter will explore the contexts in which translanguaging is used, such as education and everyday practice, and will explain why it is so important for the achievement of social justice and the promotion of cultural pluralism.

2.1. What is Translanguaging?

2.1.1. Origin and meaning of the term

The term *translanguaging* originally comes from the Welsh word *trawsieithu* and was coined by the educator Cen Williams, who developed an innovative approach to bilingualism in education (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012: 2). The Welsh term was then translated into translanguaging by Colin Baker in his textbook *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, in which he defined this approach as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011: 288). Initially it consisted in a pedagogical practice in which students were asked to alternate between languages for different purposes, for example one language for the receptive use and the other for the productive use. For example students were asked to read in English and to write in Welsh and vice versa or to discuss in one language and read in another (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012: 2). Williams argued that this practice maximized bilingual abilities in learning and tried to demonstrate the benefits of such a multilingual practice⁵.

The term was first used in education in 1980. This use has to be understood as a reaction against the historic separation of Welsh and English. English was the dominant language and had a prestigious position, while Welsh was condemned to endangerment. Therefore, the linguistic context in Wales was characterized by conflict, oppression and suppression. At the end of the 20th century the Welsh language was subjected to

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnOx8GjPvj4

revitalisation. From then on, the advantage of bilingualism began to be taken into account. The positive reputation of competent bilingualism in a child or adult started post-1960s thanks to research in the field of linguistics that opposed the belief which had spread in previous years, that bilingualism caused mental confusion in the speakers. These studies found that bilinguals were not disadvantaged in intelligence, in comparison to monolinguals. On the contrary being bilingual confers many cognitive rewards and advantages (Lewis, Jones, Baker, 2012: 2).

Concerning the progress in the study of bilingualism, Antoniou (2019) claims that studies conducted in the 1920s-1950s failed to take into account important aspects, such as age, socioeconomic status, and degree of bilingualism. Some studies even ignored participants' refugee status, schooling interruption during war or the mismatch between the testing language (most times English) and the participants' non-English-speaking backgrounds (Antoniou, 2019: 2). The studies published after 1950s challenged the dominant view of the time about the disadvantageous effects of bilingualism and sustained that advantages of bilingualism concern executive function (Bialystok et al. 2004 in Antoniou, 2019: 2), metalinguistic awareness (Cummins 1978 in Antoniou, 2019: 2), phonetic perception (Antoniou et al. 2015 in Antoniou, 2019: 2), cognitive flexibility (Adi-Japha et al. 2010 in Antoniou, 2019: 2), creative thinking (Lee & Kim 2011 in Antoniou, 2019: 2), and even delay in the onset of symptoms of dementia (Bialystok et al. 2007 in Antoniou, 2019:2). Grosjean (2010) also asserts that, according to recent studies, bilingualism is advantageous in some domains, for example bilingual children do better than monolingual children in tasks that require control of attention⁶.

Regarding *translanguaging*, the original meaning of the term went beyond the way scholars had interpreted Cummins's hypothesis of the Common Underlying Proficiency (see Chapter 1, 1.3.7.). This was interpreted as supporting bilingual education, since his hypothesis sustains that not everything taught through one language has to be retaught through another because there is interdependence between the two languages. During the 20th century, various types of bilingual education spread indeed, in particular in North America, but most of these bilingual programs followed the norm of double monolingualism (García & Kleyn, 2016: 11-12). According to Baker (2011), the double

⁶ www.francoisgrosjean.ch/for_parents_en.html

monolingualism is based on the belief that the bilingual corresponds to two monolinguals in one person. This viewpoint expects bilinguals to show a proficiency comparable to that of a monolingual in both their two languages. If that proficiency does not exist in both languages, bilinguals are often denigrated and classified as inferior (Baker, 2011: 9). In the United States, in the developmental maintenance programs and the transitional bilingual education programs that became common when the Bilingual Education Act was issued in 1968, most educators separated languages, so that there were different times, subjects, places and teachers for different languages. The innovative approach of *translanguaging* proposed by Cen Williams was an exception that opposed the strict separation of languages in education (García & Kleyn, 2016: 11-12). Translanguaging was born as a strategic way of teaching that builds on the fluent language practices of bilinguals and encourages the use of children's entire linguistic repertoire and resources in order to maximize their learning⁷.

Apart from indicating a pedagogical method, the term *translanguaging* also refers to the complex language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities in everyday life. Translanguaging is seen as the use of the speaker's full linguistic repertoire to make meaning of their multilingual world, without thinking of the fact that they have one language that is different from the other (García & Li, 2014: 8-20). Li Wei defines translanguaging as "practice based theory of language". He explains that the origin of translanguaging comes from two different roots: the bilingual pedagogical root, concerning bilingual education, and the languaging root, related to sociocultural theory and linguistic anthropology. As a consequence, people using and studying this term come from different backgrounds⁸.

With the studies of Ofelia García and Li Wei, the term *translanguaging* goes beyond the concept of additive bilingualism or interdependence between two languages, but also of languaging. As mentioned in the first chapter, the term *languaging* refers to the linguistic practice in which language does not operate as it were simply a code or a system of rules, but it is the means through which we share our experiences and our knowledge in an open-ended process (García & Li, 2014: 8-20). This term indicates the

⁷ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_AnGU8jy4o

⁸ www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnOx8GjPvj4

language practices that are product of social ones, since we express our knowledge and the way we perceive the world through them (García & Leiva, 2014: 201-202). It reflects the idea that language does not break down into neat categories and it does not involve neatly disengaged and homogeneous phenomena (Makoni, 2012: 190). *Languaging* focuses on the agency of speakers “in an ongoing process of interactive meaning-making” (García & Li, 2014: 9). Becker asserts that learning a new way of languaging does not just mean learning a new code, but means learning a new way of being in a new history of interactions and cultural practices (1995 in García & Li, 2014: 8).

Translanguaging can be defined as the whole of “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds”. It is based on the premise that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire and not two separate ones for the two languages spoken. From this unique repertoire they can select features strategically in order to communicate effectively (García & Li, 2014: 22). Canagarajah (2011) sustains that language competences are not separate competences for each language known. We can talk then about a multicompetence, that functions symbiotically for the different languages in one’s repertoire. As a consequence, proficiency for multilinguals is focused on repertoire building. Building a repertoire does not only consist in developing abilities in more languages, but also abilities in the different functions served by those languages. He defines translanguaging as the ability of multilingual speakers to use the different languages they know as they were an integrated system. This ability is part of that multicompetence we have previously mentioned, which is typical of bilingual and multilingual people, since two or more languages and the consequently complex interactions always co-exist and operate in their minds (Canagarajah, 2011: 1).

García (2014) proposes that the *trans-* prefix relates to the concept of *transculturación* coined in the 1940s by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. This concept does not consist in the passive adaptation to cultural standards. In the prologue to Ortiz’s study *Contrapunteo cubano del tabacco y del azúcar*, Bronislaw Malinowski (in García & Leiva, 2014: 203) explains that *transculturación* is the process in which a new reality emerges and this complex reality is not a mere agglomeration of various characters, but

a new phenomenon. *Transculturación* is an original and independent process, which breaks up differences, and whose characters are dynamic and are in a continuous becoming and transformative network (García & Leiva, 2014: 203).

The *trans-* prefix indicates the transgression and transformation in the context of language hierarchies imposed in school and everyday world. It also highlights the various fluid and unpredictable ways in which languages mix with other semiotic resources in the process of constructing meaning (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 6). With the *trans-* prefix Li Wei (2011a in Li & Zhu, 2013: 519-520) highlights three dimensions of flexible multilingual practices: trans-system/structure/space, transformative, and transdisciplinary. Firstly, the trans-system/structure/space dimension indicates that translanguaging means going between and beyond linguistic and non-linguistic systems and structures, including different modalities of communication (such as speaking, writing, signing) and different contexts and spaces. It includes the full range of linguistic practices performed by multilingual speakers in order to make sense of the various contexts, values, identities and relationships in the world they live in. Secondly, translanguaging is transformative in nature because it brings together multilingual speakers' linguistic, cognitive and social skills, their knowledge, experience and beliefs of the social world. The interaction between all these attitudes and values creates a new identity for the multilingual speaker. Thirdly, the transdisciplinary dimension indicates the fact that translanguaging is related to multicompetence, that consists in linguistic performances that are realized through the multilingual speakers' creativity and criticality; multilingual practices provide a means of understanding not only language performances but also human sociality, human cognition and learning, social relations and social structures (Li 2011a in Li & Zhu, 2013: 519-520).

2.1.2. Translanguaging as multimodal and transformative practice

Language is only one of the different available resources used in communication. Other semiotic resources are embodiment, performativity and re-semiotization. Translanguaging is indeed a *multimodal* practice (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 6). Translanguaging practices are multimodal since different modes of communication are

involved. *Multimodality* refers to the interconnection between language and other cognitive systems in the human mind. After all, human communication has always been multimodal. People make use of textual, aural, linguistic, and visual resources to construct and interpret messages. If we think to face-to-face communication, we note that speech signals are accompanied by visual information on the face and in gestures. In sign languages the realization of this multicompetence is even more visible because multiple channels like hands, face and body, are used to create a message. Of course also the media through which the meaning is realized and made available to others constitute the multimodality of communication. For instance, the electronic medium is often used to create modes or messages with the use of images, videos, writing, speech, and so on. In multimodal communication multiliteracy is fundamental. Multiliteracy is the ability to comprehend and analyze different modes in communication. It does not only mean reading a text, but also understanding images and sounds, and in particular understanding how different modes are put together to creating meaning (Li, 2018: 21-22).

Among the different modalities of communication, Baker (2011) includes the four basic language abilities (listening, speaking, reading and writing), as it has already been said speaking about the dimension of trans-system/structure/space highlighted by Li Wei. The four language abilities are analyzed by Baker on the basis of two dimensions: receptive and productive skills; oracy and literacy. With this classification Baker (2011) asserts that classifying people as bilinguals is too simplistic. Defining an individual as bilingual just on the basis of the two languages spoken it is not enough, because different competences are involved and each ability can be more or less developed. For example some people speak a language, but they do not read or write in a language. Some understand a spoken language but do not themselves speak that language. According to Baker (2011), there are “skills within skills” in language: pronunciation, extent of vocabulary, correctness of grammar, the ability to convey the exact meaning of a message in different situations (Baker, 2011: 7).

Furthermore translanguaging is *transformative* since it requires our understanding of the different semiotic resources and multimodality of communication (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 6). The transformative pedagogy in education aims to sustain the performances of

bi-/multilingual speakers in a way that goes beyond the use of two separate and autonomous languages. Translanguaging is transformative for the students, the teachers and education itself because it destabilizes a fixed system that does not give value to the whole repertoire of speakers (García & Li, 2014: 68-92). It can transform the way of thinking about bilingualism and multilingualism, in which children think about themselves without making differences between the languages spoken. From this perspective children do not think that one of the languages spoken is more important than the other, but see them as completely interrelated and as parts of their authentic being⁹.

2.1.3. Translanguaging as a creative process

According to Vallejo & Dooly (2019), translanguaging is characterized by *language creativity*. The spontaneous language practices are creative because the speakers are free to use their resources in various and original ways. The effectiveness of language creativity increased transdisciplinary approaches in applied linguistics and artistic practices (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 6). Language creativity is at the basis of the use of the full linguistic repertoire in translanguaging practice and it resists the boundaries of named languages imposed by society and politics. Translanguaging practice indeed does not designate the languages spoken as L1 and L2, but takes into considerations the features of the specific linguistic repertoire of a speaker. These features do not belong to languages, but to the unique language system of bilingual speakers. To recall the example made by Ofelia García, we can think to the words pronounced in a bilingual home. When García speaks at home, the words used can be *amigo*, *casa*, *dinner*, *comida*, *árbol*, *plants*, etc. We might classify them as Spanish words or English words, but with translanguaging these borders are overcome and they are simply considered García's words (García & Kleyn, 2016: 9-14). This creative process evaluates languages as separated from the limits of the political state.

Named languages are considered as socially constructed. Terms like "English", "Spanish", "Arabic", "Chinese", "Russian", etc. are socially invented categories. They

⁹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_AnGU8jy4o

refer to entities that exist in real societies, but do not necessarily correspond to the linguistic system of speakers. The linguistic system is not socially determined. It is the whole of vocabulary, pronunciation and structures that allows a speaker to communicate, read, write, and so on. It develops through social interaction and reflects the real linguistic practices performed in a communication (García & Kleyn, 2016: 9-14). This concept corresponds to two different perspectives: one is the external societal perspective, which is based on the idea that different named languages exist as standardized conventions attributed to a nation state; the other is the internal perspective of the speaker, in which the language is a unitary meaning-making system that “reflects this entanglement of worlds, cultural practices, words, and linguistic practices in which all bilinguals are always immersed”¹⁰.

2.1.4. Language ecology in translanguaging

The concept of *language ecology* is often related to the practice of translanguaging. An ecological approach to language considers the already established with the new. According to van Lier (2008 in Creese and Blackledge, 2010: 104), an ecological approach considers the development of new languages alongside the development of those which already exist. Studying the language ecology means studying the diversity within specific sociopolitical settings in which language is used to create, reflect, and challenge hierarchies and hegemonies (Creese and Blackledge, 2010: 104). Furthermore, an ecological approach to language can see the unfolding linguistic practices performed as the enactment or re-enactment of past language practices, the replay of cultural memory and the engagement of potential identities (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008: 660).

Van Lier (2004) describes the features that characterize an ecological approach to language learning and that can be also recognized in the complex language practices of translanguaging. He asserts that the ecology of language learning focuses on language as relations between people and the world, and on language learning as the possibility to relate more effectively to people and the world. According to van Lier (2004), in the ecological approach the context is not just something that surrounds language, but in

¹⁰ www.youtube.com/watch?v=511CcrRck0

fact it defines it. He claims that “context is the heart of the matter” (van Lier, 2004: 5). Among the other aspects that characterize language ecology we have to consider language as “patterns of patterns, and systems of systems”, the quality of language learning and language learning as emergence. Language as emergence means that language learning is not a simple gradual and linear acquisition, since when different elements combine together, the result is not the mere sum of them, but a new system with a different nature. Furthermore, all actions, all research, all practice, is value-laden and value producing. Van Lier (2004) explains that an ecological approach is critical, in the sense that it examines to what extent educational practices promote the specific goals and ideas that have been articulated. What has also to be taken into account in an ecological approach is variability and diversity. The former indicates that there are differences among learners affecting the way they learn and these differences have to be considered. The latter represents awareness that the variability of different learners and teachers in a class or school is a value. As in biology, diversity is essential in an ecosystem; in the same way, a diverse society, in terms of language, ethnicity, religion or interest, may be healthier than a homogeneous one (van Lier, 2004: 4-7).

Language ecology takes into account the multiple communicative competences, that characterize translanguaging and that enable social actors in multilingual settings to communicate effectively. While the interlocutors play with various linguistic codes, they also play with the spatial and temporal resonances related to these codes. This competence is called “symbolic competence”. This definition refers to the ability not only to appropriate for oneself someone else’s language, but to shape the context in which the language is learned and used (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008: 664).

2.1.5. Translanguaging and code-switching in complex language practices

Translanguaging includes language contact phenomena, such as codeswitching, but goes beyond it (Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 31). Contrary to what some people think, translanguaging and code-switching are different language practices. The main difference between them is that code-switching refers to the practice of shifting between two or more codes, that can be languages or varieties, while translanguaging involves

original and complex interrelated practices that can not be easily categorized within the definition of a named language, because these translanguaging practices, as has been written above, constitute the speaker's entire linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging is based on the idea that there is a language continuum that is accessed and, as sustained by García, there are no defined boundaries between the languages spoken by bilinguals. While code-switching develops on the basis of language separation, translanguaging promotes flexibility and permeability in language use (Paulsrud, Rosén, Straszer & Wedin, 2017: 31).

Translanguaging and code-switching are different because they reflect opposite viewpoints of languages. Code-switching reflects an external viewpoint of language, that is the point of view of states and schools that is based on the switch between one named/national language to another. Translanguaging instead reflects the internal viewpoint of language, that represents what speakers psychologically feel as their own internal language system¹¹. During a lesson García used the metaphor of the sea to explain the permeability of the linguistic continuum or current at the base of the internal viewpoint of language, that is translanguaging. If we imagine to be at the shore watching the horizon, we can not clearly define where the sea begins and where the sand begins. The same is with languages. When the languages of a bilingual speaker are internal, it is difficult to say where the one ends and the other begins. Even if we try to name languages with socially invented categories, they will be never so separated, since the real speakers' practices are like a current¹².

Furthermore García (2009 in Baker, 2011: 71-72) claims that the simultaneous presence of different languages in communication reflects a dynamic view, which is far from being simply additive. In an additive bilingual situation the addition of a second language and culture does not replace the first ones. For example English-speaking North Americans who learn a second language can be considered as being in an additive bilingual situation. Learning a second language will not displace English, on the contrary its benefits will not only be linguistic, but also social and economic. The additive view of bilingualism, which was prominent in the 20th century, is overcome.

¹¹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_AnGU8jy4o

¹² www.youtube.com/watch?v=511CcrRck0

Translanguaging practices are dynamic because reflect transcultural identities and multilingualism and establish a strong interrelationship between languages. I think that the view of dynamism related to translanguaging reflects well the characteristics of the “current” mentioned above, a flow in constant change and becoming (Baker, 2011: 71-72).

2.2. The translanguaging space

The translanguaging space is defined by García (2017) as the space where translanguaging takes place and where the features selected from the linguistic repertoire act and operate in a creative process and in the transaction between the interlocutors¹³. It is a social space in which multilingual people bring together different dimensions of themselves, such as their personal history, their experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical abilities (Li, 2010: 2). The concept of translanguaging space is particularly important to multilinguals not only because in this space they are able to use multiple linguistic resources to shape their way of living and transform their lives, but also because this space, created thanks to multilingual practices, has a transformative power (García & Li, 2014: 22).

The translanguaging space can be associated to what is called “third place” by Kramsch (1993 in Li & Girvan, 2004: 3), with reference to the intercultural classroom. This “third place” is an environment where cultural content and teaching methodology are equally open and fluid and where students are able to think beyond the usual dichotomies. References to the separation of languages and cultures, such as “target languages” or “local languages”, are not considered. Kramsch (1993 in Li & Girvan, 2004: 3) suggests that, within this context, the process of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity in language learning is possible by comparing one’s own original culture and language with the new culture and language (Li & Girvan, 2004: 3). The first scholar who talked about a space between languages and culture is Homi K. Bhaba (2006). He formulated the sociolinguistic theory of “third space”, which “constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no

¹³ www.youtube.com/watch?v=511CcrRck0

primordial unity or fixity”¹⁴. This theory implies the fact that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew. The “third space” is a space in which the articulation of cultural difference, the cultures in-between and the culture’s hybridity are involved¹⁵. Like Bhabha’s third space, the translanguaging space does not consist in a simple co-existence of different values, identities and practices, but all these aspects are combined together to generate new ones (García & Li, 2014: 24).

In the concept of the translanguaging space, creativity and criticality are embraced. Creativity, as already said, consists in following or flouting the rules concerning language use; criticality consists in using evidence to question, problematize or express views (Li, 2010: 2). Multilingualism is naturally rich in creativity and criticality, as it is based on the meeting of different identities, values, languages, groups of people, and so on. This can cause tension, conflict, competition, difference and change in spheres such as ideologies, policies, and practices to historical and current contents (García & Li, 2014: 24). Contacts between people of diverse backgrounds and traditions bring to new opportunities for innovation and creativity.

As far as criticality is concerned, multilingual speakers are aware that political entities of named languages exist; they have acquired their structural features, and they can use them. Yet they also are capable of reacting critically to historical and present conditions. Translanguaging is a way to construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values (Li, 2018: 23).

Regarding educational settings, according to Mazzaferro (2018), the translanguaging space is that space created by learners despite the rigid monolingual programs imposed in schools. Learners display agency and create a translanguaging space for themselves in a completely natural way. This space is indeed created in “off-stage” interactions where they can freely express themselves, with their multilingual and multicultural peculiarities. Contrary to the idea of teachers who claim that mixing languages confuses learners and inhibits their learning, translanguaging spaces are believed to have the important role of integrating linguistic and cultural knowledge assimilated in different

¹⁴monumenttoformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/c/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-cultural-differences-homi-k-bhabha.html

¹⁵monumenttoformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/c/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-cultural-differences-homi-k-bhabha.html

settings, such as home, community, school (Mazzaferro, 2018: 27).

The translanguaging space, that is created through the strategic use of social and linguistic resources, involves actors playing different roles and occupying different positions. In this space the individual feels connected to others and this sense of connectedness has an impact on the social behaviour of the various parts involved (Li, 2010: 13). Furthermore the translanguaging space can be considered as an intense social and emotional experience. Individuals do not simply participate, but feel a strong sense of attachment to the space, since they can be who they are within in. According to Li (2010), the translanguaging space has two important implications on multilingualism. Firstly it emphasizes the ability of multilinguals as active agents in social life, since they do not simply respond to social forces, but create spaces for themselves through the resources at their disposal. Then it breaks down dichotomies between the macro and the micro, the societal and the individual, the social and the psychological through interaction in multilingual settings (Li, 2010: 13).

2.3. Translanguaging in education: a strategy for language and content knowledge

2.3.1. The translanguaging pedagogy and its advantages

According to García and Kano (2014), the multilingual turn experienced in the 21st century has greatly impacted national schools systems. Despite the resistance of many, who have not given value to the language diversity of their students as a resource to learn, multilingualism has produced important changes in schools and pedagogical practices and educational systems try to evolve in line with the development of actual sociolinguistic realities (García & Kano, 2014: 258). The study of language in society and education has led to a move from a structural approach to a critical poststructural approach of language, that includes translanguaging (Vogel & García, 2017: 8). Structuralism in linguistics refers to those schools of 20th-century linguistics who sustained that “a language is a self-contained relational structure, the elements of which derive their existence and their value from their distribution and oppositions in texts or

discourse”¹⁶. Poststructuralism highlights indeed the dynamism and instability that characterize a language system. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida, renowned for his deconstructionist theories, wrote about a “play of differences” inside and between languages: “In a language, in the system of language there are only differences...on the one hand, these differences play: in language...On the other hand, these differences are themselves effects. They have not fallen from the sky fully formed, ...[nor are they] prescribed in the gray matter of the brain” (Derrida 1982 in Morgan, 2007: 1035-1036). In poststructuralism, meanings become provisional and the boundaries between linguistic and extralinguistic factors are removed. In contrast to structuralism, which focuses on the intrinsic properties of language and relations within a fixed system, poststructuralism investigates extrinsic conditions, such as the social intention of language users, from a critical point of view (Morgan, 2007: 1035-1036).

Even though formal educational environments throughout the world still promote a structuralist approach to language, according to Vogel and García (2017), translanguaging is starting to be identified as a practice in classrooms around the world. Translanguaging pedagogy is being put into practice in classrooms with immigrant and refugee students, but also in traditional language classrooms with students who learn additional languages (Vogel & García, 2017: 8-9). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the term translanguaging was originally conceived by Cen Williams in the context of education. It has remained an important concept in Welsh bilingual education ever since, and now it has been adopted as a key modern concept in the context of bilingual classrooms and communities. In this context translanguaging is conceived as strategic classroom language planning, implemented to allow students to make progress in both the languages known. In Williams’ use of translanguaging (Baker, 2011: 288), the input (reading and/or listening) is usually in one language, the output (speaking and/or writing) in the other language, and vice versa. An example in practice is a lesson in which students read a science worksheet written in English. Then the teacher starts a discussion in Spanish on that topic and sometimes switches to English to highlight technical science terms (Baker, 2011: 288).

Translanguaging pedagogy aims to invite students to use their whole linguistic

¹⁶ www.britannica.com/science/structuralism-linguistics

repertoire in the classroom. In this way, students have the opportunity to use their earlier knowledge and experiences and, at the same time, develop a new knowledge related to different school subjects (Pausrud et al., 2017: 15). Translanguaging for educational purposes “means that we start from a place that leverages all the features of the children’s repertoire, while also showing them, with whom, where, and why to use some features of their repertoire and not others, enabling them to also perform according to the social norms of named languages as used in schools” (García & Kleyn, 2016: 15). This means that the freedom of the speaker is at the centre of this practice, since he or she is allowed to use language in a way that does not necessarily correspond to the way languages are defined socially and politically. Instead speakers can add new features and appropriate them into their own language repertoire (Kleyn & García, 2019: 73). Translanguaging pedagogy intends to deconstruct the exclusive language categories that have been emphasized by schools over the years. This approach to translanguaging encourages educators to take a critical stance to the construction of standard languages, so that they can support the use of their students’ entire linguistic repertoire, help them develop their bilingualism, and support them in selecting appropriate features for every particular purpose (Vogel & García, 2017: 9).

García and Li (2014) assert that translanguaging has an important role in enabling students with different backgrounds to negotiate identities and affirm their own identity. Bilinguals are people with complex and language practices, which are fluid and changing, so translanguaging supports their ability to have multiple identities that are not those constructed in monolingual contexts (Celic & Seltzer, 2012: 3). Translanguaging shows “new languages practices that make visible the complexity of languages exchanges among people with different histories, and releases histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation-states” (García and Li, 2014: 21). In research conducted in classrooms where students were invited to use their different linguistic resources to write identity texts, Wedin (2017 in Paulsrud et al., 2017: 15-16) found that, by using all the linguistic resources at disposal, students naturally expressed relations between language and attitudes, ideologies and emotions. Students showed pride and feelings of shame in language choice, so that political ideologies among different groups were clearly perceived. Furthermore the use of the full linguistic repertoire highlights the different

levels of language proficiency among students and this tends to increase their linguistic curiosity (Paulsrud et al., 2017: 15-16).

In traditional educational programs, the language used in teaching and assessment most often only permits certain lexical and structural linguistic features, excluding many other features used by people, in particular by those positioned as powerless minorities, such as poor or non-white people and the speakers of minoritized languages (García & Kleyn, 2016: 15). Speaking of educational inequality, Otheguy et al. (2015 in Paulsrud et al., 2017: 16) sustain that translanguaging has a “special relevance to schools interested in the linguistic and intellectual growth of bilingual students as well as to minoritized communities involved in language maintenance and revitalization efforts”. Translanguaging indeed recognizes and values the language diversity and multilingualism and sustains home language practices. It aims at language sustainability, and not at simple language maintenance. Maintaining the static languages of the past is not enough. In order to promote a bilingual future, minoritized languages in bilingual communities must be practiced in the interaction with their social, political and economic contexts (Celic & Seltzer, 2012: 3). Translanguaging as pedagogy highlights the fact that all students’ whole linguistic repertoire are invited and included and they are indiscriminately recognized in the learning act, without distinction between multilingual and monolingual students (Paulsrud et al., 2017: 16).

Celic and Seltzer (2012) clarify that all students can benefit from translanguaging practice. Through translanguaging, students who speak only one language at home are aroused by the curiosity towards language diversity and they acquire the linguistic tolerance and the linguistic flexibility that are necessary to learn additional languages. For students who speak more than one language at home, translanguaging validates their home language practices, even though there is no instruction in their home languages. Translanguaging is also useful and effective for emergent bilinguals, namely those who are at the initial stage of development of an additional language (Celic & Seltzer, 2012: 5). As emerged from a study by García and Kano (2014), translanguaging is usually used differently by emergent bilinguals and experienced bilinguals. Emergent bilinguals tend to use translanguaging as support, and sometimes to expand their understandings. Experienced bilinguals use translanguaging for their own enhancement (García & Kano,

2014: 265).

In the context of translanguaging as bilingual pedagogy, practitioners and researchers have questioned the stricture of the separation between languages (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 204). Among these, García (2009 in Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 204) argues that an integrated and plural vision for bilingual education is needed. Blackledge and Creese (2010: 204) suggest the need to move away from “monoglossic” ideologies to “heteroglossic” ones, based on the concept that the function of language is essentially social, so it can not be viewed as a separate and autonomous system. Hornberger (2005 in Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 205) also suggests that “bi/multilinguals’ learning is maximized when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in two+ languages), rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices” (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 205). Moreover Cummins (2005 in Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 205) makes some explicit suggestions for developing bilingual strategies, such as focusing attention on cognate relationships across languages and encouraging students from different language backgrounds to use two or more languages in the collaboration between sister class projects. He also suggests the creation of dual language books made by students, by translating from the initial language of writing to the L2 and also using different multimedia and multilingual resources (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 205).

Baker (2011) discusses four potential educational advantages to translanguaging. Firstly it may promote a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter. As a matter of fact, if in a monolingual teaching situation students are able to answer questions or write an essay about a topic without fully understanding it, in translanguaging practice, this is not possible because in order to read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, a fuller understanding of the subject matter is required. Secondly, translanguaging may help in the development of the weaker language. Translanguaging lessons should indeed be planned by teachers with the aim of organizing the strategic use of both languages, by consciously allocating them in the classroom. In this way, translanguaging attempts to develop academic language skills in both languages leading to a fuller bilingualism and biliteracy. Thirdly, translanguaging may facilitate home-school links and cooperation. This concept is based on the fact that

if a child can communicate with a parent through the minority language, the parent can support and help the child in schoolwork. In the home-school link, translanguaging fosters a movement from one language to another, which involves much more than simple translation. It involves the reprocessing of content, which allows for a deeper understanding and learning. Further, translanguaging may help the integration of fluent speakers with early learners. This integration, together with a sensitive and strategic use of both languages, can develop second language ability concurrently with content learning (Baker, 2011: 289-291).

As far as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is concerned, translanguaging has also been used. CLIL is an approach that is practiced in different geographical contexts and different educational levels, in which subjects are taught through a foreign language with the aim of learning both the content and a foreign language (Nikula, Dafouz, Moore & Smit, 2016: xi). CLIL was initially created and promoted as a tool to encourage multilingualism and intercultural competence. Despite the explicit aim of CLIL, a monolingual orientation has prevailed, so that this educational program focused on the development of second language learning rather than the engagement of multilingual practices. For this reason some CLIL teachers have adopted translanguaging and researchers of CLIL have observed that using whatever resources one has available allows for more effective communication. The alternation of languages serves as metalanguage for language play and as a communicative strategy to explain problems and achieve mutual understanding (Nikula et al., 2016: 211-215).

2.3.2. The role of the teacher in translanguaging

Teachers in translanguaging pedagogy have an important and transformative role. They plan and organise programs and activities, but give up their authority role in the classrooms, in the sense that they become facilitators and try to generate opportunities for language use. The activities are student-centered but are also constructed on the basis of the relations between the students and between the teacher and the students. Therefore, the teachers see themselves not as the authority, but as another language learner (García & Wei, 2014: 75).

García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2016 in García & Kleyn, 2016: 20) identify three dimensions in instruction that are fundamental to adopt translanguaging in bilingual and multilingual classrooms: the teacher's stance, the teacher's design, and the teacher's shifts. Firstly the teachers has to develop a philosophical stance that often goes against what many think should happen in schools (García & Kleyn, 2016: 20). To adopt translanguaging they have to develop a stance that bilingualism is a resource for every step of the learning process. Furthermore teachers must believe that translanguaging is transformative because it changes standard views and enables students to perform from their own internal perspective that will encourage creativity and criticality (Li, 2010: 2-3).

The second important dimension is the teacher's design. The design of translanguaging activities requires the construction of collaborative/cooperative structures, the collection of varied multilingual and multimodal instructional resources, and the use of translanguaging pedagogical practices (García, Johnson, and Seltzer, 2016 in García & Kleyn, 2016: 21). Instruction based on translanguaging theory is always collaborative and student-centered. A speaker's linguistic repertoire is not set or static, but dynamic, and it emerges through social interactions. For this reason teachers often group students according to their home language background, so that children can maximize discussion and learn new language features from their peers. Then teachers use varied multilingual and multimodal resources in order to include different perspectives, so that students can learn to critically analyze different viewpoints. For example teachers can use printed multilingual texts, but also videos, movies, and other Internet resources. Multilingual texts do not only include those in different languages, but also those in which translanguaging is used for literary aims (García & Kleyn, 2016: 22). Teachers and students use whatever signs and forms they have at their disposal to connect with one another, connecting knowledge and creating new ones. This instructional strategy encourages classroom participants to make links between social, cultural, community and linguistic domains of their lives (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 213). Lastly, the teacher's shifts are fundamental in translanguaging instruction. Teachers have to be flexible and must be prepared to change the course of instruction in order to respond to individual children's language repertoires (García & Kleyn, 2016: 23).

2.4. Translanguaging for social justice and cultural pluralism

When translanguaging is discussed, it is necessary to refer to social justice. Translanguaging is not simply a method or a strategy for content and language knowledge in bilingual and multilingual classrooms. In translanguaging, educators leverage the students' full linguistic repertoires to teach and assess with the aim of enabling a more socially just and equitable education for bilingual students (García & Kleyn, 2016: 17). Teachers using translanguaging in class should develop a transformative stance, and not simply a scaffolding stance, based on the belief that the inclusion of the child's full linguistic repertoire is only temporary and is a scaffold for comprehension of the new language. A transformative stance, instead, is based on the teacher's belief that using the child's full repertoire will transform hierarchies in school, so that no languages will be superior and all the languages spoken by students will be given value. This stance makes it possible to disrupt the hegemony of the named national languages and of the power of the political state and to overcome monolingual norms in education (García & Kleyn, 2016: 21). McLaren (1988 in Garcia & Flores, 2012: 242) claims that multilingual pedagogies should always be "critical" in the sense that they should develop students' critical consciousness. Only a critical attitude to the different viewpoints suggested by society can oppose the conditions that perpetuate human injustice and inequity (Garcia & Flores, 2012: 242).

Garcia and Flores (2012) believe that designing instruction based on social justice means providing equity for students, their cultures, their languages and their communities. To do this, teachers create democratic classrooms where everyone is involved and has the equal opportunity to participate. Then educators can try to bolster the students' linguistic and cultural strengths, promote cultural pluralism, and develop their multilingual awareness and tolerance, by planning activities that aim to acknowledge the students' home languages and understand the social, political, and economic struggles affecting different language practices. Furthermore educators promote academic rigor and have high expectations: regardless of their abilities, teachers encourage students to achieve their aims by working hard and taking risks. Finally, educators should provide valid forms of assessment so as to improve students' learning and make it more equitable (García and Flores, 2012: 242).

As mentioned above, according to scholars such as García and Li (2014) and Vallejo and Dooly (2019), translanguaging is transformative. This means that translanguaging practice is different from other fluid languaging practices, such as codemeshing, polylingualism, transidiomatic practices, etc, because it attempts to eliminate the hierarchy of languaging practices that are deemed more valuable than others. For this reason translanguaging could be a mechanism for the achievement of social justice, especially when teaching students who belong to language minoritized communities (García & Leiva, 2014: 200). Baker (2011) refers to the *Enrichment Bilingual Education* when he talks about instruction for language minority children. The Enrichment Bilingual Education aims to develop a student's home language skills to full proficiency and full biliteracy and to extend the individual and group use of minority language, leading to the promotion of cultural pluralism and linguistic diversity (Baker, 2011: 207).

2.5. Translanguaging as everyday practice

Translanguaging is the tendency of multilinguals to dynamically construct their everyday language practices within and without the classroom. García (2009 in Mazzaferro, 2018: 2) extended the term beyond its pedagogical meaning and included the “multiple discursive practices in which multilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (Mazzaferro, 2018: 2). Therefore the term is used to indicate the linguistic practices performed by bilinguals in their everyday lives irrespective of context and in particular with the aim of gaining understandings, everyday communication, and achievement in interactions (Lewis et al., 2012: 10).

Furthermore, Li Wei (2017), following the concept of *language instinct*, related to human beings' innate capacity for acquiring languages, has used the expression “translanguaging instinct”, to emphasize the importance of mediated interaction in everyday life in the 21st century. The concept of *translanguaging instinct* stresses the fact that humans naturally go beyond defined linguistic cues and overcome in everyday contexts culturally defined language boundaries in order to achieve effective communication (Li, 2017: 24-25). García and Li (2014) talk about *translanguaging*

instinct also with reference to the natural ability of human beings to use their multiple semiotic resources to interpret different forms of symbolic references. Everyday communication involves traditional linguistic signs and images, emoticons and pictures. Signs are culturally specific and significant, so that in order to understand their meaning, not only is the linguistic structure required, but also the other indexical cues that together create the signs. This process of creation and interpretation of multimodal means of communication is a process of translanguaging (García & Li, 2014: 32-34).

Mazzaferro (2018) claims that translanguaging is a “locally-situated and interactional accomplishment of practical action” and it is significant in many contexts of society, from non-institutional to institutionalised domains of social life, i.e. school, education, diasporic families and communities, workplaces, urban landscapes, advertising practices, etc (Mazzaferro, 2018: 4). Translanguaging practices in everyday life can be imperceptible and tacit, since they commonly stratify in stable routines, but also complex, multidimensional, dynamic, mediated and socially-constructed, that is, they do not correspond to a monolithic background, but reflect language and cultural diversity (Mazzaferro, 2018: 4).

Translanguaging is a spontaneous linguistic practice in the everyday lives of multilingual people, across different contexts, between classmates, friends and family. Beyond the context of pedagogy, translanguaging is a very relevant linguistic phenomenon, since it happens in varied domains of society, such as a busy city market, cosmopolitan corner shops, public libraries, community centres, advice and advocacy offices and sports clubs (Paulsrud et al., 2017: 8). Li Wei (2010) demonstrated that translanguaging, with its creativity and criticality, is always present in the everyday lives of multilinguals. Being multilingual, rather than monolingual, is an integral part of the individual’s identity, and does not only mean being able to speak different languages, but being able to move freely between them (Li, 2010: 4-9). I report a speech of one of the Chinese students involved in Li Wei’s study (2010), because I think it aptly represents the spontaneous tendency, as well as the intrinsic need of multilinguals, to translanguage in their everyday lives:

“Our parents think we speak too much English. My friends and teachers think we only speak Chinese, because we look Chinese. Nobody seems to understand who we are. We speak both Chinese and English. That’s a fact. It’s easy to understand, isn’t it? Why don’t people just leave us alone and let us speak whatever we can speak! You told us we are bilinguals. I like that. I really want to be bilingual and I want to be treated like a bilingual. I don’t speak Chinese only; I don’t speak English only; I speak both! That’s who I am. That’s who we are” (Li, 2010: 7).

The statement is very strong and by making it the student asserts that language mixing is an important part of the his and his peers multilingual identity. They want to be taken seriously as bilinguals and multilinguals. Creating a translanguaging space is what they do most naturally and it also symbolizes who they are (Li, 2010: 9). Mazzaferro (2018) shows how translanguaging represents the unmarked and usual mode of communication as well as the only way to construct meaning for many individuals and communities worldwide. In everyday communicative practices, individuals are indeed able to develop, organise and experiment with different ways of being and becoming through translanguaging, by drawing on all the resources of their whole linguistic repertoires (Mazzaferro, 2018: 4-5).

Translanguaging in everyday practice can be seen as a social practice that crosses the borders of disciplines¹⁷. The translanguaging dimension can indeed be adopted in varied contexts, such as in visual arts, music, theatre, transgender discourse, business, sports¹⁸. For example in sport team games in which the players come from different backgrounds, translanguaging is performed by the use of different ways of communication, such as language, gestures, body expression and the eyes¹⁹. Mazzaferro (2018) presents a study conducted in the context of global business, where dynamic and flexible translanguaging practices are frequent between workers (Mazzaferro, 2018: 149-174). He also presents a study carried out in the context of an intercultural theatre group in Bologna, Cantieri Meticci, made up of Italians and migrants from different countries. Observations illustrated how the multilingual makeup of the group encourages flexible movements

¹⁷ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps4-CRON-t8

¹⁸ www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnOx8GjPvj4

¹⁹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps4-CRON-t8

across not just linguistic but also physical resources, emphasizing the role of the body as a primary resource of communication (Mazzaferro, 2018: 195-213). Another interesting study presented by Mazzaferro analyzes the benefits of a performative approach to translanguaging in drama staging between bilingual adolescents from mixed French-Russian families living in France (Mazzaferro, 2018: 215- 233).

3 - Understanding translanguaging in everyday practice: case study

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the efficacy of translanguaging as everyday practice, in particular in the context of immigration. I will describe the context in which the study was conducted and then I will report on some excerpts of the conversations observed in a trade union office, which is frequented for the most part by migrants. The analysis of each excerpt will show how translanguaging can support communication and understanding and contribute to the maximisation of the speaker's communicative potential.

3.1. Setting and context

My study was conducted in an office for workers' rights called "ADL Cobas". This is a local trade union located in the district of Arcella, in Padua. The Association "Razzismo Stop", which is active in Padua and engages in human and civil rights and the promotion of interculturalism, collaborates with the office. The Association is active in particular in the field of immigration by defending the rights of migrants, for example the right to have a house or a residence permit. Its commitment started in the beginning of the 90s, when the phenomenon of migration began significant for the Italian society and politics, and is oriented to contain the wave of racism related to the presence of migrants on the ground. Through its activities the association tries to construct relationships between different worlds and spread a more open and welcoming mentality among the citizens. For example awareness-raising events are organized, as well as intercultural meetings and Italian lessons for migrants. The Association "Razzismo Stop" collaborates with the office "ADL Cobas" by helping the staff with the routine activities, the paperwork concerning immigration or work, and the organization of meetings aimed at promoting the inclusion of migrants.

The city of Padua has been called "open and inclusive city"²⁰. It is indeed characterized by the presence of many people from different countries. According to ISTAT data from

²⁰<https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30284/langID/it/itemID/16456/-Padova-citt%C3%A0-aperta-e-inclusiva--Non-solo-un-convegno-ma-una-sfida-e-una-prospettiva-su-cui-confrontarsi.html>

2019, the foreign citizens living in Padua number 34,619, which corresponds to 16.4% of the whole population of the city. The biggest overseas group comes from Romania, accounting for 26.8% of all foreign people living in the area. The second biggest group comes from the Republic of Moldova (11.6%) and then the third is from the People's Republic of China (8.3%)²¹. The district of Arcella is dynamic and multicultural and a large proportion of its population is made up of migrants, both those who have moved there recently and those who have lived there for several years. This trade union is frequented especially by the migrants living in Arcella. Thanks to the partners of the Association "Razzismo Stop", I was put into contact with the office of the trade union and I started my study there.

3.2. Methodology and functions of translanguaging

This case study was conducted over three months, that is June, July and October 2019, by visiting the trade union office every Tuesday afternoon and collaborating with a member of Association "Razzismo Stop" from 16.00 to 18.00 pm. During this study, I was present at the appointments where people came to ask for information, paperwork, or some kind of help, for example in filling in a curriculum vitae. I was sitting next to the employee and I listened to the conversations between him/her and the service users. I could not make recordings since the conversations could involve sensitive information regarding the migrants and their stories, but I tried to take notes and transcribe some parts of the conversations that I found interesting as regards translanguaging practices. The staff helped me to be as faithful as possible in the transcription of some parts of the dialogues.

I behaved as an auditor without intervening in the dialogues between the migrant and the staff member, apart from those cases in which the employee involved me or the migrants asked me something. I decided not to intervene because I wanted to analyze translanguaging in its tendency to be a spontaneous and natural attitude. I also wanted to give the impression of being a neutral person, so that the migrants did not feel "studied" or "analyzed" in their linguistic performance or in the way they express themselves. My aim was to observe how migrants and multilingual people use their full linguistic

²¹ <https://www.tuttitalia.it/veneto/64-padova/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2019/>

repertoire to communicate, help the staff understand them, construct meaning and produce effective messages.

I often did not know the languages spoken. The majority of the people involved in the conversations that I witnessed came from African countries, from the Middle East, the Philippines and Albania. They all spoke some English, even though at different levels. Sometimes they mixed their native languages with English or Italian, in the attempt to be understood by the staff members and construct the intended meaning of the message. Very often English was the lingua franca used in those cases in which migrants did not know Italian at all. The knowledge of the native languages is not a fundamental prerequisite in order to identify the translanguaging and its practice. Through the knowledge of English and Italian, I could understand the context related to requests made by the migrants involved and the way in which they used their own different linguistic resources. In the conversations that involved Albanian people, I managed to translate some interesting lines thanks to the help of an Albanian staff member, who also showed me how to transcribe them.

I managed to identify the categories in which translanguaging is used in a natural and spontaneous way, and in particular the functions related to them. In most cases the translanguaging practice serves the need to ensure comprehension and avoid misunderstanding in communication. These functions are extremely important in a such delicate context as immigration, in which understanding and communicating the intended message are fundamental aspects which influence migrants' access to their rights. The other categories identified in this case study concern situations in which translanguaging is used to signal cultural identity, explain an utterance in a different language, assert the truthfulness of a statement, show knowledge, achieve a specific aim, emphasize a concept, mediate comprehension, construct meaning, include someone, show membership to the same identity group and answer fast. These categories represent the functions which contribute to the construction of fluent speech and an effective message and to understand in a fuller and deeper way. In the following section we will notice these categories in the conversations between the migrant and the employee and we will see how the intended communicative functions are reached through the use of translanguaging.

3.3. Case study: from theory to practice

There will now follow the excerpts of the conversations heard at the union trade office. Real speeches pronounced by migrants will be reported in boxes. The rest of the speech with its relevant aspects will be presented through my description. The sections called “analysis” will explain the functions that translanguaging has in each excerpt and the characteristics of translanguaging practice that can be identified in it. I will call the staff member as O.

Excerpt 1

There are two Philippine women, a mother (M) and a daughter (D). They speak Filipino with each other, but they try to speak Italian with O. They speak about a bill and try to say precisely when they received it. The mother says in Italian to O. that the bill had arrived the previous Friday:

M: È arrivata venerdì.

It arrived last Friday.

D: Qua è scritto venerdì prendere”.

[by indicating something written on a paper]

Here it is written to get it on Friday.

The daughter then says something in Filipino. I do not understand the language, but her tone and gestures enable me to understand that she is saying something like “The bill did not arrive on Friday but on another day”. In the middle of this sentences in Filipino, she used the Italian word “appuntamento” and she repeated it several times. I deduced that the daughter was stating that Friday was the expected day for an appointment at the office. Since the daughter speaks Italian better than her mother, she often acts as a mediator between her and O.

Analysis

In this case study, as mentioned above, translanguaging is used to ensure comprehension. The two women indeed try to speak Italian, even if with some difficulties, but they often switch to Filipino in order to check if they both understood what the employee said to them. The daughter switches more often to Filipino than her mother, because she understands more Italian than her. In this way she mediates understanding with her mother. This strategy reflects William's early definition of translanguaging (1994 in Baker 2011: 288) as the pedagogical practice of students' switching the language of input and output "to maximize understanding and performance" (Baker, 2011: 288).

Translanguaging is also used to avoid misunderstanding. As mentioned above, it may indeed "promote a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter" (Baker, 2011: 289). In translanguaging practice people tend to resort to another language to be able to provide more detailed explanations of a concept. This practice usually occurs at the level of single words to avoid misunderstanding. In this case study, while the two women are speaking to each other in Filipino, the daughter uses the word "appuntamento". She used Italian to indicate the idea of the meeting in order to achieve a deeper understanding. Even if the mother understands very little Italian, she certainly knows the meaning of this word, since the previous time they went to the office, the employee had given them an "appuntamento" for Friday. By using this Italian word, which is repeated several times, the daughter manages to avoid misunderstanding, convey a greater nuance of expression and also show the employee that what they are talking about is clear.

By observing the other modes of communication different from spoken language, such as the kind of voice tone and gestures, we can verify the aspect of multimodality, which characterizes translanguaging (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 6). In this conversation, the daughter's voice tone and the gestures roughly help me to understand what she is saying. This shows that every mode of communication is possible in translanguaging, because the main aim is to create an effective message in order to understand other people and be understood.

An interesting phenomenon that we can see in this excerpt, as well as in some of the following ones, concerns the children as “language brokers”. Very often the children who accompany their parents to the office are more proficient in Italian or English than them, so that they help them in communicating with the employee. They do not merely translate, they mediate between them. “Language brokering” is a practice in which children of immigrant families “interpret and translate between culturally and linguistically different people and mediate interactions in a variety of situations including those found at home and school” (Tse, 1996a)²². Language brokers do more than facilitating the parents’ communication processes: they mediate in a decision making process. Research demonstrates that about 90 percent of children from language minority families serve as language brokers (Dorner, Orellana & Li-Grinning, 2007; Dorner & Pulido, 2003; Tse, 1995; 1996 n Pimentel & Sevin, 2009: 16). Children attend school and the school attendance provides them with direct exposure to the language and culture of the host country²³. So when they come home, they become language brokers for their parents, grandparents, and siblings. They are an important resource for their families, since migrant families often struggle in the acculturation process. Language brokers facilitate their parents’ acculturation process and advocate for them in their interactions. This leads children to “take on adult-like responsibilities and make decisions that affect their entire family” (Love & Buriel, 2007 in Pimentel & Sevin, 2009: 16-18). In this case study we can see how language brokers are a resource in the communication between migrants and locals.

Excerpt 2

A Nigerian man (M) starts speaking English to O.

M: I asked them. The post office said they cannot do it.

O: **Allora**, I succeeded in linking - . I’ll try to enter in your mail address.

So, - .

In your e-mail address there are no communications.

²² <https://termcoord.eu/2015/09/14731/>

²³ <https://termcoord.eu/2015/09/14731/>

O. reads a written document in Italian and then adds:

O: Somehow they say they are waiting for some documents. The practice succeeded.

M: Which ones they are waiting for?"

O: There are no communications, "**in attesa di eventuale**" [by reading the Italian document] they say.

There are no communications, "waiting for possible communications" - .

M: Is it the **Prefettura**?

O: Yes, this is the **Ministero**.

Analysis

In this excerpt translanguaging is used to signal cultural identity. According to Klimpfinger (2007), this use corresponds to a type of unintended code-switching. These kinds of switches are usually "emblematic switches" and refer to tags, exclamations, pause fillers, or function words in one language that are inserted in an utterance of another language (Klimpfinger, 2007: 40-41). Here we can see how the officer uses the Italian word "allora" at the beginning of an English sentence. This expression is a very frequent discourse marker in Italian colloquial language and I would define it as pause filler. It is usually used in Italian to introduce a statement and has the meaning of "so" or "well" in English. This use is spontaneous and, for this reason, we can assert that it signals a culture-oriented expression.

Translanguaging is also used to explain an utterance in a different language: the officer reads a document in Italian and then explains in English the information reported in it, by making a sort of sight translation. In this practice there is a language change between input and output, as in the definition of translanguaging formulated by Williams (1994 in Baker 2011: 288).

As already mentioned above, translanguaging is used to avoid misunderstandings (Baker, 2011: 289). Here both the employee and the Nigerian man use two Italian words while speaking in English: "prefettura" and "ministero". This practice is very common when people mention technical words. In the excerpt they are words related to Italian

institutions and the interlocutors prefer not to translate them in order to avoid misunderstandings.

In a moment in the middle of the conversation, the Nigerian man asks the employee which documents are requested. The employee says that there are “no communications” and reads loudly an Italian expression written in the e-mail without translating it (“in attesa di eventuale”), in order to prove that what he is saying is true. I sustain that this way to use translanguaging aims at asserting the truthfulness of a statement.

Excerpt 3

There are two Nigerian young men. One of them (A) does not speak Italian, the other, a refugee (B), just a little bit.

A: Noi adesso finito a ufficio ACLI, tre ore aspettare, **since he loose his house**. Adesso a lui importante come dormire, fare l'alloggio.

We have just spoken with ACLI office, we have waited for tree hours, - .

Now it is important to find a place to stay for him.

O: Come vi ho detto l'altra volta... **as I said to you last time, they don't hospitality.**

As I said you last time... - .

A: Abbiamo chiesto Prefettura se fare qualcosa per lui, per dormire, chiamare cooperativa, prima **he call a cooperative**...come aiutare lui in questa situazione difficile.

We asked to the prefecture if they could help him to find a place to stay and if they could call a cooperative, before he called a cooperative... how to help him in this difficult situation.

O: **But I said to you last time to go to Prefettura not for the commission but for the permesso di soggiorno.**

- residence permit.

A: **Yes, ACLI said to go to Prefettura. They said to send a message if someone know that to help him.**

O. does not understand.

A: Dicono per cercare qualcuno per aiutare lui [he speaks up and articulates his words], chiedere conoscenti se sapere per aiutare.

They said to search for someone who can help him, to ask for help to acquaintances.

O: Tu hai un documento? **Do you have a document?**

The young men speak to each other in their language, probably Yoruba, and they say the Italian words “questura” and “prefettura” while speaking.

O: Prima di arrivare a Bagnoli, dove è arrivato in Italia?

Before coming in Bagnoli, when did he arrive in Italy?

[A. translates in English mixed to Yoruba for his friend]

B: Sicily.

A: Prima di arrivare a Bagnoli era in Sicilia.

Before coming in Bagnoli he was in Sicily.

O: Quando è arrivato a Bagnoli?

When did he arrive in Bagnoli?

A: [to his friend] **When did you arrive in Bagnoli?**

B: June.

[B. continues to talk to A. in Yoruba and, at a certain point, he says “after soggiorno”].

A: Dopo lui aspettare, controlli, carta d’identità, **he waited six months.**

Later he waited for controls, identity card, - .

O: Sei rimasto a Bagnoli fino alla chiusura? **Did you stay there until the closure?**

Did you stay in Bagnoli until the closure?

A. translates and B. confirms.

During this conversation O. has written a report of the facts in Italian. When he finished to write it, he starts the sight translation from Italian into English, so that both the young

men can understand.

O: “I was sent in Italy without knowing Italian and arrive in Bagnoli. There, this is important, **questo è importante**, they didn’t say anything to me about asylum, Commission, international protection”.

...

O: Se vuoi possiamo fissare un appuntamento. Sono qui martedì.

If you want we can make an appointment. I’m here on Tuesdays.

A: Dopo lunedì...**Tuesday**?

After Monday...Tuesday?

O: Yes, Tuesday. You can come on Tuesday morning.

Analysis

In my case study, as mentioned above, translanguaging is used to construct a more fluent sentence and an effective message (García & Li, 2014: 22). The Nigerian man indeed often switches languages while speaking (“tre ore aspettare, since he loose his house”, “prima he call a cooperative”) in order to be more fluent in speaking and construct a message that is understandable to the employee. It is interesting to observe the way in which the man manages to negotiate meaning by asking “Dopo lunedì...Tuesday?”. This strategy allows an immediate and effective understanding.

Translanguaging is used to avoid misunderstandings: as in the previous case, in English sentences we usually find Italian technical terms like “prefettura”, “questura” and “permesso di soggiorno”. This is the more effective way to avoid misunderstandings in thorny matters.

Among the varied functions of translanguaging, García (2011) claims that it is used to show knowledge (García, 2011: 53), and in this excerpt we can verify this use. Many times in this conversation the Nigerian man starts the sentence in Italian, but then restarts in English (“Come vi ho detto prima...as I said to you last time”, “chiamare cooperativa, prima he call a cooperative”). I noticed an evident need to show his

knowledge of Italian. Then he switches to English in order to make sure of being clear in the communication.

The excerpt that I have just presented provides us an other example of translanguaging for ensuring comprehension, confirming the fact that translanguaging facilitates a fuller and deeper understanding (Baker, 2011: 289). The employee switches from one language to the other in order to be sure that the question is clear to both men (“Tu hai un documento? Do you have a document?”, “Sei rimasto a bagnoli fino alla chiusura? Did you stay there until the closure?”).

Furthermore translanguaging is used to achieve an aim: the employee has to write a report of the facts in Italian and, in order to do this, he asks questions in Italian and English, according to the level of understanding of the two men. While speaking, he writes the report in Italian. When the report is ready, he orally translates it into English for the two men. In this translanguaging practice there is a continuous language alternation between input and output (questions and answers), translation, and multicompetence (writing and speaking in different languages). The alternation between input and output (William 1994 in Baker, 2011: 288) and the ability of multicompetence (Canagarajah, 2011: 1) are means through which the communicative aim is perfectly achieved.

To conclude the analysis of this excerpt, it is important to observe that translanguaging helps to emphasize a concept: in the sentence “There, this is important, questo è importante, they didn’t say anything to me about asylum [...]”, the employee highlights the importance of the information and emphasizes it by repeating the phrase in two languages.

As in the previous case, we see the presence of a language broker. In this conversation it is not a child but he is a reliable friend. I would define him language broker in any case, because there is the condition of being a trustworthy person. In a situation like this an interpreter would be necessary, but most of the time professional interpreters are not available. In any case, parents prefer trustworthy persons that can mediate in the

conversation with discretion and confidentiality²⁴. For this reason many people who come to the office are usually accompanied by language brokers.

Excerpt 4

A woman (W) comes to the office. She can not speak Italian. She only knows some frequent words.

O: Hai i documenti qui richiesti?

Do you have the requested documents?

W: No... [she does not understand].

O: [by referring to some papers she had in her hands] Questi chi te li ha dati? **Who gave these to you?**

W: Commercialista. Questura **gave me these documents to bring them to commercialista.**

The accountant. The central police station gave me these documents to bring them to the accountant.

O: Ok, perfetto, allora devi ritornare con questi documenti.

Ok, well, so you should come back and bring these documents.

Analysis

In the conversation above, translanguaging is used to ensure comprehension (Baker, 2011: 289): the employee does not know which level of Italian the woman has but she evidently has difficulty in understanding. So he asks a question in Italian and soon after also in English to ensure comprehension. The employee also makes also use of multimodal communication: he uses gestures to indicate the papers that the woman is holding in her hands and this facilitates understanding.

Furthermore translanguaging is used to avoid misunderstandings (Baker, 2011: 289): the use of Italian technical words is frequent in conversations held in a foreign language

²⁴ <https://termcoord.eu/2015/09/14731/>

(usually English in this study). In this case the technical term is “commercialista” and refers to the name of a job. This use makes the sentence clear and effective.

Excerpt 5

There is a man and his son of Pakistani origin. They speak Urdu. They are talking about documents for family reunification. The man (D) speaks very little Italian, even if he has lived in Padua for five years. The son (S) speaks a level of Italian which is enough to understand and communicate, so he often translates for the father. The son has lived in Padua for about six months.

O. speaks slowly, articulates words, repeats words and questions and makes wide use of gestures accompanying the words. For example when O. says “uno” (one), to indicate the first point of the discourse, he indicates one with his the finger. When he says “two”, he shows two with fingers, and so on. I noticed another significant gesture when O. said: “Vai dal commercialista e dai questo (by indicating a document)”. Then he says again “commercialista” and accomanies the word with the gesture of giving the document to someone.

O: C'è bisogno di atto di matrimonio, di famiglia, documento che attesta che tu e tua moglie siete sposati e questi sono i vostri figli.

You need a marriage certificate, of your family, a document that attests that you and your wife are married and that these are your children.

S: Ah! **Family certificate!**

D: Oh yes, family certificate! [then he says something in Urdu to his son to prove that he understood what their talking about].

Analysis

In my case study translanguaging is used to ensure comprehension (Baker, 2011: 289): comprehension is assured by the alternation between the language of the input and the language of the output, and by the use of gesture. So the communication acquires a

multimodal dimension (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019: 6). The employee accompanies words with gestures and this serves as a great help for understanding (he says “Vai dal commercialista e dai questo” by imitating the act of giving something to someone). This proves that non-verbal communication has a fundamental role in the communication with immigrants.

Furthermore translanguaging is used to mediate comprehension (García, 2011: 46) and this is enabled by the presence of a language broker: in this conversation the son has the role of mediator between his father and the officer. So, in this spontaneous translanguaging practice, he listens to the employee who speaks sometimes Italian and sometimes English, answers in English and then translates the sentence in Urdu for his father, e.g. when the employee explains the kind of document they need, the son understands and exclaims “Ah! Family certificate!” and mediates the understanding with the father.

Excerpt 6

A man (M) is asking information about the guaranteed minimum income.

O: [referring to a document] **Hai fatto questo alla Posta?**

Did you make this at the post office?

M: ... [the man does not answer].

O: Do you speak English?

M: Yes.

O: Did you make this here or in **Posta**?

M: In **Posta**. These documents comes from **INPS**.

Analysis

In my case study, as previously mentioned, translanguaging is used to ensure comprehension: the employee switches language from Italian to English because the man does not understand the question in Italian. This practice reflects the characteristic

of flexibility that the teacher has to possess in translanguaging instruction (García & Kleyn, 2016: 23). As in education, in an everyday context like a trade union office, the employee, who supports and engages in the translanguaging practice, has to be ready to change the course of communication and to be flexible in changing the language used, in order to involve, understand, and let migrants express themselves.

Translanguaging is then used to avoid misunderstandings (Baker, 2011: 289). Italian technical terms are not translated (“Posta”, “INPS”) and this is the best way to be clear and effective in transmitting a message. Translating the names of institutions typical of a country can be risky since they could acquire a different meaning in an other language.

Excerpt 7

A young man (M) from Ghana comes to the office. He speaks little Italian. In the conversation with O. there is a wide use of gestures.

O: L'ultima volta ho fatto io il curriculum per te?

Did I write the curriculum for you last time?

The young man (M) does not understand, so O. repeats the sentence by indicating himself when he says “io”. Then O. writes the curriculum for the young man.

O: Questa foto non va bene perchè se faccio la fotocopia verrebbe sgranata.

This photo is not good since if I make a copy of it, it would be grainy.

M: Non va bene questa foto?

This photo is not good?

O: **This photo is not good. If you want I can make a new photo now.**

M: **Yes, ok, we can do it.**

After that O. has devoted much time to the young man and has printed many copies of the curriculum, the young man adds:

M: Ma come si fa a...come si fa a... [by saying this, he opens his arms and makes a grateful expression of the face], **how can I thank you?**

How can I, How can I..., how can I thank you?

O: Non ti preoccupare. Figurati!

Don't worry!

M: Grazie mille!

Thank you very much!

Analysis

In my case study, as mentioned above, translanguaging is used to ensure comprehension (Baker, 2011: 289): the conversation starts in Italian but when the man does not understand, the employee speaks in English. Sometimes they mix the two languages, according to the level of understanding in one or the other language.

As already seen in one of the previous case study, the use of translanguaging facilitates to reach an aim: at the end of the conversation the man wants to thank the officer for his kindness and help but he can not say “thank you” in Italian, so he opens his arms to let him understand. This multimodal communication allows the man to convey the intended message, although he can not express it in Italian. Once again we see the importance of non-verbal communication for the achievement of a communicative aim (Li, 2018: 21-22).

Excerpt 8

A woman (W) and her daughter are at the office. They speak Arabic. The mother does not speak Italian. The daughter has an intermediate level of Italian and she acts as mediator, translating all the things that O. says or asks. O. writes the curriculum for the woman. At a certain point the woman tells him about one of her job experiences and pronounces a sentence which includes Italian and Arabic. She says: “Sei anni *ho lavorato lì*” (I have worked there for six years). The second part of the sentence was in Arabic. O. asks: “Sei anni...?” (Six years?), since he does not know Arabic, and the

woman repeats the same sentence. The daughter then translates her mother's words to O.

Analysis

In my case study, translanguaging is used to construct meaning (García, 2011: 49-50): the sentence pronounced by the woman, in which Italian and Arabic are mixed, is not understandable by the employee but it shows her attempt to answer and construct meaning. This example reflects the characteristic of translanguaging to be transformative (García & Li, 2014: 68-92): in translanguaging different kinds of language practices are accepted, also the use of two different languages in the same sentence. This practice, as mentioned above, destabilizes the separation of fixed language systems. The communicative aim that the speaker seeks to achieve has the main role in the decision of how to communicate.

As mentioned above, translanguaging is used to mediate understanding (García, 2011: 46): the daughter acts as mediator between her mother and the employee by translating the sentences and facilitating the employee in making the curriculum for her mother. Also in this case, we can observe the important role of children as language brokers.

In the following conversations, the employee (D) is Albanian but speaks perfectly Italian competently since she has lived in Italy for many years. Many Albanian people who come to the office, prefer to speak with her, so that they can express themselves in their mother tongue.

Excerpt 9

In this conversation an Albanian man asks D. for information about work. At the beginning he asks:

A: Chi è l'albanese qua? [smiling]

Who is Albanian here?

D: Io! [Then starts speaking Albanian].

It's me!

They introduce themselves and keep on speaking Albanian. While the man is speaking in Albanian, he says in Italian “va bene”. Before leaving he says goodbye to us:

A: **Mirupafshim!** [to D.]
Ciao! [speaking to me]

Analysis

By reflecting on this case study, I perceive that translanguaging is also used to emphasize a concept: I can not understand Albanian but the use of “va bene” evidently emphasizes something that has previously been said in Albanian.

In this excerpt we can also observe that translanguaging enables to include someone (García, 2011: 51-52): after saying goodbye in Albanian, the man turns to me and says goodbye in Italian.

Excerpt 10

In this conversation the interlocutors are the Albanian man (F), the employee (D) and me (G).

D: Ciao, tu sei Sam?
Hi! Are you Sam?
F: No, F.
No, I'm F.
D: Ah ok, tu sei il ragazzo albanese?
Ok, are you the Albanian guy?
F: Si.
Yes.
D: **Ckemi. Si ia kalón.**
How are you doing?

F: **Mirë.** Piacere.

Fine. Nice to meet you.

[D. introduces herself by saying her name and shaking his hand]

G: Piacere, Gemma [by shaking his hand].

Nice to meet you, Gemma.

They start speaking about citizenship, since F. asked for it more than ten years ago. They talk about the procedure and at what point it is. While speaking, they often alternate between Italian and Albanian. D. alternates the most. At a certain point she asks me:

D: Gemma, vuoi sapere di che pratica stiamo parlando?

Gemma, would you like to know what procedure we are talking about?

G: Sì.

Yes.

Then she said to me in Italian that they were dealing with the citizenship procedure and she explained to me why F. still had to wait in order to have the procedure completed. She informed me that the “Decreto Sicurezza”, proposed by the former Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, and approved last year, extends the time to obtain citizenship.

At this point of the conversation the atmosphere has become more informal and F. and D. start speaking about other things that do not concern citizenship or related paperwork. F. is narrating an event happened in the past and at a certain point he says:

F: [after finishing to speak Albanian] E allora questa ragazza che ho incontrato al supermercato e che lavorava lì ha detto: “Per fortuna ho finito gli studi e ho trovato

questo lavoro”. “E allora!” **thash.**

And then this girl I met at the supermarket and who worked there, said to me:

“Luckily I finished studying and I got this job”. “So what!” I said.

While saying this the man makes the gesture of opening his arms as if he were saying “So what?”, in the sense that he was surprised to see the girl satisfied about the work in the supermarket, since she had studied a lot. Later he talks about the languages he has studied.

F: Per esempio alle superiori ho fatto il Turco, no?

For example I studied Turkish at high school.

D: Turco? *Evet!* **Po!** *Hayır!* No!

Turkish? Yes! Yes! No! No!

F is speaking in Albanian. At a certain point he looks at me and says:

F: Scusami. Questa cosa... [he stops speaking Albanian and switches to Italian in order to let me understand what he is talking about].

I'm sorry. -

G: No, non ti preoccupare. Io mi “faccio l’orecchio” [smiling].

No, don't worry. Meanwhile I learn.

D: Lei impara l’Albanese.

She learns Albanian.

F: No, comunque stavo dicendo perchè loro hanno questa teoria - .

Anyway I was saying that - .

Analysis

In my case study translanguaging is used to show membership to the same identity group: soon after F. says he his Albanian, D. starts speaking in Albanian (*Ckemi. Si ia kalón*). By doing this she evidently shows her belonging to the same group identity as F. and at the same time allows the creation of a more relaxed and informal atmosphere.

As mentioned above, translanguaging is also used to include someone (García, 2011: 51-52): after introducing himself, F. says “nice to meet you” in Albanian and also in Italian in order to include me in the conversation; a similar situation happens when F. is speaking Albanian and at a certain point he stops himself because he understands that I

do not understand, so he starts speaking Italian in order to include me; also D. includes me in the conversation by switching to Italian when she explains to me what effects the “Decreto Sicurezza” has on F.’s request of citizenship.

Translanguaging is then used to emphasize something: it was very interesting to hear the expression ““E allora!” *thash*” (“so what?” I said) pronounced in a very spontaneous way. The use of the Albanian word after such an Italian exclamation gives the impression of wanting to emphasize the sense of surprise.

To conclude the reflection on this excerpt, we can also observe that translanguaging is used to show knowledge (García, 2011: 53): when F. says that he studied Turkish at school, D. pronounces some words that she knows in Turkish (Evet! Hayır!), by also providing the Albanian translation of the first word (Po!) and the Italian translation of the second word (No!).

Excerpt 11

An Albanian woman (W), who is a friend of D., comes to the office to complete the request of citizenship for her husband. They sometimes alternate between Italian and Albanian. D. reads an Italian document from the computer and W. often answers in Albanian. On the basis of these answers, D. writes a reminder for the application for citizenship. In an interesting part of the conversation W. says:

W: Tutte le domande ce li ho qua **të shkruajtura**.

All my applications are written here.

Then D. asks:

O: Da quand’è che non vai in Prefettura?

How long it has been since you last went to the prefecture?

W: **Tre javë**.

Three weeks.

O: **Tre javë** che non vai?

Three weeks since you last went to the prefecture?

W: **Po.**

Yes.

Analysis

In my case study, as mentioned above, translanguaging is used to emphasize something: in the sentence “Tutte le domande ce li ho qua *të shkruajtura*”, the principal aim is to assert that the documents are “written”, in the sense that they are filled in and signed, so the Albanian word represents the key word of the sentence. Therefore I perceive that, by using her native language, that is also the native language of the employee, she manages to stress the key concept of the sentence.

The use of translanguaging enables the speaker to answer fast. In the sentence “*Tre javë che non vai?*”, D. repeats two words in Albanian that have been pronounced by the other woman in the previous sentence. Reflecting on this particular use of translanguaging, I perceive that the repetition of something that has been already said in Albanian and its use into an Italian sentence, allows the employee to be fast in the response. The process of translation in her mind would have probably led her to answer shortly after. Since the two women know both Italian and Albanian, they do not need any translation, and can freely use their linguistic resources in the way they prefer.

When D. reads the Italian document from the computer and W. answers in Albanian, we again observe the tendency to alternate between the language of the input and the language of the output and moreover we notice the difference between the input and the output, since the input is a written text read by the employee and the output is the spoken answer of W. Later input and output change again: the officer asks in Italian for personal information about W.’ husband, W. answers in Albanian and the officer writes the reminder in Italian. These observations show the dynamism and the flexibility of translanguaging and reflect the multimodality and multicompetence that characterize the complex language practices of bilingual and multilingual people (Li, 2018: 21-22).

According to Baker (2011), the four basic language abilities represent different modalities of communication (Baker, 2011: 7). As we can notice, all the language abilities are involved in this excerpt: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

3.4. Reflections on the case study

Visiting the office of the trade union and listening to conversations with clients allowed me to identify the instances of translanguaging practice. As we can observe through the excerpts, translanguaging is used in a natural and spontaneous way, to construct a fluent speech and an effective message and to understand in a fuller and deeper way. Most of the time the translanguaging practice serves the need to ensure comprehension and avoid misunderstanding in communication. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, these functions are very important in a such delicate context as immigration. Migrants indeed need to understand and communicate the intended message, first of all in order to access their rights in the host country and to take part in the social life. Then we can observe that through translanguaging the interlocutor tends to signal his/her own cultural identity. We have seen that this happens when the interlocutor pronounces a typical expression of his/her language during an utterance made in another language. This is very common in translanguaging, since in this practice all the available resources can be used to communicate. We can also observe that in many cases translanguaging involves a language change between input and output, for example when it is used to explain an utterance in a different language.

Another translanguaging function found in the case study is that of asserting the truthfulness of a statement. This happens when the employee reads a statement from a document in its original language, in order to show the reliability of such an assertion. The function of showing knowledge through translanguaging is also evident, by pronouncing the same sentence in both the languages known. In a similar way we can observe that one of the interlocutors pronounces the same sentence with the aim of emphasizing a concept. Translanguaging is particularly important to include someone in the conversation, by changing or mixing languages in an utterance according to the languages known by the other interlocutor. Furthermore, as we have seen in some of the

excerpts, translanguaging practices are performed to mediate comprehension thanks to language brokers, in particular relatives or trustworthy people. Translanguaging is also useful in the attempt to construct meaning when the speaker's level of Italian is low and two languages are mixed, show membership to the same identity group through a language change, achieve a specific aim and answer fast.

In this context in which most of the people who came to the office were migrants, the language practices are naturally dynamic, fluent and flexible. I would define them dynamic because they constantly change and interact with new forms, modes and systems. They are fluent because in conversations I could hear different languages that were often mixed and used fluently, without giving the impression that the languages used were differentiated or separated. Then the language practices I noticed were flexible, because they change according to the situation in which the interlocutors found themselves. Foreign people asking for information, paperwork or some kind of help indeed adapt themselves, the language choice and the mode of communication to their need to express something or make a request. There are some factors that affect the language practices performed, like the languages spoken by the migrants and those spoken by the officers, the kind of input that operated in the conversation, and other modes of communication different from language, such as gestures and facial expressions.

It is interesting to observe that, as has been already mentioned in the second chapter, bilingual and multilingual people use their whole linguistic repertoire without thinking of the separation between L1, L2, and so on (García & Li, 2014: 22). Their way of communicating is spontaneous and natural because the different linguistic resources they have at their disposal enable them to express themselves and the intended message in the mode they prefer, with the aim of being as clear as possible, without forcing themselves to maintain language coherence or continuity in the use of one language. According to the situation and the need, they can decide to express themselves in more dynamic and flexible ways, benefiting from their abilities in different languages.

In particular, translanguaging is natural and is an everyday practice in the life of migrants, especially when their level of the language of the host country is not sufficient

to communicate, and so they necessarily have to resort to the other languages known. Translanguaging is frequent in the context of migration, because in relations with other people, migrants have to use all their linguistic resources to understand and let the others understand them, and to construct meaning in order to create an effective message.

The analysis of the excerpts enabled me to highlight the transformative power of translanguaging in everyday practice (García & Li, 2014: 22) and its multimodal dimension (Li, 2018: 21-22), especially the dimension of the non-verbal communication, which has a fundamental role in the maximisation of the speaker's communicative aim (Baker, 2011: 289). My case study also helped me to reflect on the aspects of creativity and criticality, which are characteristics that are always present in the meeting of different identities, values, languages, groups of people, and so on (García & Li, 2014: 24). Creativity allows the speakers to be dynamic and fluent in conversation, as we observe in the excerpts above, by bringing to new opportunities to the communication and the relations with other people. Criticality represents the attitude of those who react to historical and traditional conditions. Translanguaging is a way to construct and constantly modify the sociocultural identities and values (Li, 2018: 23). As we have seen, translanguaging can involve code-switching, but it is not the same thing. Translanguaging is speaker-oriented and reflects the internal viewpoint of language, that represents what speakers feel as their own internal language system²⁵. All these aspects characterize translanguaging as an effective language practice in everyday life. Speakers manage to ensure comprehension, avoid misunderstanding, emphasize a concept, mediate, include someone, show knowledge, and so on, according to the communicative aim they want to achieve. Translanguaging allows speakers to take advantage of their full linguistic repertoire and helps to eliminate language barriers.

²⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_AnGU8jy4o

FUNCTIONS OF TRANSLANGUAGING	EXCERPT
ensuring comprehension	Excerpt 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
mediating understanding	Excerpt 1, 3, 5, 8
avoiding misunderstanding	Excerpt 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
signalling cultural identity	Excerpt 2
explaining an utterance in a different language	Excerpt 2
asserting the truthfulness of a statement	Excerpt 2
constructing a more fluent sentence and an effective message	Excerpt 3
showing knowledge	Excerpt 3, 10
achieving an aim	Excerpt 3, 7
emphasizing a concept	Excerpt 3, 9, 11
constructing meaning	Excerpt 8
including someone into the conversation	Excerpt 9, 10
showing membership to the same identity group	Excerpt 10
answering fast	Excerpt 11

3.5. Supporting translanguaging as a means for the inclusion of migrants

3.5.1. Migration as challenge for society and the need for a two-way process of inclusion

In Europe, the pre-eminence given to the phenomenon of migration during the last decades has put at the centre of the public debate the challenges of living with difference, whether it is ethnic, social, cultural and linguistic (Dell’Olio, 2019: 55-56). The context in Italy is often a “systematic negative representation of migrants [...] as a burden to Italian society” (Catalano 2016 in Dalziel & Piazzoli, 2019: 9). In this context migrants are seldom celebrated by the host society as a valuable linguistic, cultural, social and economic resource. They do not only have the pressing need to acquire the language of the host country so as to face up to the tasks and challenges of everyday life, but also “to demonstrate their skills and abilities to the host community” in order to be accepted in social life (Plutzer & Ritter, 2008: 9). All migrants have to face many challenges to successfully integrate into the receiving society, which may be reluctant to

enter into exchange and dialogue with them. One of these challenges is certainly the acquisition of the language skills in the host country, which is important because the ability to speak and read the dominant language affects various daily experiences and facilitates the material survival. Furthermore, migrants without dominant language skills frequently feel social isolation (Allen 2007 in Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 113), in particular when they do not know many people who speak the dominant language and they live in communities in which the interpretation services are insufficient (Nawyn et al. 2012 in Gold & Nawyn, 2013: 113). Education is considered a crucial aspect for migrants' integration in Europe and the process of language learning, that is the first challenge that migrants have to face, is a fundamental step in becoming part of a new country and community (Dell'Olio, 2019: 55-56).

The integration²⁶ of migrants is a process that includes the social inclusion, which involves the right to housing, work, education, health care, and public life, and linguistic integration, which enables the participation in every field of society (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014: 7). The language learning is part and parcel of the resettlement process, providing migrants with an essential tool to achieve economic independence by entering into the world of work and to take care of themselves and their families. Language proficiency can also be a necessary requisite in attaining a residence permit and/or citizenship (Dalziel & Piazzoli, 2019: 9). The members of the hosting society often believe that the integration of migrants depends on the competence of the dominant language spoken in that society. However this vision is limited and is often not shared by migrants, who know well that the linguistic integration does not guarantee their full integration in society (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014: 7). Migrants need language support, in particular in the first period of stay in the host country, but finding interpreters and cultural mediators for their languages of origin is often very difficult (TWB, 2017: 9). Language support for migrants often lacks also in the humanitarian organizations which work at the major European entry points. One reason given by the people in charge for not providing more language support is a broad commitment to the concept of integration. They justify this behaviour by claiming that immersing migrants in the host country's national language helps them to integrate into society. Actually this attitude, which reflects the monolingual ideology that we have talked about in the first

²⁶ For a discussion of the terms “integration” and “inclusion”, see p. 84.

chapter, does not help migrants to integrate in the host country, since they do not have the necessary language competence to communicate even the basic information about themselves when they arrive in the host country (TWB, 2017: 9).

Furthermore refugees and asylum seekers should be given the opportunity to use the language of the host country in everyday life, even if they are not fluent and proficient or they tend to mix the languages they know. Unfortunately the use of the dominant language could be almost totally confined to the language classroom. This is also because they often live and attend social environments together with other asylum seekers, with whom they share their native language or use a lingua franca, such as English, to communicate. Their use of the target language may be confined to service encounters in places such as shops, stations and offices of various kinds. Learners need to be given the chance to speak and practice the target language they learn in classroom in their daily lives, so as to be able to perform it effectively (Dalziel & Piazzoli, 2019: 9-10).

Social workers, officers and other people who support migrants' process of inclusion, as well as educators of L2 language classrooms, should give value to the native languages of migrants. These languages should be seen as a resource, rather than something to be banned in favour of monolingual target language use, and they should be respected since are part of learners' identities. Multilingualism is based on these fundamental concepts (Dell'Olio, 2019: 59). Language barriers deriving from the monolingual attitude make migrants become more vulnerable, since they have difficulties in making informed choice which strongly affect their lives, accessing their rights and benefiting from effective assistance and protection. Therefore, focusing on monolingual attitudes can produce a big obstacle to the integration of migrants (TWB, 2017: 13-14).

The integration can be favoured by the competence of the dominant language of the host society, but it depends also by a series of behaviours that are commonly accepted in this society. Host countries organize projects and programs for the linguistic integration of migrants. In particular they prepare for the tests that migrants have to pass in order to achieve the residence permit, access to the job market and acquisition of the citizenship of the host country (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014: 7-8). Yet, according to the democratic values of the Council of Europe, an effective linguistic integration should

take into consideration migrants' languages of origin, their linguistic needs and the diversity of migrant populations. Within the integration process it is important to recognize the language or languages of origin and give them a space in the process of learning a new language, encourage migrants to give value to their languages in order to increase their self-esteem and succeed in life, and encourage them to make their children learn their language of origin, because the languages of migrants enrich the hosting society (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014: 7-9).

A quality and social just language provision for refugees and asylum seekers should focus on learner agency and celebration of diversity. The language class should be built on the strengths of the migrants' existing language competence and foster a sense of belonging by seeing inclusion as two-way process. The term "inclusion" does not simply implies that the migrant is required to adapt to his/her host country as the term "integration" does, but also involves changes taking place on both sides, in order to cooperate for the production of a welcoming and multicultural society. This is the reason why we should prefer the term "inclusion". This approach should allow refugees and asylum seekers to step outside the position of victims by exploring the concepts of vulnerability and resilience, which characterize migrants in a host country (Dalziel & Piazzoli, 2019: 8-9).

3.5.2. Translanguaging as an inclusive practice

Taking into account the context that has been illustrated above, I believe that translanguaging could be a good means for the inclusion of migrants. Translanguaging indeed gives value to the origin language and culture of migrants. This is a fundamental aspect of inclusion since it consists in respecting the migrants' identities, which is a prerequisite to feel the belonging to the hosting community and to feel self-esteemed and welcomed in a new society. In most cases indeed migrants see their native language as an essential element of their personal identity and an essential link to their personal, religious and cultural origin, to their family and sometimes as the only bond to an essential part of their life they have to leave behind. We can say that their language may be seen as the only factor of stability in their insecure lives (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008: 2). For most people, the first language represents their personal identity, as individuals who

realize themselves as persons, their social identity, as members of a family and social group, and their cultural and religious identity, which are important values for their lives (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008: 3). Furthermore, as mentioned at the end of the first chapter, Grosjean (2010) declares that the language spoken at home has positive effects on the acquisition of a new language and it can be used as a linguistic base for acquiring aspects of the other language²⁷. This is the reason why translanguaging could be an excellent approach with the aim of including migrants into the new society, by giving value to all the languages they know and recognize them as resources.

Cummins (1986), as mentioned in the first chapter, claims that the acceptance of the home language is fundamental to feel relaxed in the environment in which people live. The development of the first language is important because the first language contributes to the well-being of people, in our specific case migrants. Developing the home language facilitates learning and promotes feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. This is the first step before adequately learn a second language (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 99-102). Therefore, as mentioned above, refugees and asylum seekers should be given the opportunity to use the language of the host country and also their native language(s) in everyday life, and so their full linguistic repertoire, because this is the way in which plurilingual individuals naturally make meaning of their multilingual world (García & Li, 2014: 8-20). Translanguaging, which is based on the concept that bilingual and multilingual people have one linguistic repertoire, is a linguistic practice that allows these people to select features from their repertoire in order to communicate effectively, by “making sense of their bilingual world” (García & Li, 2014: 22). Translanguaging may help to create situations in which those feelings such as well-being, self-worth and self-confidence are produced, which are essential for migrants to feel welcomed in the hosting society.

As has been widely mentioned, learning the language of the host country is fundamental in the process of migrants' inclusion, but this is not the only important aspect. What is actually needed is a change of perspective, a transformative approach, as translanguaging could be.

²⁷ www.francoisgrosjean.ch/myths_en.html

The status of migrants in the receiving society, in particular the loss of power and social opportunities, has impact on their learning-process. Migrants face an essential change in their lives due to migration. They lose their family surroundings, networks and their social roles. They have to face a lack of social acceptance, the social decline and very often discrimination and racism in the new society. Questions of language can not be treated and analyzes in isolation, because they are interrelated with political, economic and social factors (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008: 3-4). Therefore the status of migrants is very complicated and is a burden for the process of inclusion and the acquisition of the language of the receiving society. Translanguaging is a transformative linguistic practice that oppose the fixed and traditional approaches in order to promote an innovative approach which gives back the power to the speaker and include the multilingual speaker in the social life, by giving value to his linguistic and cultural background. Within the translanguaging space, which is produced by speakers performing translanguaging practices, the individual feels connected to others and this sense of connectedness has an impact on the social behaviour of the various parts involved (Li, 2010: 13). Li (2010: 13) claims that translanguaging creates a space in which multilinguals can make an intense social and emotional experience. Within this space individuals do not simply participate in social life, but they can be who they are and feel those feelings of self-worth and self-confidence that we have previously talked about.

An important point which has to be overcome is the fact that languages are conceptualized in the triangle of one identity-one language-one territory. With the phenomenon of globalization, the territorial space has expanded. The believed homogeneity of the culture and language of the nation state community is at stake and has to face the challenge of the changes happened over time. Nevertheless the “other” is still seen as an element of disturbance for the imagined static and homogeneous national state. As a consequence multilingualism, language change and non-standard usages of language are considered to threaten the very foundation of language and culture (Dell’Olio, 2019: 60-61). Yet, with migration flows non-fixed, dynamic, changeable and dialogical identities are more and more visible (Souza, 2010: 299-230). Community continuously changes and its constitutive elements are required to engage with others and recognize the differences based on transformations and equal conflicts (Dell’Olio, 2019: 61). For these reasons there is an urgent need to face the monolingual ideologies, which are still

widely spread in educational and social settings, as mentioned in the first chapter, and that obstacle the process of inclusion of migrants. Translanguaging is a linguistic practice which aims to contrast language hierarchies and ideologies through the use of the own linguistic repertoire, so that no languages are considered superior than others and all the languages spoken by multilinguals are given value (García & Kleyn, 2016: 21).

A translanguaging approach recognizes the importance and the value of multilingualism and therefore would help people to change perspective and to consider the origin languages and cultures of migrants as resources, so as to encourage the process of inclusion, because it is not a matter of knowing the language of the receiving society, but of considering the “other” as a positive and enriching aspect.

As already mentioned, multilingualism in the modern society is a fact. We should consider that also the Council of Europe promotes the European identity as based on shared values and going beyond different cultures. The Council of Europe indeed gives great importance to the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity and encourages language learning as a means of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity, improving communication and mutual understanding, and contrasting intolerance and xenophobia (Little, 2008: 2). According to the European integration policy, apart from the provision of the host language learning for migrants and their families and the adjustment of their legal, social and economic conditions at the moment of arrival, fundamental parts of integration are the respect for the languages and cultures of origin of migrants and the development of educational offers to maintain these, and the opportunity for the receiving society to use the presence of migrants and their families as an opportunity for a cultural opening and enhancement (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008: 5). It could therefore be argued that translanguaging is an approach which satisfies the needs to achieve integration and inclusion through social justice and equality.

The maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity corresponds to the sense of social justice, which is a fundamental principle of translanguaging. The use and promotion of translanguaging makes it possible to disrupt the hegemony of the named national languages and of the power of the political state and to overcome monolingual norms in education (García & Kleyn, 2016: 21). The study of language is indeed inevitably the

study of power, as we come to understand how access to linguistic resources is associated with access to economic and cultural resources. The study of language, and therefore the study of society, enables us to understand that those who control the circulation of linguistic resources also often control other forms of capital (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 221). The state has a close control over immigration and also holds power on language planning, which is an important part in the dynamics of power. Migrants are drawn, reterritorialized and locked into the national system, which establishes the frames within which they have to reshape their ways of living (Blommaert, 2010: 178).

As already mentioned, linguistic variability is rapidly changing and meanwhile the meanings of linguistic features change for their users. At the same time, the demand for separation of languages is often associated with a need to differentiate what is known from what is owned (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 221). This linguistic variability could be identified as heteroglossia, that is, as mentioned at the end of the first chapter, the whole of complex linguistic systems and features used to negotiate meaning and communicate effectively, by rejecting the boundaries imposed by the idealized “standard” language (Posa, 2017: 107). As languages include heteroglossia, it is necessary to take into account the idea of heteroglossia in a community where each of its members belongs to different social groups, based on age, gender, social class, etc. (Souza, 2010: 298). It is consequently natural that every person possess different signs to communicate with, making the communication less transparent and possible conflict present (Dell’Olio, 2019: 62).

Conflict is always present when differences meet each other. Relations with others produce contrasts and demand negotiations in which identities are questioned and reconfigured. If the conflict ends with the imposition of only one truth which silences others, an intercultural dialogue is not possible (Dell’Olio, 2019: 66). Translanguaging is a multilingual practice that goes beyond the simple negotiation of meaning. It enables the coexistence of different features, values and beliefs, with the attitude of respect for diversities. Translanguaging in everyday practice, as well as in language education, can be a tool for migrants to enter the space of community and raise their voice and visibility, by promoting the value of every linguistic repertoire and all cultural

diversities. In this way translanguaging can be a valuable means for the promotion of inclusion and cultural pluralism.

3.5.3. The importance of using and promoting translanguaging in the context of service provision

If we take into consideration the context of service provision to migrants, we observe that the institutional language regimes are still largely monolingual, inspired by modernist ideologies of nation state. Institutions have to face the challenge of finding a way to serve migrants and all other service users by ensuring rationality of decision, fairness and equality. Migrant population and mobile citizens need to access a number of services which are fundamental for their transnational survival, for example advice on legality and settlement issues, assistance for job search, health provision or entry into professional training programs. Unfortunately people working for public services sometimes fail to provide meaningful and accurate information. At times they appear to be extremely uncooperative and disrespectful (Canagarajah, 2017: 558-563). Officials often show feelings of suspicion towards the eligibility of most applicants. These practices aim to discipline and judge the service users in the attempt to reassert employee's power and reestablish supposed power relations.

One of the means of control is language. Failure by clients to know the language of the host country is often taken as index to unwillingness to integrate into the receiving society and their lack of eligibility to certain applications. Other languages, in particular English, are sometimes used in communication, but they are categorized as exceptional linguistic resources. Moreover English is often conceived as a language that migrants could not "own" and whose prestigious status clashes with their socially marginal position (Canagarajah, 2017: 562-563). As already mentioned, coloniality is at the basis of the hierarchical categorization of languages, as well as cultures and citizenships, some of which are considered valuable and others marginalized (Dell'Olio, 2019: 63). For this reason the officials who sustain this ideology claim the use of the dominant language of the host country, creating strong language barriers which hinder the delicate process of inclusion (Canagarajah, 2017: 562-563).

My case study was conducted in a trade union office in which translanguaging is widely used and migrants are never imposed to speak the dominant language, that is Italian language. On the contrary, migrants feel free to use all the linguistic resources at their disposal by negotiating meaning with the officer and to express themselves in flexible and unconventional ways. We can see that in all the cases I observed the interlocutors manage to reach the original intent, the service user manages to explain his/her request and the officer is able to understand it, even in those cases in which migrants speak languages that are unknown to the official, by performing a multimodal communication. As we have seen, these migrants are often helped by relatives or fellow countrymen who act as brokers to facilitate the communication with the officer. In these cases the communication is facilitated and the atmosphere is also relaxed and reassuring. Yet, we see that, even if there are no brokers, translanguaging always makes the communication possible. Furthermore translanguaging practices enable to overcome language barriers and allow migrants to access to a number of services, without arousing feelings of shame and the perception of being judged as inferior, only because of his/her linguistic and cultural diversity. The attitude to translanguaging of the Associations Razzismo Stop and ADL Cobas is representative of their mindset and social justice orientation. Through translanguaging they do not simply aim at providing a service encounter, but at working to support migrants and promoting their active citizenship. Through this case study we can verify the importance and the value of using and promoting translanguaging with migrants and the way in which it can serve to encourage their inclusion.

Conclusion

Through my research on translanguaging, I had the opportunity to reflect on this multilingual practice and to attempt to understand its relevance and validity, both as pedagogy and as everyday practice. In particular, my case study conducted at a trade union office enabled me to address to my research questions. My aim was to investigate whether translanguaging could be an effective practice to construct meaning, and to explore how translanguaging as everyday practice maximizes communicative potential.

I conducted my case study in the context of immigration since migrants have been found to use all their linguistic resources in relation with other people, especially with the local people of the host country, so that I could highlight the presence of translanguaging in their everyday language practices and the benefits deriving from such multilingual practice.

As seen in the excerpts of the interaction that I witnessed at the trade union office, translanguaging may be considered an effective practice because it facilitates the migrants' ability to express themselves and enables them to understand and be understood. The employee also benefits from this multilingual practice since in translanguaging the communicative aim can be achieved in a faster and easier way.

The effectiveness of translanguaging is due to the speakers' use of their full linguistic repertoire, without thinking of the separation between the languages they know. As mentioned in the second chapter, multilingual speakers do not appear to consider their languages as separate, but perceive all their linguistic resources as constituting a whole repertoire from which they can strategically select the features they need to communicate effectively. In my case study I observe that multilingual people resort to translanguaging in a very natural way, and this also expresses their multilingual identity serving to show who they really are.

Concerning the way in which translanguaging as everyday practice maximizes communicative potential, the case study shows that the speakers manage to create a clear and effective message by mixing languages, switching between them, avoiding the translation of technical terms, and using gestures and other kinds of body language. This

study then also hints at the benefits of multimodal communication and the advantages of non-verbal communication. I observed that translanguaging can be used for different functions, according to the situation and the needs of the speaker: for example, it is used to avoid misunderstanding, ensure comprehension, include someone, mediate understanding, show knowledge, emphasize a concept, show membership to the same group identity, and so on. All these functions observed through the case study point to the fact that translanguaging is a speaker-oriented linguistic practice and has many advantages that facilitate communication among bilingual and multilingual people.

As mentioned above, translanguaging is a natural and spontaneous linguistic practice for multilinguals, but there are societies that unfortunately do not encourage people, especially migrants, to express themselves in such a multimodal practice in which speakers use all their linguistic repertoire (Crystal, 2006: 409). These societies continue to discourage the native languages of migrants in favour of monolingualism and believe that the integration of migrants depends solely on the competence of the dominant language spoken in the hosting society. On the contrary, this attitude may exclude migrants from social life, by strengthening language barriers which make them more vulnerable since they have difficulties in making informed choices which strongly affect their lives, accessing their rights and benefiting from effective assistance and protection.

I would support translanguaging as a means for the inclusion of migrants because, as we have seen in the case study, it helps interactants to overcome language barriers and this is the first step to sharing personal identities, experiences and ways of thinking and being. Furthermore, the inclusion process is enabled by the fact that translanguaging opposes language hierarchies and related unequal structures of power which derive from the monolingual ideology of the nation state. It can be argued that today's integration policies often do not manage to reach their aims because at their basis there is the belief that only migrants have to adapt themselves to the new society. Integration policies need a change of perspective. The integration process must be a two-way process. This process should not only give migrants the means and the opportunity to adapt to the hosting country, but the receiving society should also be ready to welcome migrants through an approach of openness to dialogue and to consider diversities as resources and enrichment for their society. I claim that translanguaging may be an excellent means

for the inclusion of migrants because it gives value to the languages and cultures of migrants, opposes the fixed and traditional approaches by giving back the power to the speaker and including the multilingual speaker in social life. I think that it may be a significant tool for migrants to enter the space of community and raise their voice and visibility. Translanguaging is not simply a notable multilingual approach which encourages non-standard and multimodal linguistic practices. Translanguaging is a valuable practice to be analyzed and sustained with the aim of constructing a more just and democratic society.

In light of the findings of my case study in the context of immigration, I believe that translanguaging is a significant strategy for the promotion of linguistic and cultural pluralism. For this reason I claim it is important to raise awareness of and encouraging more positive attitudes towards translanguaging in societies, even starting with school settings, in order to oppose the persisting monolingual norms which still hinder openness to new linguistic and cultural realities. Furthermore translanguaging as everyday practice should also be supported. Even if, as mentioned above, translanguaging is a natural practice in the everyday life of multilingual people, and indeed we can identify it in offices, markets, shops and public spaces, I believe that it should be supported by local people, such as salespeople, employees and people working in the public sector, who would also expand their own linguistic repertoire. With this statement I mean that these people living in a multicultural society should be willing to adapt themselves to the situation in which they are, in order to enable migrants and other newcomers or visitors to communicate with them and be involved in the participation in social life. This attitude is important because it contributes to the inclusion of the different ethnic groups living in the same area and to the construction of a social just and democratic society, in which linguistic and cultural diversity is given value and is considered a resource and people are open to the dialogue with different ways of thinking and being.

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APPENDIX A

Guidelines for excerpts in the manuscript

Transcription key for original text

text utterance in original language 1

text utterance in original language 2 (if you have more than one)

text original utterance in English

“text” quoted or read text

[text] clarifying text not spoken by informants

... longer pause

text - utterance that is cut off

APPENDIX B

Excerpts

<i>Excerpt 1</i>
M: È arrivata venerdì. <i>It arrived last Friday.</i>
D: Qua è scritto venerdì prendere”. [by indicating something written on a paper] <i>Here it is written to get it on Friday.</i>
<i>Excerpt 2</i>
M: I asked them. The post office said they cannot do it.
O: Allora , I succeeded in linking - . I'll try to enter in your mail address. <i>So, - .</i> In your e-mail address there are no communications.
[...]
O: Somehow they say they are waiting for some documents. The practice succeeded.
M: Which ones they are waiting for?”
O: There are no communications, “ in attesa di eventuale ” [by reading the Italian document] they say. <i>There are no communications, “waiting for possible communications” - .</i>
M: Is it the Prefettura ?
O: Yes, this is the Ministero .
<i>Excerpt 3</i>
A: Noi adesso finito a ufficio ACLI, tre ore aspettare, since he loose his house . Adesso a lui importante come dormire, fare l'alloggio. <i>We have just spoken with ACLI office, we have waited for tree hours, - .</i> <i>Now it is important to find a place to stay for him.</i>
O: Come vi ho detto l'altra volta... as I said to you last time, they don't hospitality . <i>As I said you last time... - .</i>
A: Abbiamo chiesto Prefettura se fare qualcosa per lui, per dormire, chiamare cooperativa, prima he call a cooperative ...come aiutare lui in questa situazione

difficile.

We asked to the prefecture if they could help him to find a place to stay and if they could call a cooperative, before he called a cooperative... how to help him in this difficult situation.

O: **But I said to you last time to go to Prefettura not for the commission but for the permesso di soggiorno.**

- residence permit.

A: **Yes, ACLI said to go to Prefettura. They said to send a message if someone know that to help him.**

[...]

A: Dicono per cercare qualcuno per aiutare lui [he speaks up and articulates his words], chiedere conoscenti se sapere per aiutare.

They said to search for someone who can help him, to ask for help to acquaintances.

O: Tu hai un documento? **Do you have a document?**

[...]

O: Prima di arrivare a Bagnoli, dove è arrivato in Italia?

Before coming in Bagnoli, when did he arrive in Italy?

[A. translates in English mixed to Yoruba for his friend]

B: Sicily.

A: Prima di arrivare a Bagnoli era in Sicilia.

Before coming in Bagnoli he was in Sicily.

O: Quando è arrivato a Bagnoli?

When did he arrive in Bagnoli?

A: [to his friend] **When did you arrive in Bagnoli?**

B: June.

[B. continues to talk to A. in Yoruba and, at a certain point, he says “after soggiorno”].

A: Dopo lui aspettare, controlli, carta d’identità, **he waited six months.**

Later he waited for controls, identity card, - .

O: Sei rimasto a Bagnoli fino alla chiusura? **Did you stay there until the closure?**

Did you stay in Bagnoli until the closure?

[...]

O: "I was sent in Italy without knowing Italian and arrive in Bagnoli. There, this is important, **questo è importante**, they didn't say anything to me about asylum, Commission, international protection".

...

O: Se vuoi possiamo fissare un appuntamento. Sono qui martedì.

If you want we can make an appointment. I'm here on Tuesdays.

A: Dopo lunedì... **Tuesday**?

After Monday... Tuesday?

O: Yes, Tuesday. You can come on Tuesday morning.

Excerpt 4

O: Hai i documenti qui richiesti?

Do you have the requested documents?

W: No... [she does not understand].

O: [by referring to some papers she had in her hands] Questi chi te li ha dati? **Who gave these to you?**

W: Commercialista. Questura **gave me these documents to bring them to** commercialista.

The accountant. The central police station gave me these documents to bring them to the accountant.

O: Ok, perfetto, allora devi ritornare con questi documenti.

Ok, well, so you should come back and bring these documents.

Excerpt 5

O: C'è bisogno di atto di matrimonio, di famiglia, documento che attesta che tu e tua moglie siete sposati e questi sono i vostri figli.

You need a marriage certificate, of your family, a document that attests that you and your wife are married and that these are your children.

S: Ah! **Family certificate!**

D: Oh yes, family certificate! [then he says something in Urdu to his son to prove that he understood what their talking about].

Excerpt 6

<p>O: [referring to a document] Hai fatto questo alla Posta? <i>Did you make this at the post office?</i></p> <p>M: ... [the man does not answer].</p> <p>O: Do you speak English?</p> <p>M: Yes.</p> <p>O: Did you make this here or in Posta?</p> <p>M: In Posta. These documents comes from INPS.</p>
<p><i>Excerpt 7</i></p> <p>O: L'ultima volta ho fatto io il curriculum per te? <i>Did I write the curriculum for you last time?</i></p> <p>[...]</p> <p>O: Questa foto non va bene perchè se faccio la fotocopia verrebbe sgranata. <i>This photo is not good since if I make a copy of it, it would be grainy.</i></p> <p>M: Non va bene questa foto? <i>This photo is not good?</i></p> <p>O: This photo is not good. If you want I can make a new photo now.</p> <p>M: Yes, ok, we can do it.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>M: Ma come si fa a...come si fa a... [by saying this, he opens his arms and makes a grateful expression of the face], how can I thank you? <i>How can I, How can I..., how can I thank you?</i></p> <p>O: Non ti preoccupare. Figurati! <i>Don't worry!</i></p> <p>M: Grazie mille! <i>Thank you very much!</i></p>
<p><i>Excerpt 8</i></p> <p>“Sei anni <i>ho lavorato lì</i>” (the second part of the sentence was in Arabic) <i>I have worked there for six years.</i></p>
<p><i>Excerpt 9</i></p>

A: Chi è l'albanese qua? [smiling]

Who is Albanian here?

D: Io! [Then starts speaking Albanian].

It's me!

[...]

A: **Mirupafshim!** [to D.]

Ciao! [speaking to me]

Excerpt 10

D: Ciao, tu sei Sam?

Hi! Are you Sam?

F: No, F.

No, I'm F.

D: Ah ok, tu sei il ragazzo albanese?

Ok, are you the Albanian guy?

F: Sì.

Yes.

D: **Ckemi. Si ia kalón.**

How are you doing?

F: **Mirë.** Piacere.

Fine. Nice to meet you.

[D. introduces herself by saying her name and shaking his hand]

G: Piacere, Gemma [by shaking his hand].

Nice to meet you, Gemma.

[...]

D: Gemma, vuoi sapere di che pratica stiamo parlando?

Gemma, would you like to know what procedure we are talking about?

G: Sì.

Yes.

[...]

F: [after finishing to speak Albanian] E allora questa ragazza che ho incontrato al supermercato e che lavorava lì ha detto: "Per fortuna ho finito gli studi e ho trovato

questo lavoro”. “E allora!” **thash**.

And then this girl I met at the supermarket and who worked there, said to me:

“Luckily I finished studying and I got this job”. “So what!” I said.

[...]

F: Per esempio alle superiori ho fatto il Turco, no?

For example I studied Turkish at high school.

D: Turco? *Evet!* **Po!** *Hayır!* No!

Turkish? Yes! Yes! No! No!

[...]

F: Scusami. Questa cosa... [he stops speaking Albanian and switches to Italian in order to let me understand what he is talking about].

I'm sorry. -

G: No, non ti preoccupare. Io mi “faccio l’orecchio” [smiling].

No, don't worry. Meanwhile I learn.

D: Lei impara l’Albanese.

She learns Albanian.

F: No, comunque stavo dicendo perchè loro hanno questa teoria - .

Anyway I was saying that - .

Excerpt 11

W: Tutte le domande ce li ho qua **të shkruajtura**.

All my applications are written here.

[...]

O: Da quand’è che non vai in Prefettura?

How long it has been since you last went to the prefecture?

W: **Tre javë**.

Three weeks.

O: **Tre javë** che non vai?

Three weeks since you last went to the prefecture?

W: **Po**.

Yes.

Summary in Italian

Introduzione

Il termine “translanguaging” deriva da una parola gallese e fu coniato da Cen Williams per indicare un approccio innovativo al bilinguismo in campo educativo. Si trattava di una pratica pedagogica che incoraggiava gli studenti ad alternare l’utilizzo di diverse lingue all’interno della lezione scolastica per scopi diversi, per esempio usando una lingua per l’uso produttivo e l’altra per quello ricettivo. Il translanguaging è nato come metodo strategico di insegnamento che incoraggia gli studenti bilingui e multilingui nella realizzazione di pratiche linguistiche fluente e promuove l’uso di tutto il repertorio linguistico degli studenti, al fine di massimizzare l’apprendimento. Molti studiosi hanno apprezzato questa strategia innovativa e le hanno dato valore, continuando a studiare e ad approfondire l’argomento e sperimentando questo metodo educativo nelle classi multilingui. Il significato del termine si è in seguito ampliato per designare l’insieme delle pratiche linguistiche complesse realizzate dagli individui e dalle comunità multilingui nella vita di tutti i giorni. Questa tesi si concentra in modo particolare su questo significato del translanguaging. In essa ho cercato di analizzare il translanguaging come pratica quotidiana che rispecchia l’uso dell’intero repertorio linguistico e di tutte le risorse che il parlante ha a disposizione per comunicare. Il translanguaging infatti è una pratica multimodale, cioè all’interno di essa sono coinvolti e appoggiati differenti modi di comunicare, ad esempio la comunicazione non verbale ha un ruolo fondamentale. Inoltre ho posto l’attenzione sul translanguaging, come pratica naturale e spontanea utilizzata da persone che parlano lingue diverse, che permette di comunicare tra di loro anche se la loro lingua dominante non è la stessa, di produrre il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere e di costruire un significato efficace abbattendo le barriere linguistiche.

L’elaborato si concentra su due fondamentali domande di ricerca: in quale modo il translanguaging come pratica linguistica quotidiana massimizza il potenziale comunicativo di un parlante multilingue e perché risulta una pratica efficace per la costruzione del significato. Per rispondere a queste domande ho raccolto dei dati nel

corso dello svolgimento della mia ricerca presso l'ufficio di un sindacato frequentato prevalentemente da migranti, inclusi rifugiati. La mia ricerca si basa sull'analisi di stralci di conversazioni alle quali ho assistito; in esse i migranti chiedevano vari tipi di servizi, per esempio: domanda di documenti particolari in materia di immigrazione o di informazioni sul lavoro, richiesta di aiuto nella compilazione di un documento, richiesta delle modalità da acquisire per ottenere la cittadinanza, compilazione del curriculum vitae, domanda di reddito di cittadinanza, e così via.

Globalizzazione, multilinguismo e migrazioni

Il translanguaging è un fenomeno linguistico che si realizza nel mondo globalizzato, in cui le migrazioni e il multiculturalismo sono sempre più in aumento. La globalizzazione favorisce e promuove un continuo dialogo tra persone appartenenti a gruppi diversi e provenienti da diverse parti del mondo, lo scambio tra le culture, tra differenti modi di pensare e tra le diverse realtà del mondo moderno. Particolari aspetti di questo fenomeno sono l'ampio uso dei media, gli scambi commerciali, la crescita delle transazioni finanziarie, il mercato globale del lavoro, i flussi migratori, le relazioni interculturali e le guerre che coinvolgono diversi paesi e continenti. La dimensione globale della società è visibile nell'ambiente urbano e nella città multiculturale, alla quale appartiene una nuova identità che deriva dall'incontro di diversi gruppi etnici, culturali e linguistici. Inevitabile conseguenza è il fatto che il multilinguismo si afferma sempre di più, in particolare con la crescita della migrazione internazionale. Le ragioni che spingono gli uomini, singoli o intere comunità, a spostarsi da una parte all'altra del mondo, sono varie e dipendono da fattori di spinta e fattori di attrazione. I fattori di spinta equivalgono alle condizioni di mancanza di opportunità nel contesto economico-sociale nel paese di origine, mentre i fattori di attrazione rappresentano le possibilità di progresso economico e di benessere previste nella nuova destinazione. Molto spesso i fattori di spinta hanno il peso maggiore nella decisione di molti migranti di lasciare il loro paese d'origine. Questo è il caso della migrazione forzata, che coinvolge rifugiati e richiedenti asilo, i quali sono costretti a ricominciare una nuova vita in un paese diverso a causa delle condizioni di guerra o di persecuzioni di vario genere. Ci sono anche i migranti economici, tra cui tanti migranti europei, i quali decidono di emigrare per motivi di lavoro o per migliorare la loro carriera professionale.

Nelle città globali vivono anche persone che si trasferiscono temporaneamente, come turisti, studenti internazionali, frontalieri o rifugiati che stanno vivendo nel primo paese d'arrivo, ma che attendono di essere trasferiti in una seconda destinazione. Dunque il mondo moderno è in continuo cambiamento e vive un processo di continua evoluzione a causa dei fenomeni su citati.

Come accennato prima, i flussi migratori favoriscono l'incrementarsi del multilinguismo. Esso non è un fenomeno recente, ma risale ai tempi antichi. Nell'era della globalizzazione, il multilinguismo è diventato un fattore caratterizzante della città multiculturale; in alcuni paesi esso non è promosso da parte dei governi mediante politiche linguistiche adeguate e il potere della lingua dominante prevale sulle altre come conseguenza del colonialismo. Ci sono lingue che si stanno pian piano estinguendo e altre che vengono parlate da un numero di persone sempre minore. Secondo alcuni linguisti questa tendenza è accelerata dall'uso sempre più frequente dell'inglese in vari ambiti della vita della società, come l'istruzione, il mercato globale e la comunicazione. Le politiche linguistiche dovrebbero cambiare e assicurare la promozione delle diverse lingue parlate in una determinata area. Questo è fondamentale per favorire l'inclusione di tutte le persone che vi abitano, dal momento che l'uso dell'inglese come lingua veicolare non è abbastanza per far ciò.

Superare le ideologie monolinguiste

Il translanguaging si oppone alle ideologie monolinguiste basate sull'accostamento "una lingua-una nazione" che si sono diffuse nel periodo di formazione dello stato-nazione in Europa, che ha avuto inizio nel XV secolo ma è legato principalmente alla rivoluzione francese e alla nascita dei movimenti nazionalisti nel XIX secolo. Il concetto di "ideologia linguistica" racchiude i valori, i costumi e le credenze associate ad una lingua e alla nazione in cui quella lingua è parlata. L'uso del termine "ideologia" si riferisce al fatto che i valori di una nazione, riscontrabili nel linguaggio e in espressioni e termini tipici di esso, cercano di giustificare la superiorità o l'inferiorità di una lingua. L'ideologia linguistica non riguarda solo la lingua, ma è legata anche alla costruzione dell'identità; infatti, i valori e i contesti sociali, culturali, politici ed economici tentano di influenzare il campo linguistico al fine di ottenere e mantenere il potere e la

supremazia di quella lingua e della sua comunità di parlanti. Il nazionalismo, dunque, è stato la causa principale dell'affermarsi delle ideologie monolingui in Europa e altrove. Le persistenti ideologie basate sul monolinguisimo mirano ad ostacolare il modo di comunicare in maniera fluente ed ibrida e tentano di racchiudere l'uso della lingua all'interno di parametri monolingui che escludono qualsiasi tipo di contaminazione o di espressione che non corrisponde agli standard linguistici. Spesso questi parametri monolingui sono presenti in contesti d'insegnamento sia formali che informali. Da questo approccio d'insegnamento deriva il fatto che un uso della lingua e di altre strategie comunicative, che non corrispondono allo standard, vengono associate alla carenza linguistica. Le ideologie monolingui tentano di stabilire un'irraggiungibile uniformità linguistica, ignorando ed emarginando le diversità linguistiche e culturali presenti di fatto nella società.

Translanguaging: significato del termine e principi fondamentali

Il termine *translanguaging* è stato usato per la prima volta nel 1980 nel campo dell'istruzione. Come già detto precedentemente, per *translanguaging* si intende sia una pratica pedagogica utilizzata nelle classi multilingui, sia l'insieme degli usi complessi della lingua da parte di individui e comunità multilingui nella vita di tutti i giorni. Il *translanguaging* va oltre il significato di bilinguismo additivo, inteso come la somma di due unità linguistiche, e di interdipendenza tra due lingue. È la modalità di negoziazione del significato usata dai bilingui (con il termine bilingui includiamo qui individui parlanti due o più lingue) in un mondo in cui la diversità culturale e linguistica è la norma e gli esseri umani sono chiamati ad agire e produrre all'interno di processi sociali transnazionali nei quali la necessità di generare significato implica il dover mediare attraverso queste diversità. Il *translanguaging* è definito come l'insieme delle innumerevoli pratiche linguistiche discorsive attraverso cui i bilingui interagiscono e prendono consapevolezza del mondo in cui vivono. Il prefisso *trans-* indica l'atteggiamento di trasformazione e di trasgressione nei confronti delle gerarchie linguistiche imposte nella scuola e all'interno delle dinamiche sociali. Esso mette anche in evidenza il fatto che, nel processo di costruzione del significato, le lingue si mescolano in modo fluido ed imprevedibile con altre caratteristiche semiotiche. Come teorizzato da Li Wei con il prefisso *trans-* si indicano tre dimensioni degli usi complessi

e flessibili realizzati dai parlanti multilingui. La prima dimensione riguarda la creazione di un *trans-system* o *trans-space*, cioè uno spazio che va oltre i sistemi linguistici e non linguistici, li mette in contatto e include i vari modi di comunicare, e i diversi contesti che appartengono a ciascun parlante, alla cultura o al sistema linguistico. Si tratta dell'insieme di tutte le pratiche linguistiche tipiche dei parlanti multilingui per comprendere i diversi contesti, i valori, le identità e le relazioni presenti nel mondo in cui vivono. Un'altra dimensione del translanguaging è quella trasformativa. Nel translanguaging il parlante multilingue è spinto ed incoraggiato a comunicare servendosi di tutte le sue abilità linguistiche, cognitive e sociali, come anche delle esperienze e dei valori acquisiti attraverso la conoscenza del mondo. Il translanguaging è trasformativo perché l'interazione tra questi valori ed attitudini producono una nuova identità per il parlante multilingue. Inoltre esso è trasformativo sia nell'ambito educativo che nell'uso quotidiano della lingua perché destabilizza un sistema standard che non dà valore all'intero repertorio linguistico del parlante. Il translanguaging è dunque trasformativo per gli studenti e gli insegnanti e può portare alla trasformazione del modo di concepire il bilinguismo e il multilinguismo. In base a questa concezione gli studenti bilingui e multilingui pensano alla loro individualità senza fare distinzione tra le diverse lingue da loro parlate; dunque una lingua non è considerata più importante dell'altra, ma entrambe sono in relazione e costituiscono il loro essere. La terza dimensione del translanguaging è la transdisciplinarietà: questa pratica linguistica e pedagogica è legata alla multicompetenza, che consiste in usi linguistici realizzati per mezzo della creatività e della criticità dei parlanti multilingui. Il translanguaging è una pratica multimodale; la lingua, infatti, è solo uno dei diversi modi disponibili per comunicare. Altre risorse semiotiche sono il linguaggio del corpo e la performatività. I parlanti fanno uso di risorse testuali, uditive, linguistiche e visive per costruire ed interpretare un messaggio. La comunicazione faccia a faccia ne è un esempio, dato che il discorso è accompagnato da informazioni visibili in viso e nei gesti. Nelle lingue dei segni la multicompetenza è ancora più visibile perché, per produrre un messaggio, vengono utilizzati diversi canali comunicativi come le mani, il viso e il corpo.

Il translanguaging comprende fenomeni di contatto linguistico, come il code switching, ma va oltre la semplice alternanza linguistica. Al contrario di come si potrebbe pensare,

il translanguaging e il code switching sono pratiche linguistiche diverse. La differenza principale sta nel fatto che il code switching si riferisce alla tendenza di spostarsi da un codice all'altro, che può essere una lingua o una varietà linguistica, mentre il translanguaging consiste in realizzazioni linguistiche originali e complesse che non possono essere semplicemente categorizzate entro la definizione di una precisa lingua, di solito la lingua nazionale. L'uso della lingua all'interno del translanguaging, infatti, come detto in precedenza, coinvolge l'intero repertorio linguistico del parlante. Il translanguaging si basa sull'idea che esiste un continuum linguistico al quale il parlante ha accesso e in cui non ci sono confini definiti tra le lingue parlate dagli individui bilingui e multilingui. Al contrario del code switching, il quale si basa sulla separazione di una lingua dall'altra, il translanguaging promuove la flessibilità e la permeabilità nell'uso linguistico. Quando si parla di translanguaging si mette in risalto il punto di vista interno del parlante nei confronti delle lingue parlate e si basa sul fatto che, come sostenuto da García, nonostante le lingue vengano definite mediante denominazioni che rappresentano categorie socialmente stabilite, per il parlante esse non risultano delle entità separate, perchè l'uso reale della lingua è come una corrente, un flusso linguistico dinamico, in continuo cambiamento e divenire.

I parlanti multilingui tendono a crearsi in maniera spontanea un *translanguaging space*, cioè uno spazio in cui il translanguaging si realizza e dove le varie caratteristiche selezionate dal repertorio linguistico del parlante operano all'interno di un processo creativo e di negoziazione del significato tra gli interlocutori. Si tratta di uno spazio sociale in cui i parlanti esprimono vari aspetti del proprio essere, cioè la loro storia personale, le esperienze legate all'ambiente in cui vivono, i valori, le abilità fisiche e cognitive, e così via. Dunque non si tratta semplicemente di uno spazio in cui poter comunicare grazie all'uso strategico delle molteplici risorse linguistiche a disposizione del parlante, ma anche di uno spazio in cui gli individui multilingui riescono ad essere se stessi esprimendosi in maniera naturale e spontanea e diventano così individui attivi che prendono parte alla vita della società.

Il translanguaging è legato al concetto di *social justice* che sta alla base di una società giusta e democratica. Una società è considerata giusta quando valorizza le diverse realtà presenti in un determinato territorio e considera le diversità linguistiche e culturali come

una ricchezza per la comunità. Il translanguaging si propone come pratica linguistica fondata sulla *social justice* in quanto promuove il multiculturalismo e il multilinguismo. Esso si oppone al principio di severa separazione delle lingue nell'uso linguistico e all'imposizione di rigidi confini linguistici stabiliti dai nomi convenzionali delle lingue nazionali. Il translanguaging, dunque, non distingue le lingue di un parlante come L1, L2, ecc., ma promuove l'uso dell'intero repertorio linguistico per raggiungere l'obiettivo della comunicazione.

Il translanguaging nella pratica quotidiana: caso di studio e riflessioni

Come già menzionato all'inizio, attraverso una ricerca effettuata presso un sindacato di Padova frequentato prevalentemente da migranti, ho potuto constatare l'efficacia del translanguaging nella comunicazione quotidiana, in particolare nel contesto dell'immigrazione. L'analisi di alcuni stralci di conversazioni tra il migrante e l'impiegato, alle quali ho assistito, mi ha permesso di individuare le funzioni del translanguaging in situazioni concrete e le caratteristiche teoriche che sono alla base di questa pratica pedagogica e linguistica.

In base ai dati raccolti si può vedere come il translanguaging può essere considerato una pratica linguistica efficace perchè facilita l'abilità dei migranti di esprimersi, di comprendersi e farsi comprendere. Nell'assistere alle convesazioni presso il sindacato, ho constatato che anche l'impiegato trae beneficio da questa pratica multilingue in quanto l'obiettivo comunicativo è raggiungibile in modo più semplice e più veloce grazie all'uso di tutte le risorse linguistiche a disposizione degli interlocutori. L'efficacia del translanguaging deriva infatti dall'ammissibilità dell'utilizzo dell'intero repertorio linguistico dei parlanti, i quali, durante il processo linguistico non percepiscono alcuna separazione tra le lingue parlate. Ho potuto osservare che le persone multilingui ricorrono al translanguaging in modo spontaneo, e ciò permette di esprimere la propria identità multiculturale e mostrare il proprio essere autentico.

Per quanto riguarda il modo in cui il translanguaging come pratica linguistica quotidiana massimizza il potenziale comunicativo, il caso di studio mostra come i parlanti sono in grado di creare un messaggio chiaro ed efficace mischiando le lingue,

spostandosi da una lingua all'altra durante una conversazione, evitando la traduzione di termini tecnici o particolari per una data lingua e usando i gesti o altri tipi di linguaggio del corpo. Inoltre questo studio mostra i benefici della comunicazione multimodale e della comunicazione non verbale. Attraverso l'analisi delle conversazioni a cui ho assistito ho osservato che l'uso del translanguaging assume diverse funzioni in base alla situazione in cui il parlante si trova; ad esempio è usato per evitare incomprensioni e dunque per assicurarsi che l'interlocutore comprenda il messaggio inteso, per includere qualcuno nella conversazione, per mediare la comprensione tra gli interlocutori, per mostrare di essere in possesso delle abilità linguistiche, per mettere in risalto un determinato concetto, per mostrare l'appartenenza allo stesso gruppo identitario dell'interlocutore, e così via. Tutte le funzioni osservate dimostrano che il translanguaging è una pratica linguistica multilingue orientata al parlante e che possiede numerosi vantaggi che facilitano la comunicazione tra le persone bilingui e multilingui.

Come detto sopra, il translanguaging è dunque una pratica linguistica naturale e spontanea per i parlanti multilingui, ma non tutte le società incoraggiano la pratica di questa modalità comunicativa, basata sull'uso di tutto il proprio repertorio linguistico, specialmente se si tratta di migranti. In molti casi si cerca, a tutti i costi, di affermare la predominanza del monolinguisimo, cercando di scoraggiare l'uso delle lingue native da parte dei migranti, e si pensa che l'integrazione di essi all'interno della comunità ospitante dipenda principalmente dalla conoscenza della lingua dominante. Al contrario, situazioni reali e concrete hanno dimostrato che questo atteggiamento rischia di escludere il migrante dalla vita comunitaria e sociale. Il rafforzamento delle barriere linguistiche, infatti, crea numerose difficoltà nella vita quotidiana all'interno della comunità ospitante, ad esempio nel fare una scelta consapevole che potrebbe influenzare fortemente le condizioni di vita del migrante, avere accesso ai diritti che gli spettano o beneficiare di assistenza e protezione efficaci.

Conclusione

A conclusione della mia analisi e della riflessione fatta a seguito della mia ricerca, sostengo che il translanguaging può essere un mezzo efficace per favorire l'inclusione dei migranti, perchè permette di superare le barriere linguistiche. Assicurarsi che la

diversità linguistica non sia un ostacolo per i nuovi arrivati è il primo passo affinché il migrante riesca ad esprimere il proprio modo di essere, la mentalità, le esperienze e le conoscenze che caratterizzano la sua individualità. Inoltre, il processo di inclusione è facilitato dal fatto che il translanguaging si oppone alle gerarchie linguistiche e alle relative disparità strutturali di potere che derivano dall'ideologia monolingua imposta dallo stato-nazione. Bisogna affermare anche che le attuali politiche di integrazione non riescono a raggiungere i loro obiettivi perchè si basano sulla convinzione che sono solo i migranti a doversi adattare ed integrare nella nuova società. Ma un vero e giusto processo di integrazione deve essere duale. Infatti il migrante non può raggiungere uno stato di inclusione effettiva se il paese ospitante non è pronto e disposto ad accoglierlo attraverso un approccio basato sull'apertura al dialogo e alle diversità, imparando a riconoscere queste ultime come risorse e come ricchezza per la società. Il translanguaging favorisce l'inclusione in quanto dà valore alle culture dei migranti e alle loro lingue, comprese quelle considerate "lingue minori", opponendosi a tutti quegli approcci stabiliti dalla tradizione. Questo atteggiamento innovativo permette di restituire il potere al parlante e di coinvolgere il migrante nello spazio della comunità, far sentire la propria voce e aumentare la visibilità dei vari gruppi etnici presenti nella città multiculturale. Per tutti questi motivi il translanguaging non è semplicemente una pratica innovativa multilingue che incoraggia un uso multimodale e non convenzionale della lingua, ma è anche un approccio al multilinguismo e al multiculturalismo che ha valore perchè contribuisce alla creazione di una società più giusta e democratica.

Per concludere, il translanguaging è una strategia multiculturale significativa ed efficace a favore della promozione del pluralismo linguistico e culturale. Per questo motivo credo nella validità dell'uso di questo approccio in campo educativo, al fine di ostacolare l'atteggiamento monolingua che continua a persistere trasmettendo sentimenti di chiusura nei confronti di ciò che è diverso, nuovo e creativo. Inoltre, nonostante il translanguaging sia una pratica linguistica usata spontaneamente e in maniera naturale dai parlanti bilingui e multilingui, per cui possiamo rintracciarlo nelle conversazioni negli uffici, al mercato, nei negozi e negli spazi pubblici, necessita anche di essere sostenuto dalle persone che occupano posizioni di responsabilità, di organizzazione e di gestione nella comunità ospitante. Con ciò voglio affermare che le

persone che vivono in una città multiculturale dovrebbero essere disposte ad adattarsi alla situazione in cui si trovano e in cui è coinvolto un interlocutore bilingue o multilingue, al fine di consentire ai migranti, nuovi arrivati o visitatori di comunicare con loro in maniera efficace, di interagire ed essere attivi prendendo parte alla vita della società. Questo atteggiamento è fondamentale per l'inclusione dei diversi gruppi etnici presenti sul territorio e per costruire una società più accogliente e democratica in cui le diversità linguistiche e culturali vengono valorizzate e considerate come risorsa e ricchezza per la società.