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## **Languages and language learning in Catalan Schools: From the bilingual to the multilingual challenge<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction:**

The Spanish Constitution presently in force was enacted in 1978<sup>1</sup> and it granted regional languages a co-official status alongside Spanish in the territories where such languages were spoken. In Catalonia, a bilingual Community<sup>2</sup>, this resulted in the progressive return of Catalan to schools, where it had been absent for the previous forty years. Soon afterwards, the Act on Linguistic Normalization (1983<sup>3</sup>), emanating from the Statute of Autonomy (1979), generalized the use of the regional language as the medium of instruction for content subjects in kindergarten, primary and secondary education. Twenty-two years later, some of the main objectives set by the Act on Linguistic Normalization have been successfully achieved, whereas a few remain elusive.

In the interim, a more complex linguistic scenario has emerged as a consequence of globalization and new realities are progressively making their way into schools. On one hand, society demands that schools raise their standards in international languages, which, for the moment, has resulted in (a) lowering the compulsory starting point for foreign language learning from the

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sixth grade (twelve-year-olds) to the third grade (eight-year-olds) (1990) and, more recently (2004), from the third to the first grade (six-year-olds); and (b) a slow-paced but steady growth of Content and Language Integrated Learning courses offered in primary and secondary schools .

On the other hand, increasing numbers of immigrant people from all over the world are coming to Europe and settling in Catalonia, as well as in other regions. Their offspring bring their languages and cultures to schools; meaning that schools are not only bilingual, but rather become multilingual learning environments.

Aware of the new challenges and in an attempt to provide a response, the education authorities have designed specific linguistic programmes for schools. These programmes aim at three major goals: (a) to move forward in the process of Catalan normalization; (b) to improve school leavers' competence levels in the international foreign languages taught in schools<sup>4</sup>; and (c) to cater for the linguistic needs of immigrant children so as to favour their progressive integration into mainstream education.

This article aims at describing and analysing these programmes as they appear in the documents which define them, as well as the tensions created by the implementation of multilingual practices in schools. The tension between official plurilingualism for immigrants, official plurilingualism for mainstream students and `backstage` plurilingualism shows how difficult it is to overcome the conditions that favour the reproduction of social differences.

The challenge of harmonizing local policies with policies that affect populations at a global scale is one of the most interesting aspects of Globalization. It gives rise to the question of how to overcome the apparent contradiction between the need to reassert local identities at the same time as developing emerging transcultural identities.

Catalonia is an interesting case in this respect as it faces tensions due to its political determination to preserve its unique language and culture, whilst it also takes an active part in the symbolic and economic construction of Europe, which includes its role as a region which attracts immigrant populations. In the field of languages and language teaching, this involves the coexistence of linguistic policies aiming at (apparently) opposing targets. Indeed, promoting a vernacular language and adopting global policies which favour the free circulation of workers and goods across Europe are two objectives which may seem hard to reconcile.

This paper<sup>5</sup> aims to provide an analysis, through both the official discourse of the education authorities and through the specific practises implemented in Catalan schools, of how Catalan society attempts to resolve the tensions caused by the friction between local, regional and global policies at the beginning of the 21st century.

## **Historical background**

### ***The journey of Catalan from prohibition to normalization***

During Franco's regime (1939-1975) all Spanish regional languages –Catalan being the one with the highest number of speakers— remained confined to family use. It was not until 1970-71 that Catalan was allowed to be taught in schools for a few hours a week. Since then, three major political events have determined a dramatic shift in the status of Catalan in society and, more particularly, in education. They are (a) the passing of The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, approved by State Law 4/1979, which in Article 3 stated that (our translation):

1. La llengua pròpia de Catalunya és el català.      1. *Catalonia's own language is Catalan.*

2. L'idioma català és l'oficial de Catalunya, així com també ho és el castellà, oficial a tot l'Estat espanyol.

2. *Catalan is an official language of Catalonia, together with Castilian, the official language of the Spanish State.*

(b) the transfer of all competencies in the field of education from the central to the regional government in 1980, which favoured policies to ensure not only the teaching of Catalan, but also the use of Catalan as a means of instruction; and (c) The Act on Linguistic Normalization (1983), which stated that:

- Catalan is<sup>6</sup> Catalonia's *own* (vernacular) language, therefore, it is the language of education, at all levels.
- Children below six have the right to be educated in their family language, be it Catalan or Spanish<sup>7</sup>. The authorities are obliged to guarantee this right.
- Catalan and Spanish are to be compulsory subjects in kindergarten, primary, secondary and vocational education.
- In order to be able to comply with their teaching demands, teachers must be proficient in both co-official languages.
- The language of the Catalan Education Authority shall be Catalan.

***From Catalan Immersion programmes to the generalization of Catalan as a working language***

After passing the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, the Autonomous Government implemented an optional Linguistic Immersion Programme to guarantee generalized competence in Catalan and Spanish. The programme was originally addressed to 3 to 7 year-old children, but was soon extended to include children up to the age of 12. Early total immersion implies that all instruction, including literacy, is provided in Catalan whereas content subjects in Spanish are introduced gradually from Grade 3 (eight year-old children) onwards.

In the 1992-1993 academic year, new educational legislation was implemented in Catalonia for non-university levels. Decree 75/1992 stipulates that the Catalan language is to be generalized as a working language in infant and compulsory education. The regulations in the Decree were also made official by the Catalan Act on Linguistic Policy 1/1998. Catalan immersion was the basis for the consolidation of a unique network of schools, from the linguistic point of view, which adopted Catalan as their main working language for the whole school community, at the

same time as guaranteeing adequate exit levels in Spanish for all students. This is an option which differs greatly from the strategies implemented, for example, in the Basque Country or Andorra, where students are streamed according to the linguistic option chosen by their parents<sup>8</sup>. The extension of the use of the vernacular language in the school system was objected to by minority groups on two basic premises: a) Catalan schooling for all would imply the discrimination of Spanish speaking children, who would be disadvantaged in relation to their Catalan speaking peers, and b) Catalan speaking children would be disadvantaged because they would be denied the opportunity to reach native-like competence levels in Spanish. One more argument, kept to private circles, was the assumption that students aiming at low qualification positions would not need Catalan in their future jobs.

These arguments were soon counteracted by majority support for generalized schooling in the minority language. This tendency can be explained by two factors: (a) the widespread perception that Catalan was undergoing a process of minorization, mainly due to unequal competition with Spanish, the official language of the state and a language used on the international stage, and (b) the public debate about linguistic issues which engaged Catalan society at the beginning of the eighties and the high level of consensus which emerged from it: one single school network for all learners, regardless of their linguistic origin, was to be preferred. This demand was based on the principle of non-discrimination and on the desire to avoid internal divisions in Catalan society. Social cohesion would be achieved through the learning of Catalan by *all* Catalan children, meaning all children who lived in Catalonia. In terms of learners' opportunities to develop competencies in Spanish, it was assumed that the pervasive presence of this language outside the school premises and the variety of contexts where Spanish is the habitual language would guarantee the acquisition of bilingual competences by all students. Soon, Catalan schooling was generalized to all primary schools, regardless of the context and the student population, whereas secondary schools presented—and still do—much less well defined linguistic profiles.

The concern for social equity which informed some of the decisions stated above coexisted with and was influenced by a political discourse and practices which aimed at associating the advantages of knowing Catalan with economic and social

benefits (Junyent and Unamuno, 2002). As a result, Catalan was also presented as a resource of undeniable material value. This instrumental vision of language focused on changing the local markets, in order to try and increase the price of the knowledge of Catalan, so as to extend the number of speakers of that language.

***Evaluating the impact of the generalization of Catalan as the main language of instruction***

The use of Catalan as the main language of instruction has largely come of age and many studies and reports have evaluated its impact. According to the Committee of Experts who monitor the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), immersion is a well established practice. Their report, issued in September 2005, states

... this (policy) has led, for example, to 88.9% of primary school classes in Catalonia being taught in Catalan during the school-year 1999/2000, whereas 7.3% followed a bilingual education model. At secondary school level, 51.2% of the classes were in Catalan and the rest received most of the teaching in Catalan plus a number of subjects in Castilian. (COE, ECRML, 2005-4:31)

In the same document, the Committee of Experts also remarks that the system adopted in Catalonia has succeeded in achieving an impressive reversal of the previous trend: a regional/minority language that was still oppressed just 30 years ago has become the “default language” in the educational system and the first language of instruction. The Committee concluded that the undertakings listed in the ECRML for minority languages had been fulfilled in Catalonia (COE, ECRML 2005 31-32).

Other studies have attempted to evaluate the impact of these programmes on students’ linguistic development. These studies cover two main areas: (1) the patterns of language use at school, in order to measure the impact of the school system on the sociolinguistic profile of the community, and (2) the possible negative consequences that the language switch from home to school might have on Spanish speaking children. In the first case, the studies demonstrate that the decision made in favour of Catalan as the working language at school does not necessarily entail a change in the patterns of language choice and language use in peer interaction (Consell assessor de la llengua a l’escola 2006; Nussbaum 2003; Nussbaum &

Unamuno, 2006; Vallcorba, 2005), or even in the patterns of interaction between learners and teachers in informal settings, such as break or lunch time. Such interactions tend to mean that Spanish takes on the role of the preferred language in schools, especially in schools located in urban and semi-urban neighbourhoods (Unamuno 2000 and 2005; Vila Moreno 2004; Vila 2005; Vila & Vial 2003).

The second type of studies showed that there were no significant differences between Spanish and Catalan speaking children with respect to their school results (OECD 2001, 2003; INCE 1999, 2000). This finding has been attributed to two relevant facts: (a) Spanish has an important presence at school and is the predominant language in many out-of-school milieus; and (b) all teachers are highly competent in Spanish, a language which is commonly used in order to avoid communication breakdowns and guarantee the understanding of school content (Arnau 1985; Arnau et al. 1992; Vila & Vila Mendiburu, 1998). Competencies in Spanish<sup>9</sup> are also obviously influenced by the significant proportion of secondary school teachers who opt for Spanish as the working language in their teaching, and, of course, to the formal Spanish tuition which students receive throughout their entire school life.

This is the bilingual environment in which immigrant students integrate, and their arrival re-raises age old questions of how immigration may affect the sociolinguistic dynamics of a region or a country, and how linguistic and educational policies must be defined in the near future.

### **Emergent discourses, policies and practices**

Growing numbers of migrant families come and settle down in Catalonia, as well as in other regions of western countries. Migrant children bring their languages and cultures to schools and the previously bilingual schools that receive them become, all of a sudden, multilingual learning environments<sup>10</sup>.

In a way, the arrival of these students has re-opened the debate about Catalan, not only as part of an ethnic heritage, but mainly as to its survival as an effective and efficient means of communication in all areas of Catalan society (Junyent & Unamuno, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003). It has also generated different reactions in

public institutions and in civil society, but the official discourse which places Catalan at the centre of the education process is still in force<sup>11</sup>.

***The Pla d'acollida<sup>12</sup> or Insertion Scheme for immigrant pupils***

The government organization in charge of designing, executing and monitoring the policies to favour the reception and incorporation of newly immigrated pupils was recently named *Secretariat per la llengua i la cohesion social* (Secretary for **Language** and **Social Cohesion**; our emphasis). The name of this organization indicates that the relationship between immigration and social cohesion is mediated or influenced by language. This interpretation is coherent with the idea stated above, given that the Catalan language is one, or *the* main, identity trait, and it must therefore continue to be the focal point of the new society which is being created.

This Secretary is in charge of the education policy for the reception of migrant pupils in schools and also, for the promotion of the use of Catalan within the education system. The coordination of functions of such a different nature is based on two general assumptions: on one hand, as stated above, Catalan must play a key role in contributing to the integration of migrant students into Catalan society, so as to guarantee social cohesion; on the other hand, it is perceived that the arrival of migrants with diverse linguistic origins, who are likely to adopt Spanish as a lingua franca among them (Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2006), may contribute to increasing the fragility of Catalan.

One of the major outcomes of the Secretary for Language and Social Cohesion has been the design of the Language and Social Cohesion Plan (*Pla per la llengua i la cohesion social or LIC Plan*), which was released by the Catalan Department of Education in 2004. This thirty-six-page document specifies the measures to be implemented in schools to favour the insertion of recent immigrant pupils.

***Plurilingualism<sup>13</sup> as the core of the LIC Plan***

The *LIC Plan* is the reference document which guides the implementation of insertion actions for newly arrived students. Its guidelines refer to the educational and linguistic measures to be adopted by schools in order to ease the incorporation of pupils who may lack basic linguistic competencies and / or previous school

experience. The notion of plurilingualism established as an educational goal by the *LIC Plan* must be interpreted starting from the two fundamental elements on which it is based; namely, the avoidance of the social exclusion of the immigrant population, and the promotion of Catalan.

#### Excerpt 1

<sup>14</sup>There are three areas that require special attention: the rising number of immigrant children in schools, the emergence of new causes of social exclusion and the shortfall in the extent to which the Catalan language has been standardised in social life. It is necessary to raise awareness, promote and consolidate Catalan as the mainstay of a multilingual and intercultural education policy in order to achieve greater social cohesion. (*LIC Plan*: 4).

In Excerpt 1, the phrase “multilingual and intercultural education policy” could be interpreted as integrating the family languages that migrant children bring to school. This interpretation may be reinforced by the text reproduced in Excerpt 2, which also declares that optional courses on these languages will be offered and that they are to be open to *all* pupils (our emphasis) as part of the after-school activities programmed by the school.

#### Excerpt 2

[In after-school hours and] In accordance with criteria laid down by the Department of Education and the PLC, all pupils will be offered classes in the languages spoken by new immigrants as part of the extra-curricular timetable (Arabic, Amazig, Chinese and so on). (*LIC Plan*:28-29).

Interestingly, the wording in Excerpt 2 hints at recognition of the fact that the knowledge of these languages is also pertinent for pupils with different family languages. However, the fact that these courses are planned as part of after-school activities implies that the educational authorities are not obliged to supply schools with the necessary resources to implement this policy, and, consequently, that schools are not obliged to offer them.

The *LIC Plan* displays a number of organizational structures and resources to achieve the educational intentions stated above. The most relevant is the *aula*

*d'acollida* [Reception Classroom, literally translated], officially translated into English as “Insertion Scheme<sup>15</sup>”. The Reception Classroom is an environment where newly arrived pupils spend up to twelve hours a week and where they can find tailor-made attention aimed at helping their integration into mainstream classes. This includes intensive exposure to Catalan (Excerpt 3).

#### Excerpt 3

The insertion scheme is a point of reference and an open working environment in the school which gives immediate, tailor-made attention to new pupils and provides support for teachers in the new challenges to teaching. It is an organisational structure that enables the school to draw up a series of curricular and methodological measures, teaching materials, and so forth which guarantee intensive language learning and progressive incorporation of pupils into mainstream classes (*LIC Plan*, 30).

Summing up, in the above section we have tried to present how the *LIC Plan* approaches the relationship between policies relating to immigration as well as the promotion and strengthening of the Catalan language. The role that foreign languages play in this plurilingual project is analysed in the following section.

#### **The status foreign languages**

The European Commission *White Paper on Education and Training* [WPET], in its fourth general objective, emphasised the importance of democratising access to foreign language learning: “*It is no longer possible to reserve proficiency in foreign languages for an elite or for those who acquire it on account of their geographical mobility*<sup>16</sup> (1995: 51)”. The participation of Spain and Catalonia in the European space, the free circulation of workers, student mobility and the development of the information and knowledge society have made citizens aware of the need to improve the traditionally low standards in international languages shown by school leavers in Catalonia, a handicap shared with the rest of Spain (Bonnet, ed., 2004).

Effective access to the plurilingualism promoted by the E.U. is affected by social factors which determine to a great extent the levels of proficiency in foreign languages of international status (English mainly, but also French or German) reached by students. In recent years, the Catalan authorities have promoted and

implemented a range of strategies<sup>17</sup> which aim at equipping students with a reasonable command of, at least, one international language<sup>18</sup> —English in the majority of cases. Recently, efforts are being made to start up a network of plurilingual state-run schools that offer Content and Language Integrated Courses (CLIL) courses (CRLE, 2005) in line with the European Commission recommendation<sup>19</sup>. The network is not a large one and the majority of CLIL courses offered are optional, but they have shown the great attraction that these types of approaches have for middle class families. Nevertheless, recent reports (Consell superior d'avaluació de Catalunya, 2005) show that these reforms are by no means sufficient and the general standards reached by students in English continue to be lower than desirable.

This situation drives middle and upper class families to turn to private tuition in after-school centres specialised in teaching foreign languages to children and adolescents. At the same time, primary and secondary schools are also aware that offering special foreign language programmes in their curricula is a very effective means to recruit students, at a time when very low birth rates are emptying schools. This strategy is especially visible in the two networks of private schools<sup>20</sup> that recruit their students mainly among the middle, professional and upper classes. All this confirms the high symbolic and practical value that Catalan society places on international foreign languages in general and English in particular.

The majority of families, however, do not have the resources to afford private foreign language tuition or are not prepared to do so. In the medium term, the inadequate capacity to function in English that school leavers from lower social or socio-cultural status show, limits their access to the qualified labour market and to the assumed advantages of the free circulation of workers within Europe. This underprivileged state of affairs affects native and immigrant pupils alike. In line with this aspiration towards a multilingual society, the *LIC Plan* echoes (Excerpt 4) European principles on this matter:

Excerpt 4

By the end of primary education pupils must be able to understand and express simple messages in a given context in one foreign language. By the end of secondary education they must be able to understand and produce oral and written messages in one foreign language (...) In

addition, (...) have a *basic level in understanding and speaking a second foreign language (LIC plan, Appendix 2: 28; our emphasis)*.

However, it is worth noting that no specific guidelines are provided in the document on how schools are to tackle this task.

### **Implementation of regional language policies in schools: a case study**

El Port is a primary school in the old district of Barcelona, committed to providing learners with high quality educational experiences of an integrative nature, such as learning projects which take advantage of and involve the community<sup>21</sup>. All the staff participates in the discussion, design and implementation of the school's insertion scheme (*aula d'acollida*), which is extremely flexible so as to adapt to the particular characteristics and needs of every learner (Nussbaum and Unamuno, 2006). For over three years, we have carried out a joint research project<sup>22</sup> in El Port, where a team of university researchers and school teachers have been collaborating in an attempt to describe, understand and improve the language practices implemented in the school in the context of the current language policies.

Within the framework of this ethnographic study, different types of data collection procedures have been implemented: classroom participant observation and field notes in mainstream and reception classrooms; interviews and discussions with the board of directors and staff members; and semi-experimental work, which aimed at assessing the learners' competencies in the different languages taught at school in order to identify variables which could explain individual or group differences. Full access to this exemplary school and the readiness of the teachers to discuss with the researchers on an equal-to-equal basis have allowed us to detect the practices described below, selected precisely because of their problematic nature<sup>23</sup>. The tensions and gaps identified in El Port may give us some clues as to what may be happening in less dedicated schools, where we would be denied access. More specifically, the ethnographic data have allowed us to reconstruct the effects that the official discourse has on the specific practices in the classrooms, the ways in which this discourse is accepted or rejected by educational agents and, ultimately, to illustrate with empirical data the social and linguistic practices in relation to the official discourses<sup>24</sup>.

Using Carrasco and Soto's terminology (2000), El Port School is a *concentration* institution [*institución de concentración*], that is, a school that has undergone a process of transformation concurrent with the changes which have taken place in its neighbourhood in the last few years: a school traditionally made up of pupils who came from local families of humble background, which now admits pupils from all five continents who have just arrived in Barcelona, and therefore may suffer from the consequences of a late arrival into the local education system. The board of directors and the teachers have made substantial efforts to accommodate to the new situation and have searched for teaching strategies, material and personal resources to better cater for the emerging and ever changing needs of their school population.

As in virtually all primary schools in Catalonia, Catalan is the official language, the language for signs, announcements, letters to parents, etc. and the working language in content subjects. This implies that in the majority of public spaces, Catalan, either oral or written, is by far the preferred language. Spanish, on the other hand, also plays a major role. Hafi<sup>25</sup> (HAF), who was born in Pakistan and joined El Port one year ago, explains this in a very effective way in his conversation with the researcher (CEC) (Transcript 1<sup>26</sup>):

#### Transcript 1 Interview with Hafi

CEC: mm\  i aquí així _ eh-  fora de casa\ no/	<i>CEC: Mm. here you do. Outside home. don't you?</i>
HAF: sí\	<i>HAF: Yes.</i>
CEC: quina llengua parles?	<i>CEC: Which language do you speak?</i>
HAF: fora de casa\  doncs castellà\	<i>HAF: Outside home? Spanish, of course.</i>
CEC: normalment\  i català\	<i>CEC: Usually. And Catalan?</i>
[s'acaba la cara A del cassette]	<i>[End of side A.]</i>
CEC: estàvem parlant de que_ de que tu parles català solament a l'escola\	<i>CEC: We were saying that you only speak Catalan at school.</i>
HAF: sí\	<i>HAF: Yes.</i>
CEC: i per què?	<i>CEC: Why?</i>
HAF: perquè fora ningú parla en cas_ català\  tots parlen en castellà XXX\	<i>HAF: because outside nobody speaks Sp_ Catalan. Everybody speaks Spanish XXX.</i>
CEC: mm\	<i>CEC: Mm.</i>
HAF: sí\	<i>HAF: Yes.</i>
CEC: i aquí a l'escola amb qui parles català?	<i>CEC: And here, at school who do you speak Catalan with?</i>
HAF: amb la mestra\	
CEC: amb la mestra\  amb totes les	

mestres/  
HAF: sí\  
CEC: sí\ i amb els companys/  
HAF: castellà\  
CEC: sí/  
HAF: sí\  
CEC: i a classe també-| quan esteu  
treballant així\  
HAF: sí\ en castellà també\  
CEC: sí\ i al pati/  
HAF: castellà\  
HAF: *With the teacher.*  
CEC: *With the teacher. With all the  
teachers?*  
HAF: *Yes.*  
CEC: *Yes. And with your  
classmates?*  
HAF: *Spanish.*  
CEC: *Really?*  
HAF: *Yes.*  
CEC: *Also in the classroom, where  
you are at work, like this?*  
HAF: *Yes. In Spanish too.*  
CEC: *Really? What about break  
time?*  
HAF: *Spanish.*

According to Hafi, the presence of Spanish is pervasive not only outside school, but also inside, where it functions as the usual means of communication among students. Jony (JON), a Philippine boy adds one more variable to the description of the linguistic uses in El Port (Transcript 2).

#### Transcript 2 Interview with Jony

CEC: ah-| amb els monitors\ és clar\  
mm\ i amb els mestres-| que parles?  
JON: cat\_ català\  
CEC: amb tots/  
JON: mm-| no\ amb tots no\ amb\_  
amb la Montse sí [la tutora de curs]\  
CEC: mm\||  
JON: perquè ella ensenya llengua  
Catalana\ és per això\  
CEC: mm\ i amb la directora/  
JON: sí també\  
CEC: i amb la Isabel parles anglès [és  
la professora d'anglès]/  
JON: sí \ amb la Isabel { @ parlo  
anglès \ }  
CEC: [riu]  
JON: però a vegades també ca\_  
castellà \  
CEC: ah sí /  
JON: quan estem al pati o a baix \\  
només parlem anglès quan  
estem en la classe [+klasa+]\  
CEC: a la classe/  
JON: sí\  
CEC: així no:\_ així\_ per\_ per xarrar  
CEC: *Ah. With the [canteen]  
monitors. Of course. Mm. How about  
the teachers? What language do you  
speak?*  
JON: *Cat\_ Catalan*  
CEC: *With all of them?*  
JON: *Mm. No. Not all of them. With,  
with Montse [class teacher] I do.*  
CEC: *Mm.*  
JON: *Because she teaches Catalan.  
That's why.*  
CEC: *Mm. How about the  
Headmistress?*  
JON: *Yes. Also with her.*  
CEC: *And with Isabel [English  
teacher] do you speak English?*  
JON: *Yes. With Isabel {(laughing) I  
speak English\}*  
CEC: *[laughs]*  
JON: *but sometimes also Spanish.*  
CEC: *Really?*  
JON: *When we are in the schoolyard  
or downstairs. We only speak  
English when we are in the  
classroom.*

ai xí no/  
 JON: no\|

CEC: *In the classroom?*  
 JON: *Yes.*  
 CEC: *Like this you don't'. Chatting like this you don't?*  
 JON: *No.*

According to Jony, informal interactions with the teachers are also accepted in Spanish if they take place outside the classroom (downstairs, in the schoolyard). In the same way as Hafi and Jony, the majority of immigrant pupils in El Port use Spanish and Catalan in their everyday life. They can make language choices according to the communicative context and can also switch from one language to another (Unamuno, 2005).

It is in this context that El Port teachers defend the priority given to Catalan during the reception of newly arrived children, even to the exclusion of any other language. Coherent with the *LIC Plan*, they consider that the current position of Catalan is that of a minorized language and, consequently, the school should guarantee the opportunities to learn this language, precisely because such opportunities may be scarce in the pupils' social milieu. This is to be carried out through spaces which favour monolingual practices, with reception classrooms being one of the very few spaces of this kind.

In spite of the *monolingual* discourse articulated by the teachers, classroom observation shows that plurilingualism is present in the classroom at various levels. Family languages are used by the students of the same linguistic origin in their private conversations. With time, family languages tend to be replaced by the use of Spanish, which progressively becomes the default language for communication among learners. They also begin to mix Spanish and Catalan in their contributions to the development of lessons. This hybrid use of the languages is not considered pertinent by the teacher, and, in general, is gently redirected by means of retakes which translate the students' words into the target language or through questions which hint at the return to Catalan. Any languages other than Catalan or Spanish have an exclusively symbolic presence in this classroom, in the form of posters or labels that decorate the walls.

Following the recommendations in the *Plan LIC*, in addition to their stay in the reception classroom, the newly arrived learners in El Port School are assigned to a standard classroom made up of either pupils their own age or pupils who are up to one year younger. In the standard classroom<sup>27</sup>, newly arrived immigrant learners participate in a variety of activities which do not require advanced linguistic competencies in Catalan, i.e. Music, PE or Art and Crafts, which are progressively extended to other areas of the curriculum<sup>28</sup>. In content subjects, control over the teachers' linguistic use is lower and, as pointed out by Hafi, the habitual language used among pupils is Spanish, which alternates with other languages according to the repertoire available to the learners in each situation. In these lessons, Catalan is often restricted to pupil-teacher interaction and teachers may sometimes resort to Spanish in different situations, especially when they consider that bilingual practices may contribute to a better understanding of school activities.

Although the only provision made for the learning of Spanish either in the "*LIC Plan*" or in the El Port School in formal contexts are the compulsory Spanish language lessons, the immigrant learners monitored in El Port made very fast progress in this language (Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2006). It was also observed that Spanish was the default language used between autochthonous children and newcomers, especially in informal settings such as the playground and, eventually, the default language that immigrant children use among themselves. On average, in about eighteen months, the majority of immigrant children observed in El Port show competencies in Spanish that match those of their autochthonous peers (Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2006). It is to be concluded, then, that the proficiency reached in such a short time span is due mainly to peer interaction among learners in informal settings.

This shows that learners soon acquire a multilingual repertoire in family and school languages, which they accommodate to different settings and communicative goals. Coherent with the official language policy, the institution prioritizes the use of Catalan in their interactions with learners, while students switch from Catalan to Spanish, depending on whether they address the teacher or a peer learner. Family languages other than Catalan or Spanish are present in the playground or in peer-to-peer conversations.

El Port does not offer any courses or special activities aimed at promoting family languages. As stated by the Deputy Head of the school, the school focuses on curricular aspects which are common to all learners and may help them feel that they belong to one common community, whereas highlighting differential aspects is consciously avoided. In her view, multicultural proposals have the undesirable side effect of fragmenting the school community, whereas an integrated project must be built around the characteristics that are common to the different ethnic, cultural and social groups, and the core of such a project must be the teaching and learning of Catalan.

Teachers in El Port usually justify this project and insist that the learners should have the opportunity to speak and learn Catalan within the school premises, on the grounds that the chances of hearing and speaking Catalan off the school premises for children who live in the old district of Barcelona are extremely rare. Our ethnographic research confirms this perception: in this area, Spanish, Arab, Punjabi or Tagalog are much more frequently heard than Catalan. Hafi, our Pakistani pupil, sees it like this:

### Transcript 3 Conference with Hafi

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| CEC: i qui parla català aquí?  | <i>CEC: Who speaks Catalan here?</i>  |
| HAF: en_en l'escola/   | <i>HAF: At at school?</i>   |
| CEC: en el_en general\   | <i>CEC: in the.. in general.</i>  |
| HAF: ah-  bueno\  no ho sé\  en_ el cole_en el cole són les mestres i ja està\  ningú més\                       | <i>HAF: Ah. Well. I don't know. At school it's the teachers and that's all. Nobody else.</i>  |
| CEC: mm\  i per què és important saber català?   | <i>CEC: Mm. And why is it important to be able to speak Catalan?</i>  |
| HAF: perquè és {(;) les paraules} en català_perquè socials i naturals totes són en català\  i_                   | <i>HAF: Because it's {(;) the words} in Catalan. Because Social Studies and Science are in Catalan.</i>                                     |
| CEC: però a_ a més a més de l'escola/  | <i>CEC: But apart from school?</i>  |
| HAF: no lo sé\  perquè fora de l'escola mai he parlat català\  | <i>HAF: I don't know. Because outside school I've never spoken Catalan.</i>   |
| CEC: mm\  i-  aquí la gent que parla català així-  hi ha gent que parla català normalment així fora de l'escola/ | <i>CEC: Mm. And here are there people who speak Catalan like this? are there people who usually speak Catalan like this outside school?</i> |
| HAF: sí\  però jo no conec\  |   |

- CEC: mm\|  
HAF: jo no conec ningú\|  
CEC: i qui són aquests?|  
HAF: los que són catalans\| els que han nascut aquí | ells sí que parlen català\|  
CEC: però tu coneixes gent que ha nascut aquí\|  
HAF: què?|  
CEC: tu coneixes gent que ha nascut aquí\|  
HAF: no·\|  
CEC: i la Carla\|  
HAF: sí\ però-| ella mai parla català\|  
CEC: mm\|  
HAF: sempre parla en castellà\|
- HAF: Yes, but I don't know anyone.*  
*CEC: Mm.*  
*HAF: I don't know anyone.*  
*CEC: And who are these?*  
*HAF: Those who are [native born] Catalan. Those who were born here. They do speak Catalan.*  
*CEC: Do you happen to know people who were born here?*  
*HAF: What?|*  
*CEC: Do you know people who were born here?*  
*HAF: No.*  
*CEC: How about Carla?*  
*HAF: Yes. But she never speaks Catalan.*  
*CEC: Mm.*  
*HAF: She always speaks Spanish.*

In Hafi's view, Catalan is a language of restricted use, limited to school practices and, more specifically, to interactions with teachers (Transcript 1). The importance of this language lies in its functions as a vehicle for the transmission of curricular content. Beyond the school's boundaries, he claims not to be acquainted with anyone who speaks that language. The only people that speak Catalan outside the school, according to Hafi, is a social group labelled "the Catalans", which is made up of the native born population, but which, interestingly enough, does not include his classmates with whom he usually interacts in Spanish.

In order to deal with this state of affairs, the teachers consider that the teaching of Catalan and their insistence that immigrant learners become proficient in Catalan is in itself a strategy to fight possible discrimination, as it allows learners to equip themselves with an asset which is highly valued by Catalan society. Two types of arguments consistently appear in their discourses: (a) its symbolic value, as the language opens the doors to being accepted as a full member of the Catalan society, and (b) its material value, as access to many jobs, as well as to university education, require a high command of Catalan.

The first type of argument is related to the identity traits (see above) that are prioritized in the symbolic construction of "being Catalan" (Woolard 1989, 1992;

Pujolar 1997, 2001). The defensive stance that the teachers and the board of directives take regarding Catalan as the insertion language is even more striking if we consider that the majority of them are from other regions of Spain and that they learned Catalan in their youth or adulthood, as a second language. The second type of argument is related to the increased value that Catalan has obtained in the past few years, especially in the field of education and services. The teachers in El Port argue that to deprive these children of the use of Catalan would imply limiting them in their future careers.

We shall now explore the role that the foreign language plays in this plurilingual context, first looking at practices related to the reception classroom, and later examining a mainstream English lesson. Carme, the insertion tutor in 2003-2004, used English in a flexible way as an aid to mutual understanding with the children that had just joined her class. Carme improvised English tests which were administered in order to identify the pupils' strengths in that language. She also encouraged the learners' participation in the English lessons, if the children showed some knowledge of the language. In contrast, Pilar, the insertion tutor in 2004-2005, had very limited command of English, which might have been the cause of the absence of reference to this language in her lessons.

The case of Brenda, a newly arrived Philippine girl, is also interesting. After initial exploration, Brenda was considered a timid girl with below average school abilities for her age, and a learning plan was designed for her on this basis. In a conversation with one of the researchers<sup>29</sup> Brenda showed unusually high competencies in English, through which she could comfortably display some previous knowledge of different school subjects, which had remained hidden up till then. The finding led to the reconsideration of the learning path designed for Brenda.

As for the mainstream classroom, Transcript 3 exemplifies the multilingual practices that take place in standard English classrooms in El Port.

## Transcript 3 An English lesson

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>4. Mestra: is pakistan listen please\  is pakistan {(DC)(F) bigger}than bangladesh\  or is bangladesh {(DC) (F) bigger} than pakistan\ </p> <p>5. Noia1: pakistan {(AC) es más grande\ }</p> <p>6. Mestra: {(FF) in english\ } {(F) home\nen\ }</p> <p>7. Noia1: {(P) ay vale\ }</p> <p>8. Mestra: XXX patatera\ tu\ </p> <p>9. EEE: XXX</p> <p>10. Mestra&gt; xxxx espera\  què? </p> <p>11. Noi1: {(PP) pakistan\}&lt;3&gt; is bigger_</p> <p>12. Mestra: bigger than\ </p> <p>13. Noi1: {(PP) than bangladesh\}&lt;0&gt;</p> <p>14. Mestra: {(F) bangladesh\ } very well\ eh/  ok\  then you write now\  venga\  tu XXX XXX\  vamos a escribir\  venga\  very well\  can you repeat Yanina\  can you repeat\  is bigger que-  who is bigger\&lt;0&gt;</p> <p>15. yanina: pakistan\ </p> <p>16. Mestra: is bigger than blangladesh or bangladesh is bigger than pakistan/ </p> <p>17. yanina: pakistan\ </p> <p>18. Noi2: pakistan is bigger the bangla_</p> <p>19. Mestra: than \ </p> <p>20. Noi2: than banglades\</p> <p>21. Mestra: desh\ </p> <p>22. Noi2: blangladesh\ </p> <p>23. Mestra: where are you from? where are you from?  pakistan or bangladesh/ </p> <p>24. Noi3: pakistan\ </p> | <p>4. <i>Teacher: is Pakistan listen please. Is Pakistan {(DC)(F) bigger}than Bangladesh? Or is Bangladesh {(DC) (F) bigger} than Pakistan?</i></p> <p>5. <i>Girl1: Pakistan {(AC) is bigger\ }</i></p> <p>6. <i>Teacher: {(FF) in English\ . {(F) home\boy\ }</i></p> <p>7. <i>Girl1: {(P) Oh. OK. \ }</i></p> <p>8. <i>Teacher: XXX patatera\ tu\ </i></p> <p>9. <i>EEE: XXX</i></p> <p>10. <i>Teacher&gt; xxxx wait. What? </i></p> <p>11. <i>Boy1: {(PP) Pakistan\}&lt;3&gt; is bigger_</i></p> <p>12. <i>Teacher: bigger than...</i></p> <p>13. <i>Boy1: {(PP) than Bangladesh\}&lt;0&gt;</i></p> <p>14. <i>Teacher: {(F) Bangladesh. \ very well. Eh? Ok. Then you write now Come on. You XXX XXX. We are going to write. Come on. Very well. Can you repeat Yanina? Can you repeat? Is bigger than-  who is bigger\&lt;0&gt;</i></p> <p>15. <i>Yanina: Pakistan.</i></p> <p>16. <i>Teacher: is bigger than Blangladesh or Bangladesh is bigger than Pakistan?</i></p> <p>17. <i>Yanina: Pakistan.</i></p> <p>18. <i>Boy2: Pakistan is bigger the Bangla_</i></p> <p>19. <i>Teacher: than...</i></p> <p>20. <i>Boy2: than Banglades.</i></p> <p>21. <i>Teacher: desh.</i></p> <p>22. <i>Boy2: Blangladesh.</i></p> <p>23. <i>Teacher: where are you from? Where are you from? Pakistan or Bangladesh?</i></p> <p>24. <i>Boy3: Pakistan?</i></p> |
|---|---|

The foreign language alternates with Spanish (turn 5) and Catalan (turn 6) in a way that a three-language tapestry is progressively woven. According to the teachers, the presence of other languages on such occasions is justified by the students' low competence in English, and its use by the teacher is justified as a strategy to

facilitate comprehension and production in English. Unlike in the reception classroom, multilingual practices do not cause tensions in the English classroom. Here, it is the teachers themselves who code-switch, as shown in Transcript 3.

In short, in El Port School, English is a language some students and some teachers refer to in order to aid comprehension and to ask for help in production activities, but its presence within the reception classrooms depends to a great extent on the teacher's command of the language. It is necessary to add that foreign languages are not a requirement for teachers in charge of reception classrooms, as they are not for primary teachers in general.

As has been pointed out above, teachers in El Port expressed the view that English is not a priority for *all* their pupils. In their own words, the children who attend this school probably will not need English in their future academic or professional lives. That is why the emphasis is placed on teaching content which is considered, in this case, more basic and relevant than a foreign language. This would also explain why the pupils' knowledge of English had not — up to the time we collected the data— been explored on a regular basis on their arrival at the school.

This interpretation is consistent with reports from teachers and observations made in other schools, which seem to suggest that, in the case of immigrant students, this deficit is worsened by a nonofficial but apparently common practice<sup>30</sup>, which consists of their partial or total exemption from foreign language classrooms. This practice is usually justified by the need to fix priorities for the newcomers —many of them with little or even no previous school experience— who would not be able to cope with so many languages and so much content at a time. Thus, the foreign language periods are spent on what are considered “core subjects”. A first consequence of this policy, as put forward by a primary teacher, is that when removed from the English classroom, the immigrant pupils are withdrawn from the one classroom in which they are more or less on equal footing to local children in terms of communicative competence in the official classroom language. This might also contribute to undermining or at least, not helping to build up the pupils' self-esteem. Meanwhile, without denying the importance of establishing priorities, it is

clear that the young immigrants who are treated in this way are deprived of opportunities to access knowledge which (a) sooner or later is to be assessed by the institution, and (b) provides high potential for social promotion.

As in Brenda's case, it is interesting to note that this segregation may happen without taking into consideration whether the immigrant has some degree of competence in the foreign language taught at the school, as may be the case for English for some of the students coming from Pakistan, or French for some of the Moroccan students. Being an immigrant entails, in some observed practices, being someone who lacks any assets to which school, and society in general, attach high symbolic or practical value (Unamuno & Nussbaum, 2006). The study carried out by Codó, 2003 in non-school settings on the attention provided to immigrants by the Spanish central government, also came to the same conclusion.

### **To conclude**

Discourses and specific practices show heterogeneous ways of defining the notion of plurilingualism, the goal of the current linguistic policies in Catalonia. Among El Port teachers, there is a high degree of consensus as to the importance of learning Catalan, independently of students' cultural origins, owing to a range of symbolic and practical reasons, and the discourse elaborated by the board of directors and teachers is in agreement with that of the official documents. More specifically, with regard to the need for monolingual practices in Catalan, the official documents seem to be an accurate reflection of the arguments provided by the teachers sustaining this approach. Nevertheless, these ideal notions of plurilingualism are not clearly reflected in the practices at El Port School.

On the other hand, it is apparent that there exists tension in the assumptions and the system of priorities that underlie the participants' linguistic practices. The development of monolingual spaces which favour the learning of Catalan is limited to a few moments of the day to day of the school, where teachers can exert control over participation and linguistic practices. The Reception Classroom is one of these spaces, due to its reduced number of pupils and to the interactive dynamics that take place there. As for the remaining school activities, plurilingualism is the norm and

not the exception. However, what we observe in El Port is not the plurilingual project drawn up in the official regional documents (i.e. *LIC Plan*). It is also not the sort of plurilingualism presented in European documents (i.e. WPET) or in the middle-class schools that offer CLIL courses.

It is rather a different kind, a “backstage” plurilingualism (Goffman 1971; Heller 2000), which emerges from the social conditions, the tensions among opposing goals and the contradictions shown by the agents when they define institutional educational and social aims. In the observed practices, plurilingualism is defined in relation to the physical and symbolic distribution of Spanish, the majority language, and Catalan, the language of the institution. The learners native language/s, which are almost absent in the school’s official discourse and therefore pushed into the background, occupy diverse contexts of learning and use. The foreign language—English, in this case—appears as an isolated element, not integrated in the school practices and the value attributed to it remains somewhat diffuse. Although English could become a useful tool when welcoming children from some Asian countries, this role is not officially recognized. This type of assumption applies even in the case of children who come from Pakistan or the Philippines, whose competencies in English are not systematically assessed on arrival, and therefore may, in some cases, be overlooked. Also, contrary to the official Catalan policy for foreign languages stated in the *LIC Plan*, Appendix 2, [see Excerpt 4], the foreign language is not promoted on an equal basis among all the foreign pupils enrolled in this school, which is probably due to the lack of specific orientation provided in the *LIC Plan* to succeed in this venture.

The tension between official plurilingualism for immigrants, official plurilingualism for mainstream students and “backstage” plurilingualism shows the difficulties in overcoming conditions that favour the reproduction of social differences. Twenty years ago, Catalonia was a pioneer region in the implementation of a single bilingual education network for children coming from two different language backgrounds, which adopted the minority language as the main working language. The accomplishments of this policy have gained international recognition (Committee of Experts ECRML, 2005). Nowadays, Catalonia faces the challenge of integrating

students from many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds who may, in time, become citizens of the European Union.

It is well known that the use that societies make of languages may promote or hinder social mobility. In this respect, it is essential that newly arrived children in Catalonia find a school that helps them become full members of the community which welcomes them, while the doors towards social promotion and mobility remain open to everyone. From our standpoint, this twofold challenge can only be faced with policies aiming at (a) supporting newcomers in the process of learning the two co-official languages, which implies guaranteeing rich educational experiences in Catalan for those pupils who would otherwise have very limited access to this language; (b) making provision for measures which guarantee that, by the end of their compulsory education, all learners—regardless of their linguistic origin—possess a sound knowledge of at least a third language of international use; and (c) establishing a solid framework for initiatives leading to the appreciation and promotion of the languages brought by immigrant families.

These three general guiding principles could materialize into actions such as (i) the generalization in schools of teaching strategies which link the school to the community, in the way that, for example, El Port does in their radio station project. (ii) The promotion of teacher training modules which guarantee the teachers' ability to, at least, understand one or more foreign languages of international use, such as English, French or Arabic. (iii) Raising teachers' awareness of the linguistic wealth that migrant families bring with them. (iv) Helping practitioners identify the characteristics of interaction in multilingual contexts and equipping them with specific teaching strategies and language management skills which can be used to the benefit of migrant pupils and of the whole school community. (v) Providing clear unprejudiced guidelines on the role that the official foreign languages in the school should play in the adapted curriculum offered to the newly arrived learners. (vi) Finally, the progressive inclusion in the school curriculum—as languages with academic value—of the languages brought by these new learners cannot be postponed. This process would necessitate the progressive inclusion of the `new` languages in the University Entrance Examination<sup>31</sup>. The joint use of these policies

may, in our view, contribute to bridging the gap between the different conceptions of plurilingualism present today in the Catalan society.

It is clear that society and schools must establish an order of priority in relation to their educational goals, but in our view, these priorities need to be set, not so much according to the social, cultural or linguistic characteristics of the students, as to the individual needs that learners present. The risk of the former is prejudging learners' capacities according to social or cultural stereotypes. El Port is a school where tailoring the curriculum to learners' individual needs is the norm and not the exception. Precisely for this reason, the mismatches observed in this outstanding learning environment between official discourses, school discourses and school practices are especially revealing.

Overcoming the conditions that favour the reproduction of social differences is a complex undertaking that needs to be tackled. We believe that the critical examination of discourses and practices may provide an important contribution to this endeavour.

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### APPENDIX: Symbols used in the original transcripts.

Initials in upper case:           Participants  
Initials in upper case >           Same participant continues the turn

Tone: lowering : \ raising : / wh-question ? sustained -

Pauses: short | medium || long <number of seconds > no pause <0>

Syllable stretching, according to length · · · · ·

Overlaps:

=speaker A's text=

= speaker A's text =

Interruptions: **text\_**

Intensity:

piano {(P)text} pianissimo {(PP)text}

forte {(F)text} fortissimo {(FF)text}

High Pitch {(A) text} Low pitch {(B) text}

Accelerated tempo {(AC)text} Decelerated tempo {(DC)text}

Utterance while laughing {( @ ) text}

Non alphabetic transcription [+text+]

Comments [text]

Incomprehensible fragments, according to length   **XXX | XXX XXX | XXX XXX**  
**XXX**

Doubtful fragments {(?) text}

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<sup>1</sup> This Constitution brought a forty-two-year-period of political abnormality, beginning with a civil war (1936-39), a dictatorship (1939-1976) and a transition period to democracy, to an end.

<sup>2</sup> Roughly speaking 50% of the population state that they have a Catalan-speaking background and 50% a Spanish-speaking one.

<sup>3</sup> The Act on Linguistic Normalization 7/1983 was later reformed by the Act on Linguistic Policy 1/1998.

<sup>4</sup> Mainly English. French is usually offered as an optional second foreign language, with German slowly gaining ground. Other European Languages, such as Italian, Greek or Portuguese, have a much smaller presence and play a minor role.

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<sup>6</sup> The present tense is used, as these principles were integrated into the 1998 law and, therefore, are still in force.

<sup>7</sup> In the sixties and seventies, many families from other areas of Spain moved to the more industrialised Catalonia in search of new opportunities. It has only been in the late nineties onward when Catalonia has become a destination for non Spanish people.

<sup>8</sup> Since 1983, three linguistic models have been present in Basque schools. In Model A, all subjects are taught in Spanish except the Basque language. In Model B, half of the subjects are taught in Basque and half in Spanish. In Model D, all subjects except Spanish are taught in Basque. (Note: Letter ‘C’ does not exist in Basque).

<sup>9</sup> PISA 2003 average score for Spanish a) in Spain: Primary Ed. 65%; Secondary Ed. 64%. b) in Catalonia: Primary Ed. 65%; Secondary Ed. 63%. Source: Departament d’Educació i Universitats, 2006: 53.

<sup>10</sup> The specificity of the Catalan case does not lie in the proportion of population of non-European origin — 8% of the total, 75% of which are concentrated in Barcelona and its industrial belt— but in the increasing rate of the migratory process in the last few years, which is having an important impact on society and the school system in particular. Since 2001 there has been an increase of 300% in the presence of foreign students in Catalan schools and in 2006 the percentage of students born abroad grew to 9.6% of the total of the school population.

<sup>11</sup> The importance attached to Catalan in the construction of a new society must be understood in the light of the role that this language has played in the shaping of the Catalan identity and in the processes of social inclusion and exclusion in Catalonia. If being a Catalan equals being able to speak Catalan, promoting Catalan among the newly arrived population will surely imply opening the gates for them to social belonging and Catalan identity. See Woolard, 1992, for example.

<sup>12</sup> “Welcome Plan”, in literal translation. In the official English translation of the document the term “Insertion Scheme” is used with two different meanings: (a) as it is used in this paragraph, to refer to the whole set of actions planned and implemented by a school, and (b) to refer to the classroom where newly arrived immigrant children receive special attention. In this second meaning, the literal translation *Reception Classroom* (see page 10) is preferred by the authors of this article, as it better reflects the practices we have observed in schools. Thus, it is the term that will be used from now on for the words we are authoring. In this second meaning, the official translation *Insertion Scheme* is reserved for literal quotations from the official documents.

<sup>13</sup> In this paper “plurilingualism” and “multilingualism” are used indistinctly.

<sup>14</sup> All excerpts from the LIC Plan are quoted following the official translation available on Internet.

<sup>15</sup> In the official English translation of the document the term “Insertion Scheme” is used to refer to the whole set of actions planned and implemented by a school and also to the reception classroom where newly arrived immigrant children receive special attention. In this second meaning, the literal translation *Reception Classroom* is preferred by the authors of this article as it reflects better the practices we have observed in schools. Thus it is the term that will be used from now on for the words we are authoring. The official translation *Insertion Scheme* is reserved for literal quotations from the official documents.

<sup>16</sup> Paradoxically, it might be interesting to note that the use of singular when referring to the mother tongue (“in addition to their mother tongue”) used to describe this fourth objective, failed to take into account the existence of bilingual and plurilingual families and societies within Europe, and their trend towards expansion, revealing, thus, a vision of society deeply rooted in monolingualism. Catalonia, an almost completely bilingualised society in Spanish and Catalan, with a high proportion of bilingual families, is a good example of the limiting effects of the use of the singular to refer to one’s native language(s).

<sup>17</sup> Among those strategies, three are to be highlighted: (a) the implementation of an aural component to be added to the reading and writing sections, in the compulsory foreign language test which provides access to tertiary education; (b) the lowering of the compulsory starting point for foreign language learning from the sixth grade (twelve-year-olds) to the third (eight-year-olds) grade in 1990 and, more recently (2004), from the third to the first (six-year-olds) grade, and (c) the offer of financial support and in-service teacher development courses to schools which implement innovative approaches in foreign language teaching.

<sup>18</sup> A second foreign language, usually French or German, must be offered by all secondary schools, but is optional for students.

<sup>19</sup> “It could even be argued that secondary school pupils should study certain subjects in the first foreign language learned, as is the case in the European Schools, (European Commission: White Paper on Education and Training: 47)”

<sup>20</sup> The school system in Spain is made up of three separate networks: (a) the network of state ruled schools, (b) a network of privately ruled schools, which are financed by the state, and (c) a network of costly private schools. The schools in (b) complain that the funding they obtain from the administration does not cover all the expenses, thus justifying the charging of fees to families. Up to now this policy has left out children from families that would not, or could not afford those fees. An agreement between social forces and the educational authorities [Departament d’educació], aimed at progressively overcoming any discrimination between the two state-funded networks was reached in March 2006. The outcomes of this agreement are still to be seen.

<sup>21</sup> One example of this, among the many available, is the school radio station, where the pupils interview *interesting* people who live in the neighbourhood, following scripts previously elaborated in the classroom.

<sup>22</sup> This research Project has been financed by the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Science and Technology. BSO2001-20030, SEJ 2004-06723-C02-00, i SEJ2004-06723-C02-01.

<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that the selection of incidents must not be taken as a representative sample of the school practices, but of the problems that the school faces.

<sup>24</sup> In order to avoid any anecdotic account we have made a selection of incidents that exemplify and support the reports provided from teachers in schools we do not have access to.

<sup>25</sup> Original names have been substituted by alias.

<sup>26</sup> The transcriptions belong to the GREIP-UAB research group [<http://dewey.uab.es/didllengua/inicillengua.htm>] Transcripts 1 and 2 were carried out and / or supervised by V. Unamuno and T. Díaz. Transcript 3 was carried out by L. Nussbaum. See symbols in the annex.

<sup>27</sup> It must be understood that this is done following tailored-made insertion programmes which are constantly re-examined.

<sup>28</sup> This is mostly done through projects which integrate different content areas in a *Language across the Curriculum* approach. One of the aims of these projects is to favour the joint work of newly arrived children, less recent immigrants and autochthonous pupils.

<sup>29</sup> The difficulties many primary school teachers have communicating in English can partly explain why the pupils are not systematically assessed in this language.

<sup>30</sup> At least, as reported by a number of practitioners we have talked to. Some of these teachers position themselves in favour of this practice as a facilitating strategy, whereas others position themselves against, arguing the potential discriminatory effects that this practice may bring about.

<sup>31</sup> At the moment, the Catalan students who take the University Entrance Test can only choose either English, French, German or Italian. This is a similar situation to that in the other Spanish Autonomous Regions.