

Representations of Plurilingual Competence and Language Use in Dynamic Trilingual Education: The Case of French-German Schools in Buc and Saarbrücken

Sofia Stratilaki

1. Introduction

Trilingual education and various curricula for third language acquisition have been increasingly implemented around the world in recent decades in order to meet the growing demand for plurilingualism. Key questions in immersion programmes are concerned with the ways in which plurilingual skills and strategies are related to communication and learning of the language registers in L1, L2 and L3, which are required for the learner to function successfully in institutional settings, and where these languages are being used for instruction of educational content (e.g., Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner, 2001). As a consequence, the new research area of trilingualism and third language acquisition has already established itself as a field of its own during the last few years (e.g., Griessler, 2001). The present study seeks to ascertain whether the learners' social representations of languages, including their features and status, shape the processes and strategies they develop and implement for language learning and use. Of particular concern for the present paper are learners' representations of *plurilingual competence*, and their motivation and attitudes towards languages. A French-German example will be presented in this study.

Few characteristics of bilingualism have inspired as much academic research as code-switching and its role and function in the interrelation between linguistic form and sequential organisation of "bilingual speech" (e.g., Lüdi & Py, 2002). As a consequence, traditional research on second language acquisition and bilingualism has often produced conflicting results in areas such as bilingual competence, language development and processing of comprehensible input such as meaning. For instance, Weinreich (1953) refers to the fact that, when a speaker has command of more than one language, both language systems do not co-exist as two entirely separate spheres, but a large number of transfer and interference phenomena are to be expected in bilingual speakers.

Furthermore, the prevailing view at the beginning of the 1970s was based on Labov's work (1971). He is frequently cited as referring to code-switching as the "irregular mixture" of two linguistic systems, and numerous linguists have viewed it as indicative of imperfect language acquisition, extreme cross-linguistic interference or just poor socio-linguistic manners. These hypotheses imply - apart from objecting to bilingualism as a negative influence on the cognitive and linguistic development of the speaker - a perception of the bilingual as a monolingual speaker in more than one language community. That is, in early analysis, code-switching is determined by the premise of a "double monolingual" hypothesis, whereas bilingualism is considered as the addition of two separate competences. Subsequent studies have established the bases of a first "grammar of code-switching" (e.g., Sankoff & Poplack, 1979). In recent years, Cook (1992, 1993, 1995), Grosjean (1989, 1992) and others have criticized what they call "monolingual prejudice" or "the monolingual view of bilingualism" and have proposed the notion of "multicompetence" to designate a unique form of language competence that is not necessarily comparable to that of monolinguals. In this sense, the language competence of bilinguals should not be regarded as simply the sum of two monolingual competencies, but should rather be judged in conjunction with the user's total linguistic repertoire. Since Grosjean (1985), the alternate use of languages has been attributed to a "monolingual-bilingual mode continuum" of speaking. A mode is a state of activation of the bilingual's languages and language processing mechanisms. In the bilingual mode, both of the bilingual speaker's two languages are activated, although one to a relatively higher level than the other, whereas in the monolingual mode only one language is activated and the other is de-activated as far as possible.

-2-

Evidence for the language mode continuum concept has been found in adults in experimental settings (Grosjean, 1997) and in naturalistic settings (Treffers-Daller, 1998) as well as in children (e.g., Meisel, 1989; Genesee, 1989; Goodz, 1989). In a more recent publication, Grosjean (2001) applies his ideas to trilingual speakers by pointing out that a trilingual speaker can certainly be imagined in a monolingual, a bilingual or a trilingual mode with various levels of activation. As a result, according to Grosjean, bi-/plurilinguals are fully

proficient speakers who have specific configurations of linguistic competences that reflect, in part, unique interactions of the languages they know. That is, bilinguals may be shown to exhibit a shared knowledge of what constitutes appropriate code-switching. As argued by Myers Scotton (1990), Heller (1988) and Auer (1995) code-switch decisions appear to be governed by pragmatic rather than syntactic criteria, and therefore it could be hasty to consider switches as no more than merely a discursive proof of lack of competence. As Gumperz (1982) has pointed out, code-switching is one of a number of possible contextualisation cues or communicative resources available for constructing and interpreting meanings in context. Additionally, for Lüdi (2003: 175), bilingual speech can be defined as a mode of speaking where rules and norms are activated that overlap single languages and govern the "grammatical" mixing of elements from different languages.

The study of bilingualism and bilingual competence has grown into a respected research field, and knowledge of more than one language is now regarded as an imperative, both in individuals as well as in institutional settings. The fact that learning strategies as well as communicative strategies are already at the disposal of bilingual speakers might facilitate and accelerate the language learning process. Yet it is only recently that the focus of research studies has shifted to third language learning in institutional settings, with a specific focus on L3-acquisition and on the *plurilingual competence* of learners. Given the short history of the field, it is not surprising that trilingualism has frequently been a secondary issue in a range of studies on second language acquisition: it has generally been considered as an extension of bilingualism. As a consequence, a focus on the development of instructional settings involving the teaching of more than two languages (L1+L2+L3) and the acquisition of plurilingual competence by learners is crucial - especially when we consider the question of the temporary, as opposed to permanent, nature of positive effects of plurilingualism on the cognitive development of plurilinguals (e.g., Baker, 1996: 142).

If we go beyond bilingualism, L3-acquisition and use tends to constitute an independent heuristic direction rather than a borderline case of bilingualism or an analysis of a dual L2 competence (e.g., Hufeisen & Lindemann, 1998). That this influence between languages might be of a cross-linguistic nature, that any language might exert an influence on another, disregarding the order of acquisition, has often been neglected (e.g., Hufeisen, 1991: 16-17). Similarly, Clyne (1997) argues that, whereas in second language learners two systems can influence each other, the contact between three language systems in a plurilingual speaker can develop more forms, that is, apart from the bi-directional relationship between L1 and L2, L3 can influence L1 and vice versa, and L2 and L3 can also influence each other.

Along the same lines, Castellotti & Moore (2002: 9) stress the importance of representations in the language learning process. Respecting this pragmatic principle implies that representations of one's mother tongue, the language being learned and the differences between them are associated with particular learning strategies adopted by learners who construct a representation of the interlinguistic distance between their own language system and those of the languages being learned. Consequently, according to Castellotti & Moore, representation is dual in nature, both static and dynamic. That is, on the one hand, representations are closely related with learning processes, which they either enhance or hinder; on the other hand, representations are flexible and changing, and can therefore be changed. Moreover, studies of social representations of languages and plurilingualism (e.g., Moore, 2001) reveal that learners' representations of interactions between languages are also constructed in relation to linguistic systems, their respective operation, probable similarities and differences and possible relationships between them. From this perspective, it is possible to argue that representations are developed in a complex interaction involving different languages and learners. Within this framework, learners construct their representations of plurilingual competence and their strategies in language uses (e.g., Mißler, 2000). It follows that, as already pointed out by Hufeisen (2000: 211-212), plurilingual competence is flexible: that is, it is sometimes difficult for a plurilingual speaker to describe her or his language competences using chronological terminology since competences usually change over time. In addition, skills within the languages can vary.

Before focusing on the French-German school context in Buc, France, and Saarbrücken, Germany, let us first specify very briefly what we mean by *plurilingual competence*.

The notion "plurilingual competence" can be considered as the development of a composite repertoire, original and complex, where the different languages in contact interact and combine. Therefore language alternation could help promote metalinguistic awareness through the communicative use of more than two languages (e.g., Cavalli & Coletta, 2002; Coste, 1994; Coste, 2001; Moore & Py, 1995). According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*:

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (Council of Europe 2001: 260, see also Coste, Moore &

Zarate, 1997: 12)

Obviously, the scope of language variation is an aspect in which plurilinguals differ greatly from monolingual or bilingual speakers. Thus, plurilinguals exhibit great linguistic variety measured in terms of plurilingual competence. The present research adopts, therefore, a broader perspective of the conditions for successful language learning and tries to show that in order to understand the dynamics of plurilingual competence it is necessary to examine the social representations of languages and to address the question of what discourse functions code-switching serves. This will entail both identifying the social representations of plurilingual competence of French-German learners and attempting to link the linguistic variable of code-switching under consideration to social representations of plurilingual competence in order to explain the significance of language choice in trilingual education. Therefore, the working hypothesis developed for this research assumes that there is an important place for focusing on the language learning strategies of different learners, namely the role of linguistic distance in L3-acquisition in code-switching and cross-linguistic influence. It is argued that the interaction between languages can help the learners to link the knowledge of the languages they already know or the languages that are being learned and, thus, they can foster metalinguistic awareness, which is an important predictor of third language acquisition (e.g., Cummins, 2001). As such, the development of *plurilingual competence* is intertwined with the learners' awareness of the intersection of languages and social representations of plurilingualism.

-4-

2. Social representations of plurilingual competence and language uses by French-German learners

2.1 Hypotheses and research questions

This study focuses on the social representations of plurilingual competence and language uses by French-German learners in two instructional settings in Saarbrücken and Buc. It provides evidence for the positive effects of third-language learning on second language proficiency, thus supporting the hypothesis of cross-linguistic influence. The assumption was that language use of learners in the Buc school differs from that of learners in Saarbrücken, and, perhaps more importantly, that these differences are the result of different representations of learners of plurilingual competence. Indeed, the two situations are intrinsically interesting because they offer, respectively, a bilingual and a plurilingual view of plurilingual competence. On the one hand, French-German learners in the Buc school consider bilingualism as the development of a composite inventory, original and complex, in which the different languages in contact interact and combine. Following this perspective, bilingual competence can be conceived of as flexible interaction between languages (more than two), associated with linguistic plurality, whereas plurilingual competence is considered as a facilitator for language learning. On the other hand, the French-German learners in Saarbrücken view bilingualism as the addition of two separate, equivalent and homogeneous competences, evaluated according to a model resembling the performance of a native speaker. Whereas bilingual competence is seen as balanced and stable, conceptualised in terms of geographic frontiers between Germany and France and affected by social and historical factors, plurilingual competence is seen as the extent of bilingual competence, which will be referred to here as unbalanced competence. It must be noted that both institutional settings emphasise positive attitudes towards bilingualism. These hypotheses raise the following basic questions:

- (1) How do learners define what could be referred to as "plurilingual competence" in the two schools?
- (2) Do learners consider themselves as "bilingual" or "plurilingual" speakers, and why?
- (3) What is the influence of these representations on the specific strategies that learners use in language learning?
- (4) Which conditions regarding the situation and the type of bi-/plurilingualism noted seem to encourage the use of code-switching?

2.2 Methodological considerations and data collection

Two main perspectives underlie our research orientations and contribute to providing valuable and complementary insights into representations and language uses of plurilingualism. Firstly, we sought to develop experimental research procedures capable of integrating various dimensions in the empirical study of plurilingualism in the two institutional settings, especially through the study of the different strategies which the groups of French-German learners have been developing to deal with three languages in contact. Secondly, data was collected by informal recorded interviews with bilingual French-German learners. We

interviewed female and male students, aged between 16 and 18 years, recruited according to strict selection criteria: namely, according to their answers in a questionnaire which had been previously distributed. [11] Interviews were recorded at schools, and there was no time restriction. Topics included studies, motivation for language learning and subjects' performance in exams. The recordings were transcribed by the researcher into orthographically correct French and German. The sample data for the years 2001 and 2003 will either confirm or refute our hypotheses.

-5-

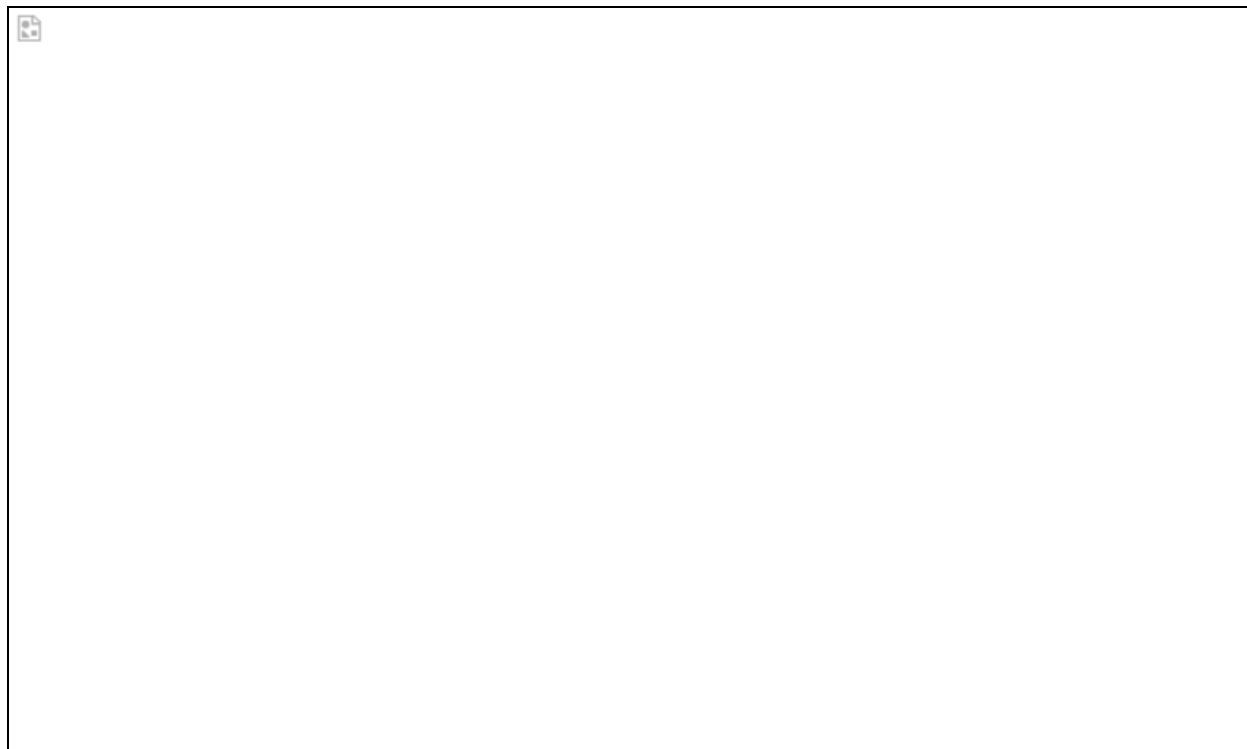
2.3 The school situation in the French-German Schools in Buc and Saarbrücken

There are three French-German Schools in Europe, known as *Lycées Franco-Allemands* (LFA) or *Deutsch-Französische Gymnasien* (DFG). The treaty concerning the foundation of the French-German public high schools was signed in 1963. The establishment of the French-German Baccalaureate (*Baccalauréat franco-allemand* or *Deutsch-Französisches Abitur*) defined the qualifications for this diploma and symbolized the reconciliation of the two countries. The first French-German Baccalaureate was awarded in June 1972 at the French-German high school in Saarbrücken, Germany, which indicated successful European integration as far as secondary education was concerned. According to this model of bilingual education, two other partner schools were created, situated at Freiburg/Breisgau, Germany (1972) and Buc/Versailles, France (1980). The French-German high school in Saarbrücken was founded in 1961 as an experimental bilingual school. It was the first French-German School in Europe which was organised according to a common bilingual program in terms of time, curriculum content and teaching, developed and accepted by France and Germany. The purpose of the school was to develop bilingualism and biculturalism in French and German.

The two languages share equal status in the schools, that is, both languages are used as a medium of instruction. The two languages are also taught as languages (e.g., aspects of grammar and communicative skills). The essential elements of instruction are that different lessons may use different languages with a regular change-over to ensure that both languages are used in all curriculum areas and that switching languages within a lesson is acceptable. For example, Environmental Studies may be taught in French, or Science and Math in German (see [Table 1](#)). In this way, interdependence may stimulate cooperation and friendship, as well as learning and achievement. The school ethos is bilingual and bicultural. Such an ethos is created by classroom and corridor displays, notice boards, curriculum resources, cultural events, and extracurricular activities using both languages in a relatively balanced way. Announcements over the school address system are bilingual French-German. Letters to parents are also sent out in two languages. The staff in the dual language classrooms are often bilingual. French-German learners are integrated in some lessons and are expected to respond in the same language. Bilingual teachers ensure that they switch languages to favour language competence in both target languages as well as the learner's language. A teacher using French will work in close association with a teacher who uses German with the same class. Such teamwork requires teachers to be committed to plurilingualism and pluriculturalism as important educational aims. Moreover, teachers use both languages on different occasions with their students. French-German schools draw from a balanced mixture of children from more than two different language or dialect backgrounds (e.g., Alsace or Saarland). Therefore, in our analysis, it is important to take into account local realities and exigencies. Bilingual learners are expected to acquire plurilingual competence formally throughout the curriculum, namely through instruction in Spanish (Sciences section) and English (Social and Economic Studies section). That is, all students are expected to learn more than two languages and become plurilingual, though the same level of achievement for the languages taught may not be expected. In both cases, communicative and literacy skills in both languages are likely to receive direct attention in the curriculum. While playground conversations and student-to-student talk in the classroom is difficult to influence or manipulate, the school environment aims to be transparently bilingual. So, the aim of French-German Schools is not just to produce bilingual students. To gain status and to flourish, such schools need to show success throughout the curriculum. The development of plurilingual competence often starts in kindergarten classes. As the kindergarten children move through the grades, metalinguistic awareness is established through the communicative use of more than two languages.

-6-

Table 1. Curriculum content und language of instruction in the French-German Schools in Buc and Saarbrücken



2.3 Analysis and results

We reported earlier that Coste (1997) draws a complex picture of plurilingual and pluricultural competence serving as the goal of future trilingual education at school. He points out that third-language acquisition in the school context and trilingual education are complex phenomena related to a large number of sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and educational factors.

In what follows, the analysis of data will be used to specify the relationship between social representations of plurilingualism and language uses. In the following extract, the French-German learners in the Saarbrücken school attempt to define the notion of a bi-/plurilingual speaker. The original version in French and German is integrated in our analysis. Extracts 1 and 2 have been translated from French and German into English and appear in the [Appendix](#).

Extract 1 (data SB: A/B)

1. SB-A 1. pour moi être bilingue/ c'est connaître et maîtriser parfaitement deux langues/ 2. connaître toutes les expressions les jeux de mots signifie aussi: qu'on maîtrise bien 2 3. langues\ & tout en étant capable de les combiner\ & et de passer de l'une à l'autre & avec 4. aisance pour\ en fait, c'est comme si on mettait un allemand et un français dans une 5. même personne... bon\ qu'on se sent à l'aise/ dans les 2 langues\ & et pour se sentir à 6. l'aise\ il y a beaucoup de possibilités\ ce qui implique une petite connaissance de la 7. culture/ voilà être bilingue représente pour moi une aventure/ donc un enrichissement\ au 8. contraire/ le plurilinguisme n'implique pas la même maîtrise que le bilinguisme\ quand on 9. est vrai bilingue/ à mon avis\ on est plus ancré dans la langue\ tandis que lorsqu'on est 10. plurilingue/ on jongle avec les langues\ mais/ on reste peut-être plus superficiel\ 11. quelqu'un qui est plurilingue\ sait parler plusieurs langues couramment\ mais/ peut faire 12. des fautes et peut avoir un accent plus au moins prononcé\ être plurilingue ne demande 13. peut-être pas une telle maîtrise de la langue\ mais/ seulement de savoir se débrouiller 14. avec à l'écrit et/ à l'oral\ ou faire des combinaisons pour apprendre plus de langues 15. latines ou germaniques/

2. SB-B 1. unter Bilinguismus\ stelle ich mir vor\ & dass jemand 2 Sprachen gleich gut beherrscht\ 2. und zwar sowohl im Schriftlichen\ als auch im Mündlichen\ möglichst ohne Akzent.. XXX / 3. & er MUSs sich im jeweiligen Land/ ohne Probleme/ verständigen können/ & er MUSs sich 4. gut\ und vollständig ausdrücken\ & er MUSs /ohne Probleme/ einkaufen gehen\ & er MUSs 5. mit den anderen Leuten frei reden können/ verschiedene Sprachebenen kennen & und zum 6. Teil beherrschen [Erklärung]: familier\ courant\ soutenu\ tout ça in beiden Sprachen keine 7. nennenswerten Ausdrucks-\ Vokabular-\ Grammatischprobleme haben\ & zumindest nicht 8. mehr als Muttersprachler\ fehlerfrei sprechen [Erklärung]: zumindest fast XXX être 9. plurilingue/ signifie maîtriser plusieurs langues\ être bilingue/ c'est être plurilingue à deux 10. langues/ en général sa langue maternelle et une deuxième\ ce n'est pas exactement la 11. même chose: quand on est bilingue on est aussi plurilingue\ mais quand on es plurilingue 12. on n'est pas forcément bilingue\ sais pas\ je pense qu'être bilingue peut aboutir à 13. plurilingue et moi/oui\ je suis un vrai bilingue/

-7-

Definitions, actually a speech genre much favoured in schools, constitute an example of decontextualised language use. The learner SB-A suggests that language competence is not a stable state and that having to deal with more than one language at a time forms part of the bilingual competence (SB-A: 3). This implies a process whereby SB-A relates the notion of *bi-/plurilingual competence* and code-switching to his own experience and knowledge. Thus, for SB-A the development of bilingual competence leads to an enrichment of the individual's language systems and personal life: "*being bilingual for me corresponds to an adventure.*" In addition to making his definition of bilingualism more persuasive, activating personal experience affirms the learner's identity as a "real" bilingual speaker. The final statement in this extract is interesting in that it reveals that SB-A possesses an increased metalinguistic awareness and a considerable knowledge of the proximity and distance between languages. In this sense, the acquisition of languages that are typologically close to French or German can potentially facilitate the process of L3-acquisition. Nevertheless, linguistic distance can also play an important role when focusing on form in order to develop language awareness and learning strategies (SB-A: 14-15). Thus, learners tend to combine languages that are typologically closer to the target language and, in this way, plurilingual competence is seen as a positive linguistic resource for language learning.

Furthermore, the double focus on content and form, and the elaborate metalinguistic work of definition provided by the learner SB-B may well have a double effect on his communicative means through which language and content can be integrated successfully (SB-B: 1/12). Therefore, the alternate experience in two languages, demonstrated and magnified through code-switching, could help reinforce complexity and refine the elaboration of the concept of a "bilingual" or "plurilingual" speaker. In the example above, switching from one language to the other goes beyond an attempt to translate. That is, it brings attention to semantic differences between the notions of a bilingual and plurilingual speaker and adds new information and insight. This cleverly staged code-switch introduces subtle nuances to elicit the meaning of the concept of plurilingualism: with two lexical forms in his bilingual repertoire, SB-B can activate two images, corresponding to two different conceptions of bilingual and plurilingual competence. Bilingual competence is seen by the learner as stable, and communicative efficiency will therefore be assessed in terms of monolingual native speaker discourse. This example illustrates that the representation of bilingual performance is that of full attainment, which means, for example, that the bilingual speaker SB-B has full command of native-speaker-like language systems L1 and L2, and that any systematic deviation can be attributed to a lack of competence (SB-B: 1-6). In this case, errors can be taken as evidence of a deficient language system (SB-A: 12). In this sense, the skills which a plurilingual speaker develops in order to integrate differing language resources into his or her repertoire can be interpreted as transitional (SB-B: 12-13). Another critical factor is the degree of competence / performance in the languages, which will correlate with the image of the speaker as bilingual or plurilingual (SB-A: 11-14). While bilinguals are characterized by a native speaker speaking (SB-A: 1-4), where both systems are considered as developed to ideal speaker competence level, plurilinguals are assumed to have a foreign accent (SB-A: 12). As can be seen from the Extract 1, both examples illustrate that bilingualism is frequently still assumed to be synonymous with ambilingualism (i.e., native-like competence in both languages), although plurilingualism is seen as a projection of bilingualism, characterized by an unbalanced competence, which can heighten difficulties stemming from complexity. The examples also seem to demonstrate the students' motivation for language learning as well as of developing a plurilingual competence.

-8-

Previously, we briefly discussed the role of distance and proximity in the development of plurilingual competence. Such an example shows the potential for social representations to raise linguistic awareness as well as its possible links with language uses and acquisition (Coste, 2001). The next example, in the Buc school, illustrates similar roles for representations of plurilingual competence and adds new elements for analysis.

Extract 2 (data B: A/B)

1.B-A 1. Ja\ avec mon frère en allemand\ ma soeur en français\ ma mère en français et avec 2. mon père allemand/ es hängt es von den anderen ab\ je nachdem welche Sprache sie 3. besser beherrschen XXX ..wo habe ich es erlebt XXX ..in welcher Sprache es sich besser 4. &oder schöner ausdrücken läßt/ XXX von meiner Laune (Erklärung: hängt es ab)/ ..es 5. kommt immer darauf an welche Leute dabei sind\ &wenn wir eine gemischte Gruppen von 6. Deutschen und Franzosen sind dann wechseln wir die Sprache\ auch bei denen die 7. zweisprachig aufgewachsen sind/ ich mag lieber Französisch\ &da meine ganze Familie in 8. Frankreich lebt\ einfacher ist es auf Deutsch\ &da ich meine ganze Schulzeit dort 9. verbracht habe\ und die meisten meine Freunde Deutscher sind\ XXX Zweisprachig: man 10. kann beide Sprachen gleich gut sprechen und

man fühlt sich in beiden gleich wohl (...)

Fragment 2

11. ZU Hause spreche ich nur Deutsch mit meinen Eltern und meinen Geschwistern/ anders 12. ist das im Schriftlichen / am liebsten/ spiele ich mit den Sprachen\ springe hin und her\ 13. zwischen Französisch\ Deutsch\ Spanisch\ wenn meine Gesprächspartner sie auch 14. sprechen natürlich/ ..normalerweise\ wird dauernd gewechselt/ in manchen Sprachen 15. gibt es Wörter\ die etwas genau ausdrücken/ und in anderen Sprachen gibt es kein 16. treffendes Wort/ & oder auch französische Wörter mit einer deutschen Endung/ & zum 17. Beispiel\ sein Gesicht war danach ganz deformiert [Erklärung: déformé]/ ..danach war 18. ich richtig bouverstiert. [Erklärung: bouverstée]

2.B-B 1. je préfère communiquer en allemand & en français/ je m'adapte à la langue préférée de 2. mes amis/ je change aussi entre l'allemand et le français/ ..d'habitude je parle la langue 3. d'origine de la personne\ sauf si elle me demande de parler l'autre langue\ pour 4. l'apprendre & ou si j'ai un trou de vocabulaire/ ..dans ce cas\ je l'explique dans l'autre 5. langue\ avec des amis parfaitement bilingues de ma classe\ ..je change la langue selon le 6. thème\ & le cours précédent\ & les personnes\

Fragment 2

7. être bilingue demande/ à la personne de se sentir à l'aise dans les deux pays\ de pouvoir 8. parler les deux langues sans appréhension\ ..comme si c'était sa langue maternelle/ le 9. bilingue comprend chaque pays/ & et son mode de vie et pouvoir théoriquement s'adapter 10. aux deux\ je crois que le bilinguisme dépasse la maîtrise des /deux langues/

-9-

Code-switches are intrinsically bound to draw attention to differences as well as to incorporate aspects that are not included in one language or the other. Therefore, switches can be considered as acting directly on the elaboration of concepts, especially when no semantically congruent equivalents are available (B-A: Fr.2: 14-15). In other words, there is a positive transfer from second language learning to learning additional languages and the use of these languages in communication needs. The previous example indicates that in situations when the focus is not only on the development of linguistic skills, but also on the transmission of subject content, there is discursive evidence for cross-linguistic transfer in the development of plurilingual competence when the languages involved are similar in vocabulary, syntax or structure (B-A: Fr.2: 16-18). That is, learners' representations of the distance or proximity between languages can be far more important than the objective similarities or differences between them.

This approach suggests that plurilingual speakers demonstrate great flexibility in switching strategies, according to the demand characteristics of the situation as well as the fact that plurilingual learners are more effective in using implicit learning strategies than bilingual learners (B-B: Fr.2: 3-5). In this sense, the two plurilingual learners B-A and B-B are characterized by an enriched experience as language learners which arguably, as illustrated from Extract 2, helps them choose appropriate strategies and use a variety of discourse strategies for social communication and learning. Moreover, we see that plurilingual learners are more sensitive and responsive to the needs of their interlocutors than bilingual learners (B-A: 5-7; B-B: 1-6). Switches also highlight the idea that plurilingual learners develop hypotheses about linguistic operations and test those hypotheses in a range of settings: plurilingual speakers will thus activate the language network required by the communicative situation. On a complex level this must be taken to mean that the alternate use of languages presupposes a view of plurilingual competence as a complex pattern of properties and functions. For instance, in the case of B-B, the notion of bilingualism goes beyond proficiency in two languages. In this perspective, being "bilingual" implies being also "bicultural," in terms of being exposed to two cultures, two modes of socialisation, and two national identities (B-B: Fr.2: 7-10). In other words, the bilingual speaker is defined by B-B as someone who has linguistic competence in two or more languages, and also has a perception of other cultures; in this sense, he is able to develop an understanding of the differences and relationships between his own and a foreign culture. That is, bicultural identity is experienced positively as a resource for L3-acquisition, language and cultural learning. Therefore, representations play a crucial role in constructing identity, relationships with others and knowledge.

3. Conclusion

Social representations of plurilingual competence are essential in third language acquisition and trilingual education. Thus, the development of plurilingual competence on the individual level as a goal of plurilingual education is a complex task. It cannot be provided merely by adding more languages to the curriculum structures and teaching methods. The approach advocated here implies that the focus on the similarities and differences between two or more language systems, as known from the analysis of representations of

plurilingual competence and language uses in French-German learners in the two institutional settings, seems to be helpful in the language learning process. With this perspective, a strong emphasis on metalinguistic knowledge, metacognitive awareness and skills will promote and facilitate further language learning.

To sum up, it is important to acknowledge the unevenness of plurilingual competence, by pointing out that the plurilingual learner is characterized by a partial competence, which changes according to personal interests, and geographical and family movements, as well as the educational context. Therefore, a useful effect of the adoption of a dynamic model of plurilingualism might well be the realisation of the need for continuous work towards the development of a plurilingual repertoire by individuals that includes language uses and social representations. If we are to acquire a thorough understanding of this complexity of plurilingualism and to develop plurilingual education programmes in institutional settings, the benefits of more methodical and effective research need to be explored.

-10-

Notes

[1] The questionnaire was designed in both languages, French and German. It consisted of 29 questions evoking socio-linguistic and socio-biographical variables and was answered in 45 minutes. Data were collected from 500 questionnaires in the Buc school and 530 in the Saarbrücken school. Code-switching by language uses with regard to the addressee in different social configurations was obtained by including three different forms of interpersonal relationships, ranging from intimate to distant: parents, friends and strangers. The results were recorded on answer sheets which, after having been marked and coded, were statistically treated. The statistical analyses were carried out by means of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Appendix

2. Extract 1 (data SB: A/B)

SB-A: For me\ being bilingual/ means knowing and using perfectly two languages/ knowing all the expressions, all the words signifies also: a good knowledge of the two languages\ &as well as being at the same time capable of combining the words\ &and switching easily from the one language to the other in order to\ Å´Å´ in fact it's like putting together a French and a German speaker in the same person...well\ feeling at ease/ in the two languages\ &and in order to feel at ease\ there are a lot of possibilities\ which also means having a basic knowledge of the culture/...well being bilingual for me corresponds to an adventure\ that means to an enrichment\...on the contrary/ plurilingualism doesn't imply the same knowledge as bilingualism\ I think that when we are really bilingual/ we are more anchored to a language\ whereas when we are plurilingual/ we move constantly between the languages\ but/ we stay probably more superficial\ someone who is plurilingual\ can speak fluently a lot of languages\ but/ he can make mistakes and can have an foreign accent\ being plurilingual doesn't demand, probably, such a great knowledge of the language\ but/ only to be able to write/ and to speak\ or to make combinations in order to learn more Latin or Germanic languages/

SB-B: I define 'being bilingual'\ &as someone who knows equally two languages\ especially as well as writing as speaking\ if it is possible without an accent...XXX / &he must be able to communicative in the two countries/ without a problem/ &he must be able to express himself correctly\ &he must be able to go to the supermarket without a problem\ &he must be able to communicate with the other people without a problem/ he must be able to communicate &and partially know the different registers of languages\ all these in both languages without a problem, concerning expression\ vocabulary\ and grammar\ &at least no more problems than a native-like-speaker\ communicate without a problem at least really fast XXX being plurilingual/ implies knowing a lot of languages\ being bilingual/ is being plurilingual in two languages/ generally the mother tongue and a second one\ it's not exactly the same thing: when someone is bilingual he is also plurilingual\ but when someone is plurilingual he is not necessarily bilingual\ I don't know\ I think that being bilingual can lead to being plurilingual and personally/ yes\ I am a real bilingual/

-11-

Extract 2 (data B: A/B)

B-A: Yes\ with my brother in German\ with my sister in French\ with my mother in French and with my father in German/ it depends on the other\ : form what language they known better XXX ..where I made the experience XXX ..in what language it sounds better &or the expression is better/ XXX it depends on how I am feeling/ ..it always depends on the people surrounding me\ &when we are a mixed group of German and French, we are switching from one language to the other, also with those who have grown up as bilinguals\ I like French more\ &because my whole family lives in France\ easier is in German\ &because I was educated

my whole life\ there and most of my friends are German\ XXX bilingual: someone can equally speak both languages and he feels at ease in both languages (...)

Fragment 2: I speak only German at home with my parents and my sisters and brothers/ it is different when writing/ I prefer playing with the words\ shifting from one language to the other\ between French\ German\ Spanish\ especially when my interlocutor can speak them/ ..normally\ I switch the whole time/ in some languages there are words\ that express exactly one thing/ that in the other languages doesn't exist an appropriate word for this/ &or French words with a German end/ &for instance\ his face was afterwards fast 'déformiert' (explication: déformé)/ ..afterwards I was really 'boulversiert' (explication: bouleversée)

B-B: I prefer communicating in German &and in French/ I adapt to the preferred language of my friends/ I switch also between German and French/ ..normally I speak the language of the person\ except from...if someone asks me to speak the other language\ in order to learn it &or if I don't remember the word/ in this case\ I explain it in the other language/ with my friends being perfect bilinguals in my class\ ..I switch the language according to the subject\ &the previous lesson\ &the persons\

Fragment 2: Being bilingual demands/ from the person to feel at ease in the two countries\ to be able to speak the two languages without hesitation\ ..like it was his mother tongue/ the bilingual understands each country/ &the way of living and theoretically he can get used to living in both of them\ I believe that bilingualism goes beyond the knowledge/ of two languages/

-12-

References

- Auer, P. (1995). The pragmatics of code-switching. In Milroy, L. and Muysken, P. (ed.). *One Speaker, Two Languages: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Code-switching* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baker, C. (1996). *Foundations of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Castellotti, V. and Moore, D. (2002). *Reference study: Social representations of languages and teaching*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Cavalli, M. and Coletta, D. (2002). *Rapports de diffusion: langues, bilinguisme et représentations sociales au Val d'Aoste*. Aoste: IRRE-Vda.
- Cenoz, J. and Genesee, F. (1998). Psycholinguistic Perspectives on Multilingualism and Multilingual Education. In Cenoz, J. and Genesee, F. (ed.). *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education* (pp. 16-32). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Cenoz, J., Hufeisen, B. and Jessner, U. (eds.). (2001). Towards Trilingual Education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 4 (1), 1-10.
- Clyne, M. (1997). Some of the things trilinguals do. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 1 (2), 95-116.
- Cook, V. (1992). Evidence for multi-competence. *Language Learning* 42, 557-591.
- Cook, V. (1993). *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. London: Macmillan.
- Cook, V. (1995). Multi-competence and the learning of many languages. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 8, 93-98.
- Coste, D. (1994). L'enseignement bilingue dans tous ses états. *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée Didier Erudition*, 96, 9-22.
- Coste, D. (1997). Multilingual and multicultural competence and the role of school. *Language Teaching* 30, 90-93.
- Coste, D. (2001). La notion de compétence plurilingue et ses implications possibles. In *L'enseignement des langues vivantes. Perspectives. coll. 'Les Actes de la DESCO'*, CRDP de l'Académie de Versailles, 29-38.
- Coste, D., Moore, D. and Zarate, G. (1997). *Compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle*. Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe. Reprint in *Le Français dans le monde. Recherches et applications*, juillet 1998.

- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins, J. (2001). Instructional Conditions for Trilingual Development. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 4 (1), 61-75.
- Genesee, F. (1989). Early bilingual development: one language or two? *Journal of Child Language* 16, 161-179.
- Goodz, N. (1989). Parental language mixing in bilingual families. *Journal of Infant Mental Health* 10, 25-44.
- Griessler, M. (2001). The Effects of Third Language Learning on Second Language Proficiency: an Austrian Example. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 4 (1), 50-60.
- Grosjean, F. (1985). The bilingual as a competent but specific speaker-hearer. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 6, 467-477.
- Grosjean, F. (1989). Neurolinguists, beware! The bilingual is not two monolinguals in one person. *Brain and Language* 36, 3-15.
- Grosjean, F. (1992). Another view of bilingualism. In Harris R.J. (ed.). *Cognitive Processing in Bilinguals* (pp. 51-62). Amsterdam: North Holland.
- Grosjean, F. (1997). Processing mixed language: issues, findings and models. In De Groot, A. and Kroll, J. (eds.). *Tutorials in bilingualism: Psycholinguistic perspectives* (pp. 225-254). Mahwah, N.J. : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grosjean, F. (2001). The bilingual's language modes. In J. Nicol (ed.). *One Mind, Two Languages: Bilingual Language Processing* (pp. 1-25). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Heller, M. (ed.). (1988). *Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Herdina, P. and Jessner, U. (2002). *A Dynamic Model of Multilingualism: Perspectives of Change in Psycholinguistics*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

- Hufeisen, B. (1991). *English als erste und Deutsch als zweite Fremdsprache: Empirische Untersuchung zur fremdsprachlichen Interaktion*. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Hufeisen, B. (2000). A European perspective: tertiary languages with a focus on German as L3 (pp. 209-229). In Rosenthal, J. (ed.). *Handbook of Undergraduate Second Language Education*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hufeisen, B. and Lindemann, B. (eds.). (1998). *L2-L3 und ihre zwischensprachliche Interaktion: Zu individueller Mehrsprachigkeit und gesteuertem Lernen*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.
- Labov, W. (1971). The notion of system in creole languages. In Hymes, D. (ed.). *Pidginization and creolization of languages* (pp. 447-472). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lüdi, G. (2003). Code-switching and Unbalanced Bilingualism. In Dewaele, J.-M. and Housen, A. (eds.). *Bilingualism: Beyond Basic Principles* (pp. 174-188). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lüdi, G. and Py, B. (2002). *Etre bilingue*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Meisel, J. (1989). Early differentiation of languages in bilingual children. In Hylstenstam, K. and Obler, L. (eds.). *Bilingualism across the lifespan: aspects of acquisition, maturity and loss* (pp. 13-40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Mißler, B. (2000). Previous experience of foreign language learning and its contribution to the development of learning strategies. In Dentler, S., Hufeisen, B. and Lindemann, B. (eds.). *Tertiär- und Drittsprachen: Projekte und empirische Untersuchungen* (pp. 7-21). Tübingen: Stauffenburg.
- Moore, D. (ed.) (2001). *Les représentations des langues et de leur apprentissage*. Paris: Didier-Essais.
- Moore, D. and Py, B. (1995). Parole empruntée, parole appuyée ou la place des emprunts dans l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde. *Plurilinguismes 9-10*, 133-146.
- Myers Scotton, C. (1990). Codeswitching and borrowing: Interpersonal and macrolevel meaning. In Jacobson, R. (ed.). *Codeswitching as a Worldwide Phenomenon* (pp. 85-111). New York: Lang.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sankoff, D. and Poplack, S. (1979). A formal grammar for code-switching. *Papers in Linguistics 14*, 3-46.
- Stratilaki, S. (in press). Pluralité des représentations sociales et des pratiques bi-/plurilingues dans les lycées franco-allemands de Buc et de Sarrebruck. In Mochet M.-A. and Potolia, A. (ed.). *Cahiers du français contemporain 9*, Actes du colloque international 'Pluralité des langues', ENS/LSH, juin 2002, Lyon: ENS Editions.
- Treffers-Daller, J. (1998). Variability in code-switching styles: Turkish-German code-switching patterns. In Jacobson, R. (ed.). *Codeswitching Worldwide* (pp. 177-198). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. The Hague: Mouton.

Copyright © 2006 *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*

<p>Stratilaki, Sofia. (2006). Representations of plurilingual competence and language use in a dynamic trilingual education: The case of French-German schools in Buc and Saarbrücken. <i>Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht</i> [Online], 11 (1), 14 pp. Abruflbar unter http://www.ualberta.ca/~german/ejournal/Stratilaki1.htm</p>
--

[Zurück zur [Leitseite](#)]