

Strategies of Multilingualism in Education for Minority Children

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Introduction

Across Western Europe, policy in the context of education for minority children has in the past 20 years increasingly stressed proficiency in and use of the dominant language as a condition for school success (in most cases, this has meant the 'national' language). The use of the children's first language or home language(s) has been valued by policy makers as a cultural marker of identity, but not pedagogically as a didactic asset for learning, or as a 'scaffold' for the acquisition of the dominant language (Cummins 2011, 2013; Van Avermaet 2009; Extra and Spotti 2009).

A monolingual ideology is at the basis of such policies. The occurrence of monolingual ideologies is neither recent nor incidental. They are the result of specific social, historical and political contexts. Linguistic ideologies can be defined as 'systems of belief', collectively or individually held ideas about the role, function and value of (a) language in a societal context (Woolard 1998; Spolsky 2004). However, language ideologies are also related to interactional moments of identity construction and reflect power relations in a given society (Kroskrity 2000; Pavlenko 2002). As Woolard (1998: 3) puts it, 'ideologies of language are rarely about language alone'. Perceived as common sense, inherent contradictions often remain implicit, while the continuation of language ideologies is assured in official documents, through policy actions, media debate, national curricula and so on, and implemented in practice by principals, teachers and so on, and via mission statements, learning materials, language tests and so on. (Shohamy 2006; Gkaintartzi et al. 2015). Creese (2010) stresses how language ideologies in educational contexts always interact with local school contexts and the beliefs and convictions of teachers.

The multilingual make-up of today's schools and classes is a topical theme for many schools and teachers, and in society more generally. Many schools in Flanders struggle with the multilingual constitution of their student population. On the one hand, there is a strong historically rooted belief in the European context that knowledge of more than one language results in surplus value, and this has been especially the case in countries like Belgium and the Netherlands and in Northern Europe.

Hence, young people are generally encouraged to learn and actively use French, English, Spanish or Italian, for professional and economic reasons or for holiday purposes. Yet, at the same time the multilingualism of minority children and their parents is seen as an obstacle to learning and school success. Parents are encouraged to use their first or home language as little as possible with their children, and the use of other languages than Dutch is mostly banned from school settings. Local school policies are not necessarily informed by negative perceptions of the children's mother tongue, as school measures often originate in a genuine concern with learning opportunities. Immersion is held to be the most optimal response and one and only route to learning the dominant language well enough to guarantee school success. In such an educational universe, there is no room for the children's first languages.

While this chapter addresses some of the consequences of monolingual policies, it raises the question whether it is sensible to continue to ignore the multilingual realities of today's diverse school populations. If this question is answered negatively, schools are still saddled with the question of how best to respond to the challenges posed by the educational environment. In this chapter, we engage with these issues by reporting on the results of a longitudinal pedagogical intervention in four primary schools in Ghent, the so-called Home Language in Education project (HLiE), which ran from January 2009 to the end of 2012. The HLiE project was funded by the municipality of Ghent. Its implementation followed the local education authority's decision to both try out and assess the learning potential of an alternative sociolinguistic climate which is more positively oriented to the multilingual resources which minority children bring to school and in which home language use is encouraged as an asset for learning. The scientific part of the project consisted of a mixed-method pre/post-design intervention study. We will discuss the research findings and critically reflect on both the design of the project and the dynamic relationships with the local policy makers and other stakeholders. Before we turn to the details of the implementation and its accompanying research project, it is important to first discuss some of the effects of monolingual language policies as a background for a discussion of possible alternatives.

The Effects of Monolingual Thinking

Social inequality and educational underachievement are among the most persistent problems in education. Successive PISA results (OESO) have revealed the relative failure of national educational responses in meeting these challenges. Above and beyond socioeconomic variables (e.g., socioeconomic status [SES]), the PISA results show that children who speak another language at home than the dominant language perform less well in school. The PISA data, however, show that the effect size of this variable is much smaller than the effect size of SES. In most other studies, the correlation between language spoken at home and school success disappears when controlled for SES. Moreover, we should caution against easy causal interpretations of the connections between home language use and school success. A statistical correlation does not necessarily point to a straightforward causal connection. In addition, Cummins (2018, this volume) compares the PISA results in a number of national contexts and notes that there are success stories to be found of bilingual learning trajectories and educational achievement. Other studies do show, however, that the negative impact of low SES is fed by language difference (see also Van Avermaet et al. 2015). A second consequence of a negative causal reading of the relationship between school success and home language use is that conditions for success crystalize exclusively around pupils' knowledge of Dutch, the dominant language. This, however, goes against the state-of-the-art knowledge about processes of second language learning (e.g., The Douglas Fir Group 2016). It reinforces the monolingual ideology. Yildiz (2012) notes the contradictions in the continued pursuit of and belief in monolingual responses with its values of civic inclusion and national language, despite intensive and widespread 'on the ground' experiences of multilingualism. It is important to gauge how the back-and-forth between the two tendencies plays out in practice. One noted dimension is the continued belief in monolingualism as a recipe for school success and the perception of minority multilingualism as detrimental to educational success. Pulinx et al. (2014) report how the two sides of monolingual thinking prevail in Flemish teacher populations. Monolingual belief is deeply rooted.

In a questionnaire, 700 teachers in 16 Flemish schools (see Fig. 1) were asked to rate a list of propositions on a five-point scale of (dis)agreement.

Eight out of ten teachers agreed that pupils should not be allowed to speak another language than Dutch at school. A similar segment of the examined population identified lack of knowledge of the dominant language as the main cause of lack of progress in learning. This contrasts with other research which identifies low SES as the most important cause (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming 2014; Van de gaer et al. 2006). For every ten teachers, there are three who agreed with the claim that

Item	Description	(Completely) Agree
1	Non-Dutch speaking pupils should not be allowed to speak their home language at school.	77.3%
2	The most important cause of academic failure of non-Dutch speaking pupils is their insufficient proficiency in Dutch.	78.2%
3	The school library (classroom library, media library) should also include books in the different home languages of the pupils.	12.8%
4	Non-Dutch speaking pupils should be offered the opportunity to learn their home language at school.	6.8%
5	By speaking their home language at school, non-Dutch speaking pupils do not learn Dutch sufficiently.	72.1%
6	Non-Dutch speaking pupils should be offered regular subjects in their home language.	3.2%
7	It is more important that non-Dutch speaking pupils obtain a high level of proficiency in Dutch than in their home language.	44.7%
8	It is in the interest of the pupils when they are punished for speaking their home language at school.	29.1%

Fig. 1 Teachers' monolingual beliefs

pupils should be penalized for speaking their mother tongue in school. Less than 13% of the teacher population who participated in the research felt that school libraries should also hold a collection of books in the pupils' home languages. The latter point needs further qualification, as this finding contrasts rather starkly with the observation that secondary school libraries in Flanders typically harbour a collection of books in French, German, English and so on—the languages taught as second, third and fourth language, respectively, in secondary education. When it comes to the perception of negative effects that multilingualism would have on learning, there appear to be double standards. A distinction is clearly made between (economically viable, prestigious) 'good' multilingualism and (educationally counterproductive) 'bad' multilingualism (Blommaert and Van Avermaet 2008). Slembrouck (forthcoming) makes a comparable analysis of the unequal distribution of opportunities for learning particular foreign languages in the Flemish context and points to the existence of a spatio-temporal scale of relative proximity/distance. 'Closer' are the languages of neighbouring countries learnt for purposes of trade, tourism and cultural exchange with widely available and long-established 'mainstream' opportunities of learning, while more 'distant' are the minority languages, for example, Turkish, Arabic and so on, with more recent and more scarcely resourced 'niche' opportunities for learning. While English and French are very much taken-for-granted competencies presupposed in the secondary school diplomas of prospective teachers as they enter into higher education, a strategic investment in the learning of a minority language is not even an available option in teacher training today.

Common opinion identifies multilingualism in a minority language as a problem and a cause of learning deficit. Youngsters who speak another language at home than the language of instruction are easily classified as 'pupils with a language problem'. Sometimes they are perceived as not very proficient, and even as 'not having much language' (even in their home language). The monolingual response is fraught with various other difficulties. Pulinx et al. (2014) point to a negative correlation between the strength of monolingual beliefs and confidence in learners (see Fig. 2). The vertical axis represents confidence in the learners (from '1 = low confidence' to '5 = high confidence'), whereas the horizontal axis

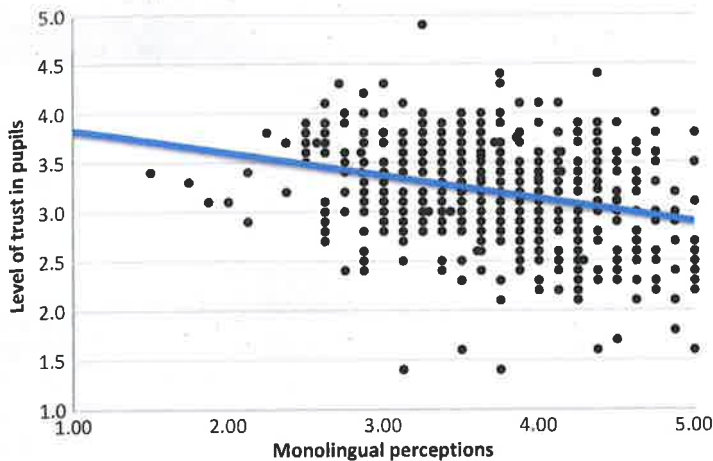


Fig. 2 Monolingual perceptions and trust in learners

represents the degree of monolingual belief (from '1 = mainly multilingual' to '5 = mainly monolingual').

The blue line in the figure denotes the negative correlation between the two dimensions. Strong monolingual beliefs appear to go together with less confidence in the multilingual learner. Research in educational sociology will add to this observation that low confidence in a learner's abilities tends to result in lower expectations and impacts on the behaviour of both teachers and learners, who adjust their self-expectations to the teacher's authoritative judgements. The Pygmalion/Golem-effect (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968) in its turn results in diminished cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes for learners. Well-intended as the belief in a monolingual approach based on immersion into the dominant language may be, the question must be faced if it does not result in exactly the opposite: low success fostered by low self-expectations.

Monolingual Versus Multilingual Education

Bilingual teaching models are often put forward as a viable alternative to a monolingual approach. Certainly in the Flemish context, the debate about this predates the current situation in which urban school contexts

are deeply affected by migration-linked diversity. With these more recent developments, questions have shifted essentially in the direction of the most suitable form of language education for pupils with a migration background: monolingual teaching or bi/multilingual teaching?

Advocates of bilingual or multilingual education argue that learners with a migrant background stand to benefit more from education in the first language, in addition to or in combination with education in the second language (García 2009; Cummins 2000). Bilingual teaching models come with the use of more than one language of instruction, as well as the teaching of non-linguistic subjects in another language (e.g., mathematics, world orientation, etc.). Mainstream and specialist opinion in Flanders is mostly in favour of monolingual education, and often common sense is invoked that the locally dominant language is learned more easily through complete immersion. The so-called L2-submersion model is based on three negative assumptions about bilingual education: (i) there is competition between the two languages, (ii) there will be negative transfer ('interference') from L1 to L2 and (iii) time spent on one language will be at the cost of learning the other language (cf. 'time on task'). See for instance Leseman (2000), Scheele et al. (2010) and Verhallen and Schoonen (1998).

The immersion model, referred to locally as *het taalbadmodel*, the 'language bath' model, a metaphoric representation akin to that of being thrown into the ocean in order to learn how to swim, has for more than two decades dominated educational debate in Flanders and has been widely implemented. It has not produced the success hoped for. Inequality in education remains a persistent problem. Yet, few appear to entertain the possibility of an alternative approach. Belief in the immersion model has remained strong, and many responses to immigration-related language differences advocate an even earlier start for parents and their children and with this, 'optimal' conditions of complete immersion.¹ Much of this has been at the expense of any positive value being attributed to the home languages of the students. Within such a framework, there is no place for the use of home language(s), let alone that they would feature explicitly in the curriculum. It is also assumed that their use by low SES learners will hinder progress in the acquisition of the dominant language. Linguistic diversity has largely stayed outside the scope of a recognized

investment in the well-being, self-confidence and motivation of young people, despite publicly articulated opinion of the need to value social and cultural diversity.

Does this mean that we should opt for a bilingual education model? There is strong empirical evidence in support of such a choice (see Butler and Hakuta 2004; Cummins 1979; Hamers and Blanc 2000). Linguistic interdependence and positive transfer between languages have been noted as central arguments. Yet, a more traditional bilingual model does not always result in a miracle solution, as Sierens and Van Avermaet (2014) discuss in their review of the literature. In addition, there are practical limitations to be considered. Today's student population in urban schools in Flanders turns out to be quite diverse and heterogeneous, often with 10 or 20 different languages represented. Traditional bilingual education is not feasible in such contexts. Practical limitations aside, the most important criticism of the classic bilingual model is that the current landscapes of multilingual communication in today's complex social worlds have resulted in fundamental challenges to more traditional and more static sociolinguistic assumptions about language and community (Rampton 1995) and the attendant understanding of multilingualism as 'parallel monolingualisms' (Heller 1999) or 'separate linguistics' (cf. 'the two solitudes assumption', Cummins 2008, which stresses connections in learning effort and gain). As a result of this, bilingual education was organized around principles of spatial and temporal segregation (language homogenous classes and language-specific sessions). Assumptions of this kind clash with more recent empirical observations about multilingual language use (Creese and Blackledge 2010, on 'flexible bilingualism') and insights into the real-time dynamics of multilingual learning. The notion of 'translanguaging' (García 2009) further stresses the flexible ways in which learners move between and freely combine elements from different named languages in everyday communication. Any attempt to bring language use in schools closer to that of the children's lifeworld should take account of the complexities and flexibilities afforded by today's multilingual repertoires. The challenge is therefore just as much theoretical as it is practical, and it touches on more ontological questions about the nature of language and multilingualism.

Functional Multilingual Learning

The 'language bath' response to the contemporary multilingual context of education has not produced the expected results and more traditional bilingual approaches come with limitations, as linguistic diversity continues to increase, and with this, the need for on-the-ground recognition of the many forms of translanguaging which are characteristic of today's multilingual spaces. In contrast with this, public debate has been heavily polarized, with a one-sided belief in L2-submersion and negative causalities attached to the use of other languages in schools. Our advocacy is to transcend the limitations of a binary debate between advocacy for exclusive L2-submersion and traditional bilingual education and to move in the direction of a new multilingual approach to learning in schools which embraces current sociolinguistic realities. Pupils with an immigrant or national or ethnic minority background come to schools equipped with multilingual repertoires. It is better to put these to good use, instead of ignoring them or banning their use. Part of this involves re-framing the factor 'home language' from a negative one ('a problem for learning') into a more positive one ('a resource of learning'). This is possible in an approach which integrates L2-learning with the strengths of multilingual interaction. The cultivation of spaces of translanguaging forms part of this.

Expressed differently, the aim is to bring about a multilingual model of social interaction for learning into the classroom. This includes that we assign a positive value to the languages and varieties in pupils' linguistic repertoires and seek to unlock the learning potential of the translanguaging practices which they bring to the school context, extending their range and fostering their scope for learning. This comes with an active investment in building learners' self-confidence, increased well-being and strengthening commitment to what goes on in school and in the classroom. Given these aims, functional multilingual learning (FML) is about more than admitting translanguaging into the classroom. It is about turning multilingualism into a powerful didactic tool. The languages and language varieties which children bring to school can be treated as didactic capital which can be invested in real-time learning processes, so as to increase children's chances of development and education. In such an

approach, children's multilingual repertoires form a scaffold for supporting the learning of and learning in a second language, as well as learning more generally (van Lier 1996; Saxena 2010; Swain and Lapkin 2013; Rosiers et al. 2015, more specifically in the Flemish context).

Let us discuss one or two examples of this in more detail. A teacher may encourage the pupils to support one another in the home language when performing or preparing a task or during work in small groups. Such a move presupposes that the teacher organizes the interactional environment in a way so as to create opportunities for peer interaction. It involves a temporary relinquishing of teacher control to enable pupils to invest their linguistic resources in the service of a particular assignment (see also Slembrouck and Rosiers 2018, this volume, for an interactional analysis of examples from a kindergarten context). The teacher's role as a mediator is crucial in such a process. Often teachers express concern about the use of L1 in the classroom. They are worried that they cannot check whether a task is performed adequately and whether learning content is exchanged correctly. The negative frame of lack of control can be changed into a more positive one, for instance, when the teacher joins a subgroup of learners, provides feedback on the work done by the group, formulates suggestions to undo an impasse or provides instructions needed for the next stage. As the teachers do not speak the minority language(s), they are likely to do so in the dominant language. Added value will be that learning processes are steered in a particular direction or insight is fostered into the adoption of problem-solving protocols. In doing so, a teacher is likely to depend on an L2-paraphrase of information exchanged among the pupils in L1. The latter will strengthen what has been learned, while providing an indirect instrument for monitoring learning conduct in the L1. In these examples of FML, different linguistic routes are adopted for learning specific competencies. Learners make use of their full linguistic repertoire, with language learning gains for both L1 and L2.

One of the major advantages of FML is that the pupils' multilingual repertoires become a constant factor in the learning process, without having to construe a parallel curriculum in the home language(s). At the same time, it is not necessary for the teacher to master the minority languages represented in the classroom, though the construction of parallel tools can be considered via digital means. As Van Laere et al. (2016) propose,

a further step can be the integration of a multilingual digital learning tool to provide learners with the opportunity to access academic registers in the L2 and the L1 at the same time. However, the most important gain undoubtedly is that, in a context of FML, diversity is no longer viewed as a problem which results in underachievement or cognitive delay. Instead, it is viewed as an asset which produces surplus value in learning. Diversity deserves a chance, so as to maximize young people's opportunities for learning.

The Home Language in Education Project as a Case Study

The Ghent Home Language in Education project (2009–2012) entailed a pedagogical intervention in four primary schools based on a combination of selective bilingual teaching and FML. Funded by the education department of Ghent city council, it combined a pedagogical implementation with research assessing its impact.

First, the pedagogical implementation. Two of the four participating schools introduced a limited L1 curricular component of initial reading and writing in Turkish (for newcomers and first-, second- and third-generation children of Turkish ancestry). The curricular component spanned the first and second years of primary school, with the introduction of literacy in the L2 being delayed for a couple of months. The 'Turkish' children in the group first received initial L1-literacy. The hypothesis behind this decision is these children would obtain better results for reading and writing in the L2 (Cummins 2000) and, in the longer term, obtain higher proficiency in both languages, compared to children whose L1 is banned from the spaces of school instruction and learning. Simultaneously, the four participating schools introduced a trajectory of FML (spanning the three years of kindergarten and six years of primary education). This came with an investment in sociolinguistic awareness and the fostering of a more positive climate of multiple, multilingual routes to learning. The hypothesis here was that formally welcoming and encouraging the use of the home languages in

the classrooms would result in an increase in well-being and would produce better results for learning Dutch. The implementation was monitored by three coaches from the local educational support service, and it received support from five pedagogic advisors who work for national educational networks. The teachers also received support from project coordinators in the schools (staff capacity drawn from special needs and bridging programmes). Turkish teachers provided the initial L1-literacy, while some schools, which already had a teacher with a Turkish background on their list of staff, could draw on extra support in the activation of forms of FML.

In addition to the pedagogic implementation, the city authorities funded a four-year research project with two research officers to document and detail the process of the pedagogical intervention and examine its results. The methodology was mixed, with quantitative instruments (pre- and post-tests for proficiency in reading L1/L2 and surveys for social-affective effects), as well as qualitative instruments (interviews, participant observation and classroom recordings). The city also invested politically in the project, as is illustrated by the following anecdote. When the local education authority in 2008 concluded, on the basis of the recommendations of a small-scale preliminary investigation (Bultynck et al. 2008), that it was worth investing in the envisaged four-year pedagogical intervention sketched above, the Alderman for Education was summoned by the then Minister of Education. Even though they were members of the same political party, the minister suggested the idea should be dropped, convinced as he was that 'multilingualism leads to zerolingualism'. The Ghent city council ignored the government's advice and decided to proceed nevertheless. In return, the Minister of Education asked for the project to be kept under the media radar, and this low profile was maintained until the very end of the project when the results were reported in some of the national media. The local coalition had a point to prove. The political pressures on the project were never far away, as was clearly felt by the researchers in the various reporting back stages. Managing the project became in some respects a highly reflexive process permeated by tactical considerations which anticipated political reception.

The Results and Implementation of the HLiE Project

The results of the HLiE project can be summarized briefly, while at the same time, they invite a considerable degree of nuanced understanding and insight. For an exhaustive account, we refer to the research report (Ramaut et al. 2013) which was adopted by the city council and can be consulted online.

On the basis of the pre- and post-test findings for Dutch and Turkish proficiency and those for social-affective effects (well-being, self-confidence, involvement, etc.), no hard-and-fast effects were noted for the two schools which had adopted both implementations (L1-literacy initiation and FML), nor for the two schools which had only adopted the FML model. Under the heading of well-being, involvement and socio-affective variables, only one measure was found to be nearly significant ($p = 0.056$), for example, an increase in self-confidence in the learner population of the two schools with FML goals only, compared to the control schools. Also for the language-learning goals (effects on L2-proficiency), no significant differences could be noted between the schools which participated in the experiment and the control groups. The school populations had shifted in the course of the implementation, and this had resulted in a sample that was too small for a statistical analysis of progress in L1-proficiency (reading skills). On the basis of the remaining population, it was not possible to draw any reliable conclusions.

The 'hard' effects provide one side of the coin. The picture is much more nuanced and becomes more complex when we turn to the qualitative side of the coin, with an emphasis on the findings for process evaluation. In the survey at the end of the four-year intervention, teachers were quasi-unanimous in their statements about the impact on the children's proficiency in Dutch: according to the teachers in kindergarten, the impact was limited; for the primary school teachers, it was almost non-existent. However, when we examine the findings of the semi-structured interviews with a smaller section of the surveyed population, we see that the teachers offer a more positive picture.

'I think they [the children] are much more engaged with language'. (T, 3rd year of kindergarten)

'They [the children] can now use their home language, but I don't have the impression that they use less Dutch as a result. No, certainly not'. (T, 1st year of primary school)

'Well, I do think that they feel more self-confident, that they are more at ease, but does this effectively improve their Dutch, I'm not sure. I have doubts about this'. (T, 2nd year of primary school)

The Turkish teachers who conducted the L1-literacy modules noted positive effects in their interviews on L1-proficiency in Turkish. They mention enriched vocabulary and an improvement in the use of standard Turkish (vocabulary and pronunciation).

'At first, and it did take quite a bit to get to the time they had mastered the system [of sounds and letters]. So I couldn't do much for comprehensive reading. It's only seven and a half hours [per week] and you invest a lot of time in this. But for the pupils it's really ... they really learn to read and write well in Turkish. It's a pity that after January I'll have to stop, because then it's all in Dutch'. (T, Turkish, 1st year of primary school)

For the social-affective effects of the HLiE project, the stance of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews was more explicitly positive. The questionnaire results included a general positive effect on learner well-being. This was confirmed in the interviews, while teachers mentioned an increase in commitment to what goes on in the classroom and improved personal relations between teachers and pupils. Moreover, the teachers also noted an increase in self-confidence to speak up in class.

'I feel that some children have truly opened up. The fear to speak up is gone'. (T, 2nd and 3rd year of kindergarten)

'It's great to see children like that, you see them, they show respect and feel at ease. That you pay attention to their language. Personally I think that makes them flourish'. (T, transition year kindergarten-primary school)

'Whether they feel better in class? I think so yes. Well, yes, they can now just be themselves'. (T, 1st and 2nd year of primary school)

'They are really interacting in a task-oriented way and helping each other'. (T, 2nd year of primary school)

'I think the relationship is closer, perhaps I should say more bonding'. (T, 2nd year of primary school)

The Turkish teachers, on the other hand, noted the pupils' increased motivation to read Turkish.

'Now they are all interested in reading. They are more motivated to do so. I think it's wonderful to see how children flourish by learning to read in Turkish first, really'. (T, Turkish, 1st year of primary school)

Teachers also reported that openness towards the pupils' home languages had resulted in a change in their own pedagogical–didactic approach. All teachers reported that they had accepted the use of the home language during informal moments in the classroom and outside the classroom. The teachers in kindergarten responded more positively to the spontaneous use of the children's home language in interaction, compared to the primary school teachers. Further reporting included that language awareness activities now also featured in their lessons (again, the adoption in kindergarten being more systematic than in primary education), and some teachers consciously adopted the use of the home languages during peer-tutoring as a principle.

Most teachers in the sample report positive change in their attitudes and perceptions, that is, an increased awareness of linguistic diversity and more appreciation of their pupils' multilingualism.

'I've grown in the use of multiple languages in class. My appreciation of the children's language use has increased'. (T, primary education, newcomers)

Classroom observations over the four-year period indicate there has been an evolution in the presence and use of home languages in the classrooms, for teachers in both kindergarten and primary education. During the preliminary enquiry (in 2008, before the start of the implementation), the researchers observed how use of the home language in kindergarten was 'tolerated' and in some cases actively stimulated in order to

facilitate mutual comprehension or during work in small groups. In primary education, home language use had been admitted only in some cases, but not given any further attention. It was 'tolerated' during more informal moments, but it was not talked about. There were also a few teachers who drew upon a child's home language occasionally, for example, during counting routines or to sing a song. In contrast, four years later, variation in practice was noted in kindergarten, ranging from use of the home language in isolated occurrences, detached from the topic of the lesson, to more extended uses, for example, by inviting parents to tell a story in the L1 or by encouraging the children to use their home language when performing a task. In the primary school contexts, there were still a few teachers who, after its introduction, didn't pay much further attention to it, while others had made a leap forward by integrating their use in classroom activities, for example, stimulating its use during group work or peer support exchanges.

Most teachers changed their behaviour. Granted a few exceptions in the primary school contexts, most were now willing to strategically rely on home language use in instances where pupils helped each other and some teachers had also taken more firm steps in the direction of forms of FML with an active constructive role for home language use in the learning process.

'It's no longer new, it's become a part of their [= the children's] daily behaviour. It's normal. For instance, helping each other in the home language: it is no longer considered unusual. We [= the teachers] no longer pay attention to this. And the children's fear to use one's own language has disappeared. Children who come from another school still experience difficulties taking this step. I also think that it's more important in kindergarten than in early primary education, because they really need this a lot more. Their Dutch is still insufficiently developed to express themselves'. (T, 1st year of primary education, commenting on an observation)

'A Turkish pupil is telling us about a wedding party she attended last weekend. She tells us what she's eaten at the party, but she can't name a certain ingredient in Dutch. The teacher asks her to draw it on the blackboard and also asks for the colour of the vegetable. The pupil points to the colour of her sweater and says it is light. The teacher continues: *could it be a pea? Who can help?* The pupil responds spontaneously: *in Turkish we say*

fasulye. The teacher asks the other pupils whether they are familiar with this. One pupil knows what it is, but she doesn't know the word in Dutch: *it's green*, and she draws it on the board. The teacher asks: *could it be string beans?* There is some discussion about the colour (green, yellow). One of the Turkish pupils asks if she can look up the translation on the computer. The teacher gives permission and the Turkish pupil continues with her story of the wedding'. (observation, T, 3rd and 4th year of primary school).

The positive results must be understood within the context of school-specific trajectories of implementation. The initial literacy modules in Turkish required a considerable investment in time, coordination and logistics. There were considerable differences in the trajectories of the two schools who participated in this part of the intervention: closer guidance and more depth in one case, and a slow and more difficult process that was moreover hindered by lapses in communication and coordination in the other case. As to the goal of developing a practice based on FML, we can equally note that there were wide-ranging activities in three of the four schools, while the fourth school limited its actions. Differences in the amount of internal coaching contributed to these developments: very intensive in one school, diminishing in the course of the project in the second school and altogether weak and minimal in the third school (more or less comparable to what was happening in the least active school). The differences at school level correspond in part with differences between classrooms, while, like Hattie (2009), we also observed considerable differences among teachers who participated in the intervention.

Some Reflections on the Research Project's Evolving Relationships with National and Local Educational Policy Makers

Where did the HLiE project and its results take us policy-wise, as a local initiative and as an intervention-driven project of a particular type? Looked at internationally, the HLiE project is certainly not unique as a longitudinal project funded by a local educational authority. Nor is the specific combination of a pedagogical experiment which is twinned with

a separate scientific assessment of its effects (e.g., Head Start—see US Department of Health and Human Services; Administration for Children and Families 2010). In the Flemish context, however, both were unusual, and the point is indeed worth stressing that the HLiE project was a local municipal initiative. A local education authority had made available funds to pursue a pedagogically innovative approach and, at the same time, it wanted to assess impact so as to inform future policy. As a research team, we were sympathetic to such an approach. As a marked departure from the one-size-fits-all formulations characteristic of national policy directives, part of the attraction resided in a scale of intervention and research that was manageable ethnographically. The intervention was context-specific by being informed by a local understanding of policy issues which were widely debated at a national level ('what can the city schools do to address the challenges posed by linguistic diversity and educational underachievement?'). The research design which accompanied the pedagogical intervention enabled close and sustained observation of a limited number of sites (four schools only), while also allowing pre- and post-measurements on the basis of representative samples that would allow necessary generalization to the city's primary schools. A major role in this was played by the city council's own aspirations to develop a small-scale alternative and an assessment of its impact as a basis for an implementation across the schools in its network, should the results prove to be encouraging. At the same time, the council set high expectations by insisting that reliable research findings should be presented in a way which settled political debate.

As noted above, although originating in local policy considerations, the project and the city council's decision did not pass unnoticed. Even before the actual start of the project, local decision-making was implicated in national debate, resulting in friction between national and local levels of decision-making. Did the implementation entail a violation of the federal/regional language laws? And, although the Flemish framework did foresee the possibility of limited educational provisions, partly by way of 'experiments' and partly by making use of financial resources earmarked for minority pupils, this did not stop the then national education minister from publicly voicing doubts about the feasibility of the planned intervention. Following his 'gut feeling' con-

viction that 'multilingualism leads to zerolingualism' and his insistence that the project could proceed if a low profile was kept, political debate was never out of sight in the four-year period that followed it.

In early 2013, the presentation of the project results to the local Education Committee was preceded by an informal stage of reporting to the Alderman for Educational Affairs. The timing of the informal report was shortly before that year's local elections, and everyone in the room was aware that the committee meeting itself would come after the election date, yet before the start of the incoming coalition. The coalition moved from a social democrat-liberal one to social democrat-liberal-green one, with responsibility for the Education Department being handed over from the social democratic party to an alderman of the green party. Of course, we can only speculate how the successive stages of reporting would have fared, had the political landscape been completely redrawn and a radically different coalition had come into power. Our most salient recollection of the report preparation stage was that re-entry into the world of political debate came with a narrowed interest. Initially at least, the question 'What do the figures of the pre- and post-language tests tell us?' was uppermost on the minds of the education authority, and undoubtedly, this was also due to the order in which we had presented the findings. In the foreground were the apparently pessimistic conclusions that initial literacy in the home language (two schools) and the creation of a sociolinguistic environment in which the home language can be used (all four schools) did not result in better scores for L2-learning or for social-affective effects (with the exception of a noted increase in learner self-confidence). In the meetings, it took quite a bit of discussion to rescue the more positive findings of the qualitative part of the research from disappearing into the background. Eventually, research team and alderman settled on an overarching picture which answered the wider question, 'What do the research findings tell us?' with equal attention paid to qualitative research findings. While the figures did not show a positive effect, they did not show a negative impact either, and the qualitative findings indicated a more positive experience. Needless to add, considerations of political pragmatism had by that point entered into the conversations. For social scientists, this may be a difficult balance to maintain, but it is certainly naive to think that, as scientists executing policy-driven funded research, one does not get implicated in pragmatic, political considerations of strategic representation.

Our cautiously formulated recommendation to the education committee became that we advocated in favour of the 'A'-goals (a sociolinguistic climate which is positively oriented to multilingualism and stimulates FML), and less in favour of the 'B'-goals (bearing in mind that the implementation of a parallel literacy trajectory in the home language had been too short and limited in scope, to expect any real success from it). It was a refreshing experience to note that the local education committee as a whole responded positively, across the coalition-opposition divide. (This included representatives from political parties that would traditionally draw a more legalistic or nationalist 'Dutch only'-card.) Was this because we had voiced modest aspirations for the future? Perhaps so. Our experience in the committee stage certainly underlined that with a realistic message it is possible to secure a broad consensus. Shortly after the new coalition came into power, an active local policy around multilingualism in schools was implemented across the schools in the city's own network, including the adoption of FML (see also the published manual by Gielen and Isçi 2015). We were not part of the conversation leading to this particular decision. Sometimes, social scientists are in the conversation with the politicians, and sometimes they are the topic of the conversation. Sometimes, decisions with considerable impact are taken without consulting the scientists. This is part of the experience of being in an expert role. When in the conversations with the political world of local authority decision-making, social scientists are not necessarily comfortable with all aspects of the roles which they have to take up, nor do they necessarily see themselves as well-prepared and well-equipped for this, partly because of the way in which the world of 'scientific truth' competes with that of 'political adversity'.

Some Reflections on a 'Mixed Design'

We noted above how the policy makers spontaneously expressed a more immediate interest in quantitative results and how they needed to be persuaded to engage with the more qualitative insights. In retrospect, this was a somewhat remarkable development, because at the onset of the project, the mixed design had been carefully negotiated with the education department. It is worth reflecting on how the separate qualitative and quantitative parts were managed during the four-year project,

including the role which they played in shaping the project and the representation of its results. Is the conclusion to be drawn here that, in a number of respects, a quantitative logic took over?

First, it must be noted that it is still true that, in managing a research project over a longer period of time, the quantitative parts are more predictable in scope and easier to manage in terms of task schedules. Qualitative research is more open-ended. It is more unpredictable in terms of how much and what kind of data will be yielded. It is more time consuming in the analysis stage and more vulnerable in terms of managing deadlines within allotted time frames.

Secondly, having concluded the four-year project, masses of qualitative data (especially recorded classroom sessions) still await detailed analysis. Despite best possible planning and time management practices, there hadn't been sufficient time within the four-year period to do this.

A third relevant observation is that it continues to be a serious challenge to convince non-academic audiences and some academic audiences of the value and merits of qualitative insights. Figures do not tend to be disputed: their aura is one of objectivity and absoluteness, whereas qualitative observations, even when systematically and carefully sampled and processed, tend to be much more easily dismissed as 'opinion' or 'anecdote', and emblematic accounts are often countered without a blush by the receiver's own personal anecdotes of one-off experience. In the case of the HLiE project, the figures were inconclusive (admittedly, with a number of methodological caveats), but the assessment from the teachers, apparent in interview data and field observations, was positive overall. How does one weigh the strategic importance of quantitative results against qualitatively obtained and strongly expressed convictions across a population of teachers?² It is a question that continues to occupy us.

Some Reflections on a Channelled Conceptualization of Multilingualism

The question must also be asked where the HLiE project is taking us as an enquiry of the dynamics of contemporary urban multilingualism. A further series of observations therefore concerns the conceptual construal

of 'multilingualism' and how this manifested itself in the project's lifespan. The project team started out with strong initial concerns which included questions such as, do we need to re-think bilingualism and multilingual education in the light of conditions of linguistically heterogeneous populations, often with a high number of different home languages represented in a single classroom? And, if so, how do we go about this? Moreover, recent work on the nature of multilingualism in contexts of globalization and immigration has come with a fundamental critique of the idea of multilingualism as 'separate monolingualisms'. Yet, when we look at how the contemporary diversity of multilingual classrooms featured in the implementation and the parallel research project, two points must be noted which are arguably subject to this critique: (i) a selection to concentrate only on Turkish as a home language and (ii) a reliance on existing test materials for the two languages involved. Both were pragmatic choices made in response to a set of practical considerations of time, scope and manageability. As a consequence, linguistically heterogeneous classroom populations were only selectively included in the quantitative part of the research project and in the implementation of the 'B'-goals of the pedagogical intervention.

A continued concern therefore remains: did we actually test 'multilingual proficiencies'? For instance, the reading comprehension tests that we used do not tell us anything about the test takers' capacity to switch or move between named languages. The test situations did not come with a potential for pupils to translanguage while taking the test. We tested reading comprehension in Turkish and Dutch, and we did so separately following the logic and practice of large-scale standardized testing. The larger realization is that we still appear to be quite a few steps removed from adequately conceptualizing an assessment of multilingual proficiency. As the 'two solitudes' assumption is more strongly present in the world of testing than it is in the interactional arenas of classrooms, the quantitative part of our research continued to be largely informed by a similar, possibly questionable, baseline, viz., that multilingual proficiency can be captured adequately by conducting tests in two languages, on separate occasions and with separate instruments for each language. As a result, language-specific proficiency is tested rather than multilingual competence. While sociolinguistic regimes, as the

HLE project testifies, are perhaps more open and amenable to change-inducing interventions than is often assumed, it is also true that existing sociolinguistic regimes may well be reproduced in the shaping of sociolinguistic research. Moreover, some of this reproduction may come 'sneaking in through the backdoor', for instance, as a result of practical constraints and a reliance on existing instruments. Somewhat paradoxically, while the HLE intervention sought to change teachers' perceptions in relation to multilingualism, the use of monolingual tests steered things in the opposite direction when it came to assessing their impact. A more global methodological approach which invites attention to all aspects of project management is being invited, and this must come with more detailed scrutiny and careful consideration of the choices that are being made 'en route'.

Some Reflections on Intervention Research

A fourth and final set of notes concerns the implications of a situation in which a pedagogical implementation is accompanied by a scientific project running parallel to it. The HLE project is an instance of 'action research' (Reason and Bradbury 2001), and this also comes with a set of ethical considerations: ethics vis-à-vis the world of science versus ethics vis-à-vis the world out there. This is a field of tension between 'scientific integrity' and 'social accountability'. While the adequacy of observations is premised on refraining from any interventions which shape the conditions of what is being researched, moral citizenship comes with a duty not to deny expertise in situations where they can make a real difference. In the HLE context, the teams struck a middle course, and we would like to think that we did not compromise ourselves. As for the two research officers, we insisted on a strict separation between the research project and the pedagogical implementation, but as principal investigators, we nevertheless positioned ourselves as 'open' to consultation requests relevant to the implementation. For the two researcher officers, the remit of their activities excluded any involvement in the pedagogical intervention. The principal investigators, on the other hand, were frequently consulted for their pedagogical expertise. Crossing the boundaries

between implementation and research project is in the run of a four-year project at times inevitable (e.g., the PI's held presentations for an audience of school advisors which was also attended by HLiE stakeholders; general advice was given to the Director of the Local Education Department on the sociolinguistic management of a pedagogical intervention). The question which must be raised remains a difficult one to answer: what are justifiable forms of boundary crossing? Any answer must also recognize—in line with current work in education—the potential and strengths of close partnerships between practitioners and researchers (Coburn et al. 2013).

Conclusion

Politicians, education experts and other stakeholders may be disappointed about the lack of 'hard' evidence pointing at a positive effect of home language use or parallel literacy instruction in the home language on the pupils' reading skills in Dutch. Is 'disappointment' in order here? There is a tendency with researchers and recipients to be disappointed when research fails to register direct and significant effects. However, the absence of effects can be important, too. In schools, the widespread assumption is that the use of multilingual resources negatively impacts on the acquisition of the dominant language or the language of instruction. Hence, the fact that both factors do not impact negatively is in this case highly significant: active multilingualism in schools does not occur at the expense of cognitive and linguistic advancement in the dominant language. The other question one must address is whether significant positive effects could have been noted in such a short period of time. In today's world, intervention-driven research must quickly come up with significant positive effects. If it doesn't, the intervention is quickly dismissed as ineffectual. In the context of intervention-led research programmes such as the HLiE project, how much of the four-year period of its run is effectively spent on the intervention itself? Was it realistic to expect demonstrable positive effects over such a period of time, especially as we know that processes of language learning are longitudinal processes with considerable individual variation and often characterized

by an irregular trajectory of achievements (Levin et al. 2003; Verheyden et al. 2012). Often we note the effects at the level of individual learners only many years later. We also need to consider the role of intervening variables such as well-being, commitment, self-confidence and how these contribute to school success, as well as teacher dispositions. In the case of the HLiE project, the quantitative findings showed a growth in self-confidence among the learners. The qualitative findings point to enhanced well-being, an increase in commitment and the development of more interactive learning environments. Moreover, the qualitative findings in which the teachers' evolving responses to the pedagogical intervention were mapped are more explicitly positive and hint at an experience which radically changed their perceptions of multilingual pupils and their functioning in a school environment, including a new way of looking at the difficulties and challenges which pupils and teachers experience. The implication is that it may be worth investing more in the registration of the processes of change that need to be situated somewhere in between intervention and measured effects.

The HLiE experience has also raised fundamental issues about project planning and management in a context of policy development. One central question remains: how to develop leverage in the context of a national framework for the provision and development of multilingual approaches which—paradoxically—need to be developed in a more local and context-sensitive way. More than language planning, today's multilingual and multicultural context calls for language policy management which is process-oriented, involves cycles of analysis, intervention and assessment, and attends both to macro dimensions of national and institutional policy and to micro dimensions of local agency (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987; see also Jernudd and Nekvapil 2012: 33ff.). In the HLiE project, processual insights were very much at the forefront, because in each of the four participating schools, the implementation of the intervention had followed its own trajectory, with considerable variation in the extent to which the HLiE project's goals had been explicitly adopted and embraced by the school. Further work is needed on how to translate awareness of the context-specificity of processes and their outcomes into a practical contribution to national policy making.

Notes

1. Some historical context is necessary here. Originally, the immersion model presented itself as a fast-track model for foreign language learning, which was at no point assumed to threaten functioning in a learner's first language (cf. early immersion programmes for military personnel in the USA in the 1950s). In the present Flemish context, the idea of immersion for purposes of learning has been caught up in a rhetoric of fast-track integration through the use of the local, national language. As a result, immersion as a model of language learning became ideologically 'cloaked' and its many possible variants were lost sight of, for example, selective immersion (only some subjects), two-way immersion with mixed populations of L1 and L2 users of the two languages involved and so on. Immersion became a matter of 'politics' rather than of 'pedagogy'.
2. In passing, it must be added that we did not interview the children. Given the ages involved, it wasn't easy to do this, but (admittedly) it is a gap in the research design.

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