In Other Words: Maltese Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Cross-linguistic Practices and Flexible Language Pedagogies in Bilingual and Multilingual English Language Classes.

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Abstract

As a result of globalisation, bilingualism and multilingualism are becoming more of a norm rather than an exception and speaking two or more languages is associated with multiple benefits. Bilingual social identities are shaped by language acquisition and socialisation, and educators construct their own teacher identities and pedagogies through their past personal, educational, and professional experiences.

This study provides a basis for critical reflection and discussion amongst English language primary school Maltese teachers, to explore how their bilingual identities affect their pedagogical practices. The study probes into teacher's perceptions on whether, why and how cross-linguistic pedagogies are beneficial within bilingual and multilingual language classroom settings. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine purposely selected primary school teachers, each with over ten years teaching experience, to explore their bilingual identities and beliefs, how being bilingual may affect their pedagogical practices, and to investigate whether they believe they are using cross-linguistic practices during English lessons.

The process of data collection and analysis highlighted the fact that educators' perceived pedagogies, beliefs, and language preferences stem from their own personal, educational, and teaching experiences, and are embedded in Malta's socio-cultural context. Maltese teachers believe that they use fluid language practices in their classrooms as a natural part of their daily communicative practices, and as a means of reaching out to all their students. However, they are uncertain about the benefits of these practices, and of how they can strategically utilise them in a structured manner. Furthermore, as a result of recent demographic shifts in Malta, teachers are raising concerns about the new challenges they are facing related to multilingualism.

This study supports previous research advocating the use of fluid and hybridised language practices such as translanguaging as the way forward in meeting the super-diversity of today's classrooms. Demographic changes on the island call for an appraisal of the pedagogical use of judiciously hybridising languages in order to provide a socially just and equitable education for all. In view of these findings, recommendations are made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of initial teacher education programmes and professional practice. In conclusion, in view of the limitations of the study, recommendations are made for further research, as to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my *papa,* who flew to a better place half way through my PhD journey. A man of very few words, but with a heart of gold, and patience beyond compare. His love will sustain me forever.

I also dedicate this work to my beloved *nanna* who was a great scholar of *L-Universita tal-ħajja* (The University of Life). Although she had little formal schooling, she was a wise, clever, and compassionate woman, with ideas that were way beyond her time. Her teachings and advice will always form an essential part of the woman I am today.

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I would like to thank all my wonderful participants for their cooperation and for keeping my spirits high. I feel privileged that I was given the opportunity to delve into their lives, as they so graciously and generously gave me an insight of their personal and professional experiences, of the many challenges they face, and how these are impacting their teaching.

I would also like to thank my beautiful children Francesca and Luca for their unconditional love and support, and for being my "study buddies" during long nights fuelled by tea and mutual words of encouragement. I am grateful to my mother for believing in me, even if she does not always understand my constant quest for knowledge and lifelong learning. A special, loving thought goes my father in heaven, who supported me in his own quiet way during the beginning of this journey, before he abruptly departed this life. It was not easy to carry on pursuing this journey without his physical presence, but I know that his spirit will always live on inside my heart.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Study

This research study focuses on bilingual teachers' identities and the way in which their language backgrounds impact their attitudes, views, and perceived pedagogical practices. Educators construct their own teacher identities and pedagogies through their past personal, educational, and professional experiences. Teachers' views on language use are often linked to their biographies, and may be rooted in language purism, thus favouring language separation, or embrace more fluid language practices.

Bilingualism is an inherent part of our Maltese identity, and bilingual education as practised in Malta may be defined as teaching children both Maltese and English simultaneously, with both languages also being used as languages of instruction (Camilleri Grima, 2013a, 2013b; Milton, 2016; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019; 2020). When children are exposed to different languages, this supports their cognitive development and their overall learning abilities (Bialystok, 2001; Wei, 2007; Marian, Faroqi-Shah, Kaushanskaya, Blumenfeld and Slieng, 2009; Bialystok, 2011; Byers-Heinlein, 2017), and hence, the current focus on societal diversity has led to a further interest in, and understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism in education (García, 2009; Baker, 2011). Flexible multilingual practices, including codeswitching and translanguaging are replacing previously advocated concepts which favoured a strict separation of languages (Otheguy, García and Reid, 2015, 2019). Within the local scenario, however, cross-linguistic pedagogy is still in its embryonic stages, with many teachers feeling insecure and not adequately skilled in this area, especially when teaching multilingual students (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020). This study focuses on Malta as one country experiencing a global trend of diversity, focusing on its unique bilingual situation which forms part of a historical legacy, together with the current demographic shifts

which are transforming Malta into a multilingual society (Facciol, Buhagiar, Consiglio and Randon, 2015; Farrugia, 2017; Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019; Caruana, Scaglione and Vassallo Gauci, 2019; Paris and Farrugia, 2019; Bonello, 2020). As a result of globalisation, bilingualism and multilingualism are becoming increasingly widespread, and therefore, multilingual education is currently the way forward to educate children within changing societies (García, 2009; Baker, 2011). In this respect, this study aims to explore if Maltese primary school teachers embrace this view, and how they believe they are putting it into practice.

The participating teachers' views towards English and Maltese, and the use of L1 in L2 language lessons were qualitatively investigated through extensive face-to-face semi-structured interviews, which provided me with an insight into their professional practice, and the reasons motivating it. Teachers' narratives are often rich and insightful, as personal and professional "stories" may be used to reflect further on the values and beliefs which may shape and form their practice. As Kelchtermans (2009, p. 260) puts it,

> teachers' talking about their professional lives and practices is very often spontaneously framed in narrative form. They use anecdotes, metaphors, images, and other types of storytelling to recall, share, exchange, or account for their experiences in classrooms and schools.

The impetus for the study was a result of a personal interest in bilingual teachers' views and practices, and in innovative cross-linguistic practices such as García's (2009) concept of "translanguaging" and "transglossia", "where different languages are not separated, but interrelate dynamically within globalised, multilingual communities" (Panzavecchia and Little, 2020, p. 112). My own pride in my bilingual identity, my many years of experience both as an early years and junior years schoolteacher, my role as a visiting lecturer responsible for the

development of Initial Teachers' Education, and Teachers' Professional Development programmes, together with my recent engagement as deputy head of school, sparked an interest in Malta's unique language practices, specifically those related to education. The research questions addressed in the current study (see section 1.3: The Research Questions Guiding My Study in this Chapter) focus on Maltese primary school teachers' current views on cross-linguistic practices, and the ways in which they feel they are supporting bilingual and multilingual students in their class.

Hence, the main objective of this study is to shed more light on current linguistic practices, as well as on educators' own views about Malta's bilingual status, and on the current transition from bilingualism to multilingualism, in light of the island's recent demographic shifts and migration trends. Teachers' voices are powerful and emancipatory since they may have a transformative effect on social policies and practice (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). These views enhance our understanding of bilingual and multilingual pedagogies, and they may also have implications on professional practice and the drawing up of policies, continuous professional development and initial teacher education programmes (Panzavecchia and Little, 2020).

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This study focuses on an academic journey that was ignited by my personal, long-standing fascination for Malta's unique socio-linguistic situation. This passion had inevitable implications on my choice of research, which was eventually moulded through my research questions, literature review, research design and methodology.

- In **Chapter 1** of this thesis, I briefly describe the choice of topic, the aims of my study, together with my biography and positionality in view of the topic being explored. Additionally, I provide my audience with an overview of the Maltese context and background of my study together with a discussion on how teachers' personal

experiences and biographical backgrounds affect their professional identities, and how their perceptions, attitudes and perspectives may impact language use in class.

- **Chapter 2** explores the literature which constitutes the framework of my study. This chapter focuses elaborately on language use, as the concepts of Bilingualism, Multilingualism, Codeswitching and Translanguaging are clearly defined and investigated through the lens of several theoretical stances.

- **Chapter 3** describes the Research Design and Methodology in detail, with particular focus on the context and the participants of this study. My own role as researcher, together with philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks, ethical issues, and other matters related to the rigour and reliability of my study are elaborately reviewed and discussed.

- **Chapter 4** presents the findings, analysis, and interpretation of the results, linking them back to the theoretical underpinnings discussed in Chapter 2.

- In conclusion, **Chapter 5** answers the research questions through a reflection on the major findings previously presented in Chapter 4, whilst providing a set of guidelines together with key recommendations to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners. Finally, suggestions for future research, and the recognised limitations of this study will be evaluated.

1.3 The Research Questions Guiding my Study

The aim of this doctoral study is to draw on a framework from linguistic research in order to explore teachers' language ideologies in local English language classrooms through the following research questions, which shall be further discussed in Chapter 4, and answered in Chapter 5 of this Study:

1. **Have Maltese primary school teachers' own personal and professional experiences related to bilingual identity and language use shaped their pedagogy in any way?**

2. **What are the participants' current perceived practices and perceptions of using codeswitching and translanguaging strategies in bilingual ELT classrooms? What benefits, if any, are associated with their use?**

3. **What recommendations can be made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners in view of these findings?**

1.4 My Biography and Positionality

I embarked on this doctoral journey, fully aware of my own bilingual identity, my personal experiences as both language learner and teacher, together with my own family and cultural background. This has undeniably impacted my choice of research topic, my methodology, and my data analysis. Emerald and Carpenter (2017) claim that "as scholars in pursuit of understanding of the social world, our own place in that world and experience of that world can be one of our first objects of inquiry" (p. 29). They further claim that when we publicise our own personal experiences, these "transcend the private and personal and assume political agency" (p. 28). Therefore, I believe that providing an insight into my own language biography, contextualises this research study, whilst giving it added depth and dimension.

I was born to parents with diverse language backgrounds. My mother hailed from the south of Malta, (where Maltese is the predominant language), whilst my father hailed from the northern part of Malta from an English-speaking family. My parents spoke to me in English, possibly because of the positive connotations it holds (Camilleri, 1996; Caruana, 2007; Francesconi, 2010; Mifsud and Vella, 2018b; Vella, 2019), whilst my grandparents, whom I was very close to, spoke to me in a mixture of Maltese and English (issues related to the use of English and Maltese in Malta shall be discussed in section 1.6.2 of this chapter).

I attended church kindergarten and primary schools, where the English language was not only promoted, but it was actually a school policy to speak in English at all times (apart from the Maltese lesson), and thus worked on a system which resembled subtractive bilingualism (Baker, 2011), where the child's home language was somewhat taken away.

My secondary and post-secondary schooling was in both church and state education mixed environments, where I could practise speaking in both English and Maltese. I think that this also helped me to achieve balanced bilingualism, since I consider myself to be equally proficient in both languages. English was always my favourite subject and I developed an early passion for vocabulary and etymology in my teenage years. Although I am fluent in both our national languages, I must admit that I do prefer to use the English language as a means to communicate, to speak to my own children, to read, to write and to teach. This is not triggered by elitist motives (this issue shall be discussed in section 1.6.2 of this chapter), but simply because I feel more comfortable using the English language. On the other hand, I am also hugely protective of the Maltese language, and believe that more should be done to preserve it as our heritage language and as an essential part of our identity.

Despite my passion for books, writing and learning, I did not go on to tertiary education until my late twenties. I graduated as a Primary school teacher specialising in English in my early thirties. I subsequently went on to work as an early years' educator for many years, and eventually moved on to teaching English in junior school. As a teacher I began a distance learning Masters' degree in Language and Communication Impairment in Children, through the University of Sheffield. This degree led me to take a more profound and informed interest in language acquisition and communication, which in turn, turned into a personal passion for language learning and teaching. I am also a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta and at The Institute for Education, where I am involved in initial teacher education, and educators'

professional development, and I have recently been assigned the role of deputy head within a primary school.

My interest in translanguaging was quite coincidental. I did not initially set out to research cross-linguistic practices *per se* but was rather interested in researching bilingual practices. I was always interested in bilingualism, due to the unique situation in Malta, which I deem fascinating. When I decided to embark on this doctoral adventure, I started looking into bilingual practices to find a focus for my study. This is when I stumbled upon the concept of cross-linguistic pedagogy, and specifically translanguaging, which I found very intriguing.

When I taught both Maltese and English within the early years, I admit that I probably gave more importance to the English lesson, as I always felt more comfortable teaching in English than in Maltese. In hindsight, I realise that my classroom was always full of English books and resources, interspersed with only a few in the Maltese language, however this could partially be also due to limited resources available (Camilleri Grima, 2013a). This has recently made me question what message/s I was covertly passing on to the children. I used translanguaging and codeswitching more often during the Maltese, rather than the English lesson, and when this occurred, it was not done as an intentional instructional strategy, but rather as a necessity and only very rarely. As an English teacher, I have always separated languages during both my early years teaching period and more so during my junior school English teaching years. I was in fact a firm advocate of the full immersion monolingual approach, hence avoiding cross-linguistic practices during English lessons, which stance is also backed up by earlier (see Berthold, 1991; Porter, 2000), and more recent (see Dooley, 2007; Jaspers, 2018; Lyster, 2019; Auer, 2020) research. I believed that my students should be exposed to English as much as possible, especially since many of them had little or no exposure to the language at home. As a result of opinions formed throughout my own educational journey, I was not in favour of

using Maltese during explanations and for communicative purposes. However, here was this approach, which went completely against this notion, and yet made sense in so many ways. The more I read about flexible multilingual pedagogical approaches, the more intrigued I became. This led me to wish to research it further, keeping an open mind in the process. I hence set off on my journey sitting very much on the proverbial fence.

My four year doctoral journey during which I put my participants' linguistic, educational, social and cultural backgrounds under an analytical lens, was transformative in this respect, since I now believe that the judicious use of L1 during L2 lessons may be beneficial in a variety of ways. Full-immersion strategies do not take the social context of both teachers and students into consideration. Additionally, monolingual pedagogies do not take advantage of L1 as an important teaching and learning resource.

I have learnt that it is does not have to be an "all or nothing" approach, and that full immersion may be utilised during certain parts of the lesson, but I also believe that the judicious and appropriate use of L1 in class is an inclusive concept, thus reaching out to those children who may find it difficult to participate in a learning activity due to linguistic or cultural barriers. Exploring these issues through a personal lens, has made me further aware of how teachers' identities are indeed influential in their beliefs and pedagogies (see section 1.6.2 in this chapter).

However, I also believe in adapting multilingual concepts to each particular bilingual/multilingual context, since when one considers the complexities and uniqueness of diverse linguistic landscapes, one cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Additionally, I also believe that further research on cross-linguistic pedagogy and evidence-based practice is warranted, particularly at local level. These issues will be discussed further in sections 2.3.6 and 2.4.2 of Chapter 2: The Literature Review, and section 5.2.3 of Chapter 5: Conclusion).

1.5 Background and Context of my Study

I shall now provide some background information about Malta's linguistic heritage, which has shaped its bilingual status and educational system. My aim for doing this is to introduce my readers to the distinctive bilingual context of Malta, which provides an important backdrop to this research study.

1.5.1 Malta's linguistic heritage

The island of Malta is situated in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, directly south of Italy and north of Libya. It is 27 kilometers long and 14.5 kilometers wide, with an area of 246 square kilometers. Malta's strategic position has contributed to the development of the Maltese language, which is the accretion of borrowed elements from mainly Arabic, English and Romance (Fabri, 2010; Francesconi, 2010; Vella, 2012). Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is the only official national Semitic language in Europe, and moreover, that it is written in Latin script and in a left-to-right direction (Francesconi, 2010; Paris and Farrugia, 2019). The heterogeneity of Maltese has not only enabled it to survive but possibly also to flourish (Fabri, 2010; Camilleri Grima, 2013b), despite the fact it is spoken only in Malta and by Maltese expatriates. The National language of Malta is Maltese, which is the dominant language of most Maltese nationals (Fabri, 2010; Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019). Most Maltese people, however, are considered to be bilingual, although the level of proficiency varies widely among individuals (Vella, 2012).

Bilingualism is a situation which is an age-old characteristic of Malta. Arabic was introduced into Malta in ca. 870 AD and this led to a continuous co-existence of at least two languages on the island. This has included Arabic, Latin, Italian (Sicilian), French, English, and Maltese (Caruana, 2007; Fabri, 2010; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020). The presence of English in Malta is a result of the island's colonial heritage. English was initially introduced in schools in 1833, and eventually substituted Italian as Malta's official language, after a lengthy struggle

known as the 'Language Question' (Brincat, 2004; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Frendo (1988, p. 189) states that this battle placed "Dante against Shakespeare, Pope against Queen, the Southern against the Nordic". Interestingly, Frendo refers to Sir Walter Francis Hely-Hutchinson, an Anglo-Irish diplomat and colonial administrator who served as Lieutenant-Governor of Malta between 1884 and 1889, and who insisted that all public appointments required a knowledge of the English language. He was resolute that nobody would be appointed or promoted unless they demonstrated a thorough understanding of the language. Hely-Hutchinson also stated that all those who opposed English were to be denied employment or favour from the Government. He advocated the teaching of Maltese and English in primary schools so that eventually "there won't be a chance for the propagation of Italianist ideas" (Frendo, 1988; p. 194). Due to the financial implications linked to this predicament, such cultural allegiances eventually diminished, as Maltese livelihood depended heavily on the British ruling class (Frendo, 1988). Paradoxically, this pro-English and pro-Italian rivalry also gave rise to the emergence of the Maltese vernacular, thus resulting in the legitimisation of Maltese as an official language together with English in 1934 (Frendo, 1988; Sciriha, 2002; Brincat, 2011; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). However, it is interesting to note that as a result of our close proximity to the peninsula, and due to Italian media exposure, the Italian language is still widely practised in Malta, with some considering it as a third language (Sciriha, 2001; Caruana, 2007; Caruana, Cremona and Vella, 2013; Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019), although it is not as widespread as it used to be due to changing television viewing habits (Caruana, 2007; Caruana et al., 2013).

1.5.2 Malta's bilingual situation

The Constitution of Malta (p. 7), states that "Maltese and English … shall be the official languages of Malta, and that the Administration may for all official purposes use any of such languages". Maltese is also one of the official languages of the European Union, and therefore,

EU laws and official documents are all translated into Maltese (Fabri, 2010; Francesconi, 2011; Camilleri Grima, 2013b).   The majority of Maltese speakers are compound bilinguals, developing both languages as a single system rather than two separate ones (Francesconi, 2010).   Farrugia (2016) holds that "generally, a Maltese person may use the two languages to different extents depending on their backgrounds, preferences, and the context in which they find themselves" (p. 224).   Over 95% of the population are ethnic Maltese, and predominantly use the Maltese language, alongside English, which is spoken fluently by over 85% of the population (Camilleri Grima, 2016).   The sociolinguistic situation in Malta is hence one of a widespread societal bilingualism without diglossia since neither of the two languages is assigned a High or Low function (Camilleri Grima, 2013b).   In Malta, either language may be used in all situations and spheres (Camilleri Grima, 2013b), and the presence of the two official languages, Maltese and English, is hence found in most domains (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c;   Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019).   Sciriha (2017) describes the local linguistic situation as one which values the Maltese language as a "recognition of the local, of what is typically Maltese", and English as a means of survival within a globalised society, where it is necessary "for a second world language to be kept alive and thriving in a small island community" (p.240).   Nonetheless, since beliefs and values about language use differ amongst bilinguals, some Maltese speakers attribute a higher status to Maltese, whilst others hold the English language as being a superior language (Milton, 2016).

In this respect, Camilleri (1995), Caruana (2007) and Vella (2019), identify two social groups in Malta: one group with a preference for English language use and one for Maltese.   Primary orientation towards the use of the English language is generally elitist in nature, and the groups that tend to prefer the English language do so as they attribute a higher prestige to English. These groups usually descend from "high class" families, typically reside in areas which are considered to be more exclusive than other parts of the island and opt for fee-paying private

independent schooling for their offspring. This group may also look down on their Maltese-speaking peers, considering them to be of a lower social class or simply uneducated. On the other end of the continuum, we find the Maltese language purists who constantly advocate the use of standard Maltese over any type of Maltese dialect or English (Milton, 2016). The families who use both languages interchangeably and/or codeswitch seem to have found a happy medium. Milton goes on to point out that considering the compactness of our country, it is an odd state of affairs, through which language is implicitly divisive, and this may stem from a variety of historical, social, and cultural factors. This uniquely Maltese phenomenon related to language use and attitudes towards languages shall be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2: The Literature Review, section 2.3.2.

Maltese is the main language spoken by the majority of Maltese, however, as described above, there are also some families who choose to adopt English as their first language (Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019). Language use is mainly a result of family background, school environment and policies, and socialisation (Vella, 2019). This is pertinent to my study since it investigates how personal and professional experiences impinge on teachers' attitudes towards, and on language use in class.

Camilleri (1995) describes the language use in Malta as divided into four types of family, acquiring language varieties in diverse ways as follows:

• **Type A** – Children first acquire a dialect of Maltese which is the parents' and community's first language. Standard Maltese is subsequently acquired through parents' teaching and formal teaching at school. English as L2 is successively acquired formally at school

• **Type B** – The children acquire Maltese as L1 at home and subsequently English as L2 through formal schooling.

•   **Type C** – Both Maltese and English are acquired simultaneously and are used interchangeably.

•   **Type D** – The children acquire English as L1 at home and subsequently Maltese as L2 through formal schooling and social/peer interaction

Malta has a unique and complex linguistic situation, where codeswitching is inherently interwoven in the country's linguistic and cultural fabric. Intrasentential and intersentential codeswitching are common linguistic practices, giving an added dimension to the multifaceted linguistic behaviour of Maltese speakers (Camilleri, 1995; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Grosjean (2010) defines codeswitching as "the alternate use of two languages, that is, the speaker makes a complete shift to another language for a word, phrase or sentence and then reverts to the base language" (p. 52). According to Kamwangamalu (2010), language contact is exhibited through unique characteristics such as codeswitching, borrowing, diglossia and language shift, to name a few. The "Englishization" of the language or "Anglicized Maltese" is a phenomenon that transcends codeswitching. Borg (1980) introduced the term "Mixed Maltese English" and this appears to be the mother tongue of a large number of Maltese nationals, and also a part of our national identity. A variety of English words and phrases have been borrowed and adapted morphologically and/or phonologically into the Maltese language (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). According to Grosjean, (2010), bilinguals also tend to use speech or nonce borrowings, which would eventually become established loans, thus forming a part of the community's lexical repertoire. Borrowing and codeswitching usually occur when bilinguals do not find adequate words in one language to cover what they need to express (Grosjean, 2010; Kamwangamalu, 2010). Kamwangamalu (2010), however sustains that borrowing in all its forms does not necessarily stem from the level of proficiency in both languages and may occur in the speech of both monolinguals and bilinguals, whereas codeswitching is a phenomena pertaining mainly

to bilingual speakers. (These issues shall be elaborately discussed in section 2.3 of Chapter 2: The Literature Review of this research study).

One peril of language contact is the corruption of language (Fabri, 2010), and the creation of newly formed reduced languages or pidgins (Appel and Muysken, 2006). Sciriha (2002) sustains that the improper use of both English and Maltese together with the extensive use of codeswitching endangers the proficiency of both languages and may result in a pidgin language of sorts. Conversely, Francesconi (2010) claims that socio-cultural, historical, and ethnographic factors have so far hindered the formation of a real pidgin in Malta. Similarly, Camilleri Grima (2013b) holds that,

> the bilingual situation of Malta can be considered as stable and is not indicative of language shift. We are witness to the vividly changing nature of the Maltese language that will remain a language of great national significance and currency in its own right, and will continue to co-exist with English, a language of international importance that links Malta to the rest of the world (p. 59).

García (2013) believes that separating a speaker's two languages "works against developing bilingualism and appropriating an identity as a bilingual person" (p. 159). García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzmán (2006) refer to this hybridity of language practice as a contributing factor towards keeping indigenous and minority languages alive. Camilleri Grima (2013b), corroborates this view, and sustains that attitudes of Maltese bilinguals on language use are flexible, and unbound by language purism or dogma, but set on "keeping the Maltese language alive and ever developing in accordance with the changing needs and way of life of modern society" (p. 47). In this respect, Van der Walt, Mabule, De Beer (2001) state that codeswitching "is not a sign of language delay or corruption, quite the opposite. It is a sign of the dynamic nature of language and the way in which people make language serve their needs" (p. 173).

As a result of recent changing demographics on the island, the many threads of additional languages are being interwoven into the linguistic fabric of our society, as we find ourselves rapidly shifting from bilingualism to multilingualism. The fact that Malta has effectively become a cultural melting pot of sorts, can also be observed in the arrival of many migrant children speaking a variety of different languages in our classrooms (Camilleri Grima, 2013a; Farrugia, 2017; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020; Paris and Farrugia, 2019; Bonello, 2020). This rapid and unprecedented cultural and linguistic shift in our schools is enriching in many ways, but also challenging in others (European Commission, 2017). One such challenge sees Maltese teachers increasingly faced with having to teach young students who do not speak either English or Maltese (Grech, 2015; Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019). (This shall be discussed further in Chapter 2: The Literature Review section 2.4, and Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, section 4.5). García's (2009) term 'transglossia' is built on Bakhtin's (1981) concept of polyphony, which literally means "multiple voices" García (2009) describes these language practices as follows: "Transglossia might be a better term to describe societal bilingualism in a globalised world: a stable, and yet dynamic, communicative network with many languages in functional interrelationship, instead of being assigned separate function" (p. 79).

Bakhtin's (1981) concept is metaphorically based on the musical term polyphony, and the idea suggests that there is not one single voice, but many voices and points of view heard as one. In this respect, Transglossic language practices may be somewhat more relevant to our unique bilingual and multilingual context.

1.5.3 Defining L1 and L2 within the Maltese context

The ways in which members of a community choose to communicate may be heterogenous (see Farrugia, 2013), and this holds even truer for countries such as Malta who are experiencing demographic changes, and therefore linguistic diversity as a result (Panzavecchia and Little,

2019; 2020). My aim for this dissertation is not to homogenise Maltese speakers, but rather to depict the interesting Maltese linguistic context based on the research discussed in this study together with my own personal knowledge as an "inside" member of this group.

In the previous section, I have discussed how the language situation in Malta is one of societal bilingualism without diglossia, where both languages are used interchangeably in both private and public domains. It is important to emphasise that although Maltese is the dominant spoken language, with a small number of Maltese nationals choosing English as their mother tongue, there is a constant interplay between the two languages through the prevalence of codeswitching and the use of "Manglish" (Rix, 2010), or "Mixed English Maltese" (Borg, 1980), or "Maltese English (MaltE)" (Bonnici, 2010; Grech, 2015), where both languages are used in parallel, interchangeably, or in a blended manner. Vella (2012) describes this "rich and complex" situation where English and Maltese are regularly used alongside each other as "a continuum of use along which speakers shift as a function of different variables" (p. 548). Camilleri Grima (2003, p.56) claims that "the average Maltese person lives daily with two languages, moving from one to the other as the context demands". She holds that Maltese speakers naturally switch between languages depending on "the context, the person being communicated with, the topic of conversation and the task at hand" (ibid). Camilleri Grima corroborates this view in her later work, where she states that "the Maltese bilingual person learns two languages from infancy, and uses both languages in most situations as circumstances demand" (Camilleri Grima, 2018, p. 34). This linguistic behaviour can be witnessed on the media (Camilleri Grima, 2013a, 2013b), within families and the community (Sciriha, 2001; Scerri, 2015; Sciriha 2017), and in schools (Farrugia, 2016). Although communication within the majority of families is usually held in Maltese, this spoken language is rarely pure and untainted since codeswitching is a common linguistic practice and therefore the majority of Maltese families find themselves shifting between the two languages as part of

their daily communicative practice (please refer to Section 2.3.2 - Codeswitching and the Maltese context). The English influence is apparent in even very young children who naturally pepper their interactions with vocabulary from both languages, thus shifting between the two languages from a very early age. One such example is that in general, young Maltese children usually prefer to count and use vocabulary related to numbers in the English language despite the existence of a Maltese equivalent (Farrugia, 2003, 2018; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). This is common practice, even within families who hold that Maltese is their dominant language. On the other hand, English is preferred as a written medium since readership of English language newspapers and books is in fact preferred over Maltese, whilst the majority of textbooks used in schools are in English (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). This indicates that although the Maltese language is spoken by the majority of Maltese inhabitants, it is used in most but not all domains (Council of Europe, 2015).   Neither of the two languages is considered to be of low or high function, and in spite of a subtle, often implicit language divide (please refer to Section 2.3.2 - Codeswitching and the Maltese context), the value and importance of both languages is nonetheless generally understood and accepted by the large majority of Maltese speakers (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). The linguistic behaviour of the majority of Maltese people is one which makes use of both languages interchangeably, whilst also instinctively selecting one language over the other depending on the context and requirements at the time.   According to the Language Education Policy Profile,

> an accurate representation of the domains in which each language is used is very complex, and any assignment of one language to a particular domain must be viewed tentatively. This is because in a context where societal bilingualism prevails, Maltese and English code-switching is a common linguistic practice … Even those who claim to use Maltese or English exclusively are likely to use forms of codeswitching (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 13).

In the context of this dissertation, Maltese is therefore referred to as L1 because it is the dominant language of most Maltese nationals, whilst English is referred to as L2 because it is considered to be the country's second language with both Maltese and English being the country's official languages. Although the large majority of Maltese-born people are considered to be bilingual, possessing proficiency in both languages albeit at different levels, there are sections of society who are termed as Maltese-speaking or English-speaking. These labels are in line with what is considered to be L1 or L2 in Malta, hence, a preference or dominance in one language over the other, despite a level of mastery in both. According to Bonnici (2010, p. 54), "the label English-speaking refers to Maltese-English bilinguals who use and/or align with English more than Maltese, and reside in areas known to be traditionally English dominant". The opposite applies for inhabitants labelled as Maltese-Speaking.

Children learn both languages as subjects in tandem at school, and they are also both used as languages of instruction (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2016). The majority of Maltese children are what Kovács and Mehler (2009), and Baker (2011) refer to as crib bilinguals, thus being exposed to both languages from birth.

Caruana (2007, p. 188) states that assigning either Maltese or English as L1 is an arduous task since

> the linguistic situation in Malta is complex indeed and relies heavily on the heritage of the historical and political permutations of the past. In view of this in the Maltese context it is difficult to apply the terms 'minority' and 'majority' language because Malta is essentially bilingual and both languages are used regularly by most of the population.

The acquisition of both languages from a very early age (albeit to different levels of proficiency), the constant interplay between both languages, together with the pervasiveness

of codeswitching as common communicative practice are what create the uniqueness of the Maltese linguistic dynamic, which may in ways also be tentatively compared to what Baker (2000), and Lanza (2004) refer to children acquiring bilingualism as L1.

1.5.4 Malta's educational System

The Maltese primary and secondary educational system is offered via three educational institutions, namely: state schools, which are free for all students; private independent schools, which charge hefty school fees; and church schools which offer education to students drawn through a ballot system, and which do not charge fees since they are subsidised by the government (Milton, 2016). State schools introduce Maltese as L1 and English as L2 at pre-school/kindergarten level, whilst a small number of church schools and the majority of private independent schools reverse this choice, where English is introduced as L1, followed by Maltese as a second language. Both languages are taught in tandem as from term two of the scholastic year, whilst some private independent and church schools opt to teach both languages simultaneously from the very beginning of preschool/kindergarten.

'A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo' launched by the Education Ministry's National Language Policy in Education Committee advocates the promotion of bilingualism in young learners. The Policy recommends the fostering of positive attitudes towards both our national and other languages, the development of competences in Maltese and English, and their application across a variety of settings (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c). The Learning Outcomes Frameworks for the Early Years (Malta Ministry of Education, 2016) highlights that Children who are effective communicators are aware of different language systems (Maltese and English), progressively enjoy and recite nursery rhymes and songs in both languages, whilst listening to and understanding simple stories in both English and Maltese. Within the early years, young children are also encouraged to hold simple conversations in both languages. The Language Education Policy Profile for

Malta (Council of Europe, 2015 p. 41) also advocates, "beginning bilingual education at an early age and continuing over time, using two languages to learn subject content and ensuring the contribution of bilingual education to the development of not only language but also cognitive competences".

The National Curriculum Framework for all (Malta Ministry of Education, 2012) also takes into account the recent demographic changes happening in Malta, and advocates a multilingual education policy, focusing on an additive theoretical model whereby students are given the opportunity to extend their initial repertoire with other languages, with English being the primary language of focus.

The level of pre-school language exposure in each language varies, depending on the family and community environment, and most children in Malta are dominant in either of the two languages. However, regardless of family choices, school policies, practices, and environment, it is virtually impossible for a child to be monolingual in Malta (Grech and Dodd, 2008; Vella, 2012; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Both languages are used interchangeably in day-to-day life and most situations. The use of the English language as a written medium is greater than that of Maltese, particularly in higher education, since most textbooks are in English. English is in effect the language of tertiary education, where students are expected to be fully proficient in the language to study at this level (Baldacchino, 2018). There are relative discrepancies related to reading material in Maltese and English, since Maltese texts are comparatively limited. Additionally, the majority of school textbooks are in English, while most books in Maltese focus on the actual teaching and learning of the Maltese language.   The media uses both English and Maltese interchangeably. Local TV and radio stations transmit a variety of programmes in both English and Maltese, whilst advertising is done in both languages. Local discussion programmes and talk shows usually contain a mixture of English and Maltese, either

by language mixing, or by codeswitching (Camilleri Grima, 2013a, 2013b). With regard to the visual use of language, both Maltese and English are present in Malta's linguistic landscape, however, there seems to be an English dominance in this area (Sciriha and Vassallo, 2015; Sciriha, 2017; Camilleri Grima, 2020). The prevalent use of the English language in many domains may be attributed to the development of international affairs, tourism, and a growing number of English Language Schools for foreign students (Francesconi, 2010; Camilleri Grima, 2013b).

Some studies suggest that language acquisition starts in the womb, since new-borns appear to show a preference for both the mother's voice and the language she used during pregnancy (Costa, 2020). Simultaneous or crib bilinguals are infants who are exposed to both languages from birth (Kovács and Mehler, 2009; Baker, 2011). The majority of Maltese children may be classified as such due to their early and practically unavoidable exposure to a bilingual environment, with differentiations according to location, education, and socio-economic background (Sciriha, 2002; Vella, 2012). Within Maltese schools, codeswitching is a natural phenomenon, based on the level of teachers' and learners' bilingual proficiency (Camilleri Grima, 2013a; Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci, 2019). Although there has been relatively little literature on the subject, Scerri (2015) conducted a very interesting undergraduate study on the bilingual interaction among Maltese young children while playing in public play areas across Malta and Gozo. A record of the spoken interaction among young children was taken in play areas, as children played freely and used verbal communication naturally. Taking potential issues pertaining to academic rigour into consideration, the results of this research show that bilingual interaction is significantly present in the lives of the majority of young Maltese children, mainly through different types of codeswitching and borrowing.

The main objectives guiding the teaching of English in Maltese schools are linked to Malta's sociolinguistic situation, together with an awareness of the importance of English as a global

language for communicative and economical reasons. In practice, there is a distinction between what is spoken and what is written in most Maltese classrooms. Maltese is the major spoken means of interaction, whereas English is largely a written language and hence the main language used in written tasks, assessment, and examinations. The written text in English is therefore used as the basic point of reference, whilst the oral discussion is usually held in Maltese (with codeswitching) "through which participants reiterate, interpret and reinterpret the written text" (Camilleri Grima, 2013a, p. 556).

English language teaching (ELT) history has witnessed many arguments for and against using L1 to teach L2. Although codeswitching has been considered to be counterproductive to the L2 learning process (Chen and Rubinstein-Avila, 2018), this methodology is not always an obstruction to learning a language, but may conversely be utilised as an effective strategy in classroom interaction, serving significant cognitive, communicative, and social functions in foreign and second language (L2) classrooms (Macaro, 2005; Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain, 2009; McMillan and Rivers, 2011). According to Camilleri Grima (2013a), and Ariza, Calleja and Vassallo Gauci (2019), utilising codeswitching as a means to resolve pedagogical challenges is a complex phenomenon. This practice, which is often instinctively utilised by bilingual teachers, supports the learning process whilst improving teacher-student relationships. The Council of Europe's Language Education Policy Profile (2015), embraces the concept of codeswitching, stating that turning it into a learning tool could hold the future of language education in Malta. The report recommends "validating codeswitching by researching the most successful practices currently being used by teachers and developing new training programmes to promote more effective approaches" (p. 63). This is in stark contrast to the recommendations previously made in the Malta Ministry for Education's National Minimum Curriculum (1999) that promoted the strict separation of both languages in education.

1.5.5 Comparison of postcolonial bilingual countries

Globally, colonialism has had a large impact on linguistic and discursive practices, since imposing languages onto defined geographical zones was one way in which colonial rulers exerted control over inhabitants, uniting groups into "communities of speakers", whilst dividing others through "sociolinguistic hierarchies within and between languages" (Stroud, 2007, p. 27). These practices have had an important role in assigning low or high prestige to languages, and in creating linguistic forms which emerged as a result of colonialism (Migge and Léglise, 2007). In spite of the subsequent political independence of decolonised countries, the effects on the realm of language have had long lasting effects, many of which are still evident in many postcolonial countries such as Malta (see section 2.3.2 in Chapter 2: The Literature Review). However, postcolonial societies do not constitute a homogeneous group, and the continuing effects on language use and bilingualism have impacted different countries in diverse ways. Although the scope of this study is not comparative, I shall hereby briefly juxtapose Malta with four examples of other postcolonial countries which hold English as one of their official languages in order to contextualise the Maltese postcolonial bilingual situation and its bilingual education further.

Canada

The linguistic situation in Malta differs to that in some other postcolonial countries. Canada is one example where due to historical, social, and political influences, bilinguals are often perceived as two monolinguals in one (Roy and Galiev, 2011). As a result of colonisation by both the French and the British, Canada's two official languages are English and French, with both forming a fundamental part of Canadian identity and the subject of historical language battles and debates. However both languages are spoken as two parallel systems, where most bilingual speakers are equally proficient in both languages and where there is no overlap between English and French. In the words of Roy and Galiev (2011, p. 354) "various groups

in Canada hold an ideology according to which bilingualism is defined as speaking French and English with very little code-switching or transfer". This is in stark contrast to the situation in Malta, where, as previously discussed, codeswitching, language transfer and borrowing are pervasive and ubiquitous. Additionally, public attitudes toward official bilingualism in Canada tend to be diverse and divisive (see Dufresne and Ruderman, 2018), whereas in Malta official bilingualism is generally accepted and supported by the majority of islanders. Bilingual education programmes in Canada are usually structured on full immersion methods, following the principles of additive bilingualism. Canada boasts of three main forms of immersion programs, namely French immersion, which was originally developed mainly for English speaking majority students, Heritage language programs for students with diverse mother tongues, and Indigenous language programs for aboriginal students (Dicks and Genessee, 2017). Malta's bilingual education is also based on the Immersion pedagogical method, following the principles of additive bilingualism, where our children learn both English and Maltese in tandem from an early age and where both languages are used to learn subject content (Council of Europe's Language Education Policy Profile for Malta, 2015). However, in Malta where the majority of our children are proficient in both English and Maltese, and where there is a constant interplay between both languages, our immersion programs do not usually include strict language separation or language grouping. Both languages are used as both instructional and communicative tools and a significant amount of codeswitching takes place in class. Presently, heritage language programs are practically non-existent in Maltese schools, despite the demographic changes on the island which are seeing an increase in multilingual students.

India

Another example is India which has two official languages: English and Hindi, with English being a result of its postcolonial heritage. In spite of its colonial legacy and the language planning endeavours of its colonial rulers, India is nonetheless a richly heterogenous

multilingual country, with a large number of other officially recognised languages and dialects that are used by different segments of its people, which is mainly attributed to "an obsessive language loyalty that is the culture of South Asia" (Vaish, 2005, p. 188). The English language in India is associated with the more privileged and elite and although there is little consensus about the circulation and level of English within the country, it is generally agreed that although English use is widespread in India (Parshad, Bhowmick, Suman, Vineeta, Nitu, and Sinha, 2016), a significant part of the population is still not proficient in the language (Bhattacharya, 2017). This is dissimilar to the situation in Malta, where English is spoken fluently by the large majority of the islanders (Camilleri Grima, 2016). Comparable to the Maltese scenario is the widespread use of language hybridisation through unmarked codeswitching, where inhabitants engage in shifting between English, Hindi and other regional Indian vernaculars, or what is referred to as "Hinglish" (Parshad, 2016). What is however significantly different to the situation in Malta is the way in which children acquire the English language. School language policies are rooted in traditional caste structures and class systems related to language skills and access (Parshad et al., 2016). Although public schools offer free education for all, the way in which the English language is taught in these schools has been the subject of criticism since the main focus is on reading and writing, rather than on the communicative aspect (Vaish, 2005; Bhattacharya, 2017). Additionally, children from economically underprivileged families are at a disadvantage, since school is their only means of accessing the English language (Parshad et al., 2016; Bhattacharya, 2017). Poor teacher training together with the teachers' own lack of proficiency in English are other factors contributing to inadequate English language instruction within schools (ibid.) This creates a catch 22 situation because "rather than a tool of linguicism, which it was during British colonialism, English in India today is an agent of decolonization that enables the urban poor to access the global economy" (Vaish, 2005, p. 187). This state of affairs is not the case in Malta, where children

are immersed in both languages from birth, and where both English and Maltese are taught in all schools by fully qualified teachers who are proficient in both languages, and where both languages are used in most domains. However, in a similar stance, Maltese students who are highly proficient in both spoken and written English are considered to be at an advantage for academic, employment, and in turn economic reasons (Caruana, 2011).

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is another postcolonial officially bilingual territory with a linguistic dynamic which in some ways resembles the Maltese one. Chinese and English are co-official languages of Hong Kong, however law does not specify any particular variety of "Chinese". Although Mandarin is the standard language in mainland China, Cantonese is in reality the standard language in Hong Kong. Bilingualism in English and Cantonese is considered to be an integral part of Hong Kong identity (Hansen Edwards, 2015). The language situation in Hong Kong has experienced many changes over the years through a "a realignment and redistribution of roles of the main languages" (O'Halloran, 2000, p. 145). Hong Kong was a British colony up to 1997, when the territory returned to Chinese control.   The linguistic situation prior to its decolonisation was a diglossic one where Chinese and English held different statuses and functions, with English having superior status, and where matters related to education, government administration and law were conducted in English, whilst Chinese was limited to home use and social communication (Poon, 2010).   After its decolonisation, Chinese started to replace English as a high function language within the public sector, however previous diglossic attitudes towards languages "still exist[s] in the minds of the Hong Kong people as reflected in their practices" (ibid. p. 13). This is in ways similar to the Maltese situation in view of the subtle language divide which exists informally, and where an amount of Maltese people believe that the use of the English language in certain formal contexts (such as job interviews) is more appropriate (see section 2.3.2 in Chapter 2: The Literature Review). Similar

to the bilingual situation in Malta, shifting between two languages is pervasive in Hong Kong. O'Halloran (2000, p. 145) describes how the society has developed into one "where there is a proliferation of mixed codes, involving a continuum of language use from "high" Cantonese and English to "low" Cantonese with code switching". Hong Kong however, has an additional diglossic situation related to the use of the two varieties of spoken Cantonese, and a disparity between modern standard written Chinese and spoken Cantonese (Poon, 2010). The linguistic situation in Hong Kong also distinguishes between two varieties of the English language, namely Hong Kong English and British English, the latter being a colonial inheritance which is considered to be more prestigious, whilst the former is an accepted and legitimate variety (Hansen Edwards, 2015).

Bilingual education policies in Hong Kong place much emphasis on language purism and hence advocate a separation of linguistic systems. This is evidenced through the introduction of The Native English-speaking Teacher scheme, which aims to employ overseas native English teachers to co-teach with local educators in an endeavour to better expose the children to the English language and to encourage the "English only" rule in language classes (Pérez Milans, 2016). The strict separation of languages is similar to what used to be recommended in Maltese schools a few years back, and what some teachers who were trained in this manner may still hold true. However, in Malta, monoglossic ideas were not always possible to put fully into practice due to the constant interplay between the two languages by both teachers and students, and this pedagogical stance is now making way for more fluid and flexible heteroglossic language practices as required in today's ever-increasing multilingual societies (see Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results).

Singapore

Singapore is another postcolonial country, having been under British rule from 1946 – 1963. Singapore is a multilingual society with four official languages namely English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Lee (2019) holds that Malay is the national language for political reasons, whilst English is considered to be the working language for economic reasons. English is the lingua franca between different ethnic groups and the *de facto* main language. Bakar (2016) claims that in Singapore, heritage languages may be at peril as a result of the ubiquitous use of English, which is the dominant language of the country. The language-in-education policy in Singapore is officially bilingual, where English is the medium of instruction of all subject-area content and is prescribed as students' first language, irrespective of the family's dominant home language, and where students study their mother tongue language as an additional subject (Bakar, 2016; Xie and Cavallaro, 2016; Lee, 2019). The English language has significantly more time allotted to it at school than the heritage language (Xie and Cavallaro, 2016). Conversely in Malta over 95% of the population predominantly use the Maltese language, alongside English, which is spoken fluently by over 85% of the islanders (Camilleri Grima, 2016), and in Maltese schools, both languages are used as a medium of instruction and as subjects in their own right (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Bakar (2016) describes a situation where English and mother tongues have different roles in Singapore. English is thought to provide Western values and world viewpoints, whilst heritage languages serve as a link to ethnic and cultural roots. Although Maltese and English do not officially have different roles in Malta, there are similarities in that the Maltese language is valued as part of our identity and of what is quintessentially part of being Maltese, whilst English is considered to be necessary within a globalised society (Sciriha, 2017). In Singapore, due to the fact that English is the main medium of instruction and consequently the language of academic assessment, it is perceived to be a superior language to the mother tongue. Bakar (2016) claims that this has

led to a more widespread use of English amongst children, and a decline in their use of the heritage language. In Malta, the situation is very different since both languages are used for tuition and to measure academic excellence at school, and there is no marked decline in the use of one language in favour of the other (Camilleri Grima, 2013b). There is also an overlap and a constant interplay between English and Maltese, whereas Bakar (2016, p.1) holds that in Singapore, English and the heritage language are taught "as a form of double monolingualism, in watertight compartments, with no opportunity for bilingual learning or reflection in class on the relationship between the languages". This situation in turn reduces pupils' access to the other language and hence impinges on the acquisition of proficient bilingual skills. Similarly to Malta, there is a prolific use of codeswitching in Singapore, however the type of codeswitching differs between the younger and older generation. The latter's use of codeswitching is based mainly on dialects, and Lee (2019, pp. 21-22) holds that due to this, the younger generation are "are unable to have more meaningful conversations with their grandparents due to their inadequate dialect competence", and that this in turn signifies an unfortunate "loss of heritage language and culture". On the other hand, the younger generation codeswitch mainly with English, however, in contrast to the codeswitching situation in Malta, Lee (2019) states that this is done to "fill in gaps", rather than as a means to communicate better, since it evidences a deficiency in Mandarin proficiency. Discourse markers are often used in English which may be "tell-tale signs that English is the underlying language of the society" (ibid.) Conversely, codeswitching in Malta is not a sign of a deficiency in either Maltese or English, but rather a natural way of merging the two languages the islanders are comfortable communicating in. In Malta discourse markers are usually uttered in both languages, with a current trend towards the emergence of words of American origin due to pop culture and internet use among the younger generation (see section 4.6.1 in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results). However, in general there is a preference for Maltese discourse

markers, even among those speakers who favour English as their dominant language (see section 2.3.2 in Chapter 2).

The cultural and material forces of colonialism and postcolonialism are rooted in "complex, multifaceted and contradictory social processes and semiotics", which are also evidenced through language use which is a "historically and socioculturally specific construct" (Stroud, 2007, p. 25). In the same way that postcolonial societies do not constitute a homogeneous group, they may hold similar or diverse views about the formal and functional use of languages and of sociolinguistic hierarchies. Stroud defines bilingualism as a "political and economic field" and holds that "the organization of citizenship in societies is mediated by a historically variable sociopolitical and cultural organization of language practices and beliefs about language and language learning" (p.46). This brief overview of some postcolonial countries where English has found its place due to historical legacies highlights such similarities and differences in the linguistic and discursive practices of speakers and in educational systems. Bonnici (2010) posits that "Malta's proximity to the United Kingdom and the European subcontinent, its cultural and political affinity to Italy and Europe as a whole, its relative ethnic and religious homogeneity, and its small size, which has historically resulted in societal multilingualism, render the situation of English in Malta dissimilar to other postcolonial contexts" (p. 46). In this respect, although there are many similarities, there are also stark differences between each country, and I believe that these very differences are what make the Maltese context comparatively unique. Throughout this section, I have described how Malta has been shaped linguistically and culturally through its many rulers and British colonial heritage. This legacy offers important insights into its current bilingual status, and its education system. I have also juxtaposed Malta with other postcolonial countries having English as one of their official languages in order to contextualise the Maltese postcolonial bilingual situation for this study.

Recent demographic changes are also transforming Malta's linguistic practices as a variety of languages are presently being integrated within local communities. This points towards a potential shift from a bilingual to a multilingual society, which is also mirrored in our schools. These issues are relevant to my study because they are representative of my participants' heritage, culture, and the realities of their everyday professional practice, as will be discussed in the next section.

1.6 Teachers' Backgrounds, Biographies, and Identities

The participants in my study were all born and raised in Malta, and therefore their family background, language biography, educational history and professional experiences are inherently moulded by Maltese culture, traditions, ethnicity and heritage, all of which give our society its unique essence. I shall now be focusing on how this contextual background shapes teachers' biographies, identities, and sense of selves, and how this may in turn impact their pedagogy.

1.6.1 A teacher's sense of self

Temporality is an essential characteristic of human beings, who are largely a product of their experiences throughout their existence. In the words of Kelchtermans (2009), "people have a personal history. Their life develops in time, between birth and death. Interpretations, thoughts and actions in the present are influenced by experiences from the past and expectations for the future" (p. 260).

In this respect, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) sustain that researchers need to view teachers holistically, in terms of their views, attitudes, experiences and perspectives, to fully appreciate and comprehend their practice. This is because teachers' own personal histories, together with their knowledge and beliefs are the driving forces behind their pedagogical decisions (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, Ajayi, 2011, Izadinia, 2013; Yazan, 2018),

their effectiveness (Richards, 2010), and the rapport they develop with their students (Izadinia, 2013; Li, 2017).   Additionally, educators' views are pivotal in the way they manage issues related to policy and practice (Watson, 2015).   Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006, p. 601) state that a teacher's sense of self strongly influences educators' motivation and effectiveness, since,

> the broader social conditions in which teachers live and work, and the personal and professional elements of teachers' lives, experiences, beliefs and practices are integral to one another, and that there are often tensions between these which impact to a greater or lesser extent upon teachers' sense of self or identity.

An educators' personal, educational and professional experiences are all highly influential in the construction of a teacher's sense of self, or "teacher identity".   Teacher identity is also dependent on a variety of educational, social, linguistic and cultural contexts, which Reeves (2018) refers to as "the push and pull of internal and external forces" (p. 7), an interplay of influences which may be either in harmony or conflict with one another (Trent, 2017). Yazan (2018, p. 21) refers to teacher identity as "teachers' dynamic self-conception and imagination of themselves as teachers, which shifts as they participate in varying communities, interact with other individuals, and position themselves (and are positioned by others) in social contexts".

Karimi and Mofidi (2019, p. 122) posit that teachers' identity is formed as a result of "past personal experiences, prolonged engagement in the practice of teaching, the immediate contextual and the broader social structure (family, organizational culture, community of friends/colleagues), and the society as a broad activity system …"   In this respect, they postulate that identity is not innate, "but an ongoing process of interpreting experiences connecting person and context features, yielding a multifaceted understanding of self" (p. 123). Educators' professional and personal identities are often unavoidably intertwined, due to the

"significant personal investment" which the teaching profession demands (Day et al., 2006, p. 603). Moreover, educators often shape, reshape and negotiate their identities, particularly within linguistic interactional contexts, which Rosiers (2020) describes as the communicative "subtle and fluid dance" of a teacher (p. 11).

Identity formation is not static or unchangeable but is rather shaped and re-shaped throughout a person's life, as a product of experiences, encounters, and events (Richmond, Juzwik, and Steele, 2011; Reeves, 2018). A teacher's identity is also constructed and reconstructed as a result of their experiences within their professional environment (Kelchtermans, 2009). Morgan (2004, p. 172) postulates that the concept of identity is in effect complex, and may shift according to temporal, relational, and spatial factors, as opposed to having "a fixed and coherent set of traits".

Goodson and Sikes (2001) sustain that,

> There are likely to be many influences, experiences and relationships within any teacher's life which have led to their developing a particular philosophy of education and taking on a specific professional identity which informs their work. Then there are the various contexts and conditions within which teachers have to work which further have an effect upon what they do and how they do it (p. 21).

Taking into account the importance of identity as construct in teachers' professional lives is therefore imperative when conceptualising teaching (Kelchtermans, 2009), and consequently, when conducting research on education (Gee, 2001). This is especially true when teachers' identity is a "crucial component in determining how language teaching is played out" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22), and because "each time a person interacts in the target language, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation over that identity" (Li, 2017, pp. 243 – 244). In this respect, I strongly believe that teachers' linguistic identities may have multiple

effects within classroom environments, and that they constitute pedagogical resources in their own right.   The issues discussed in this section are particularly pertinent to my study since it focuses on bilingual teachers' identities, and how their backgrounds are influential on their views and pedagogical practices.

1.6.2 The Relationship between teacher identity and language teaching

Teaching is much more complex than "merely transmitting information" (Barnard and Burns, 2012, p. 2). Teachers are powerful curriculum decision makers and their attitudes and practices all impinge on these decisions (Barnard and Burns, 2012). As human beings form their identities, they are developing their place in society in the process. Identity includes both individual characteristics and external influences (Reeves, 2018), and is "constructed, not ready-formed … the process of construction is a social one that takes place in social settings" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 37).   Moreover, as previously discussed, a person's identity is dynamic and may also be transformed following new experiences (Morgan, 2004; Varghese et al., 2005; Twiselton, 2006; Pennington and Richards, 2016; Reeves, 2018). In the mainstream educational system, primary school teachers' identities are complex and multifaceted. Teachers' own personal training, together with their previous educational, personal and professional experiences are all pivotal in the construction of the teacher self, which in turn impacts the classroom learning environment. These views are also dependant on a variety of educational, social, linguistic, and cultural contexts (Milton, 2016). Pennington and Richards (2016) state that,

> The identity which a teacher projects in a classroom at a given moment or over time
> will be in part a projection of the teacher's view of the institutional role of teacher and
> in part a projection of a unique individual identity based on the teacher's autobiography.
> It will also be a reflection of the characteristics of the learners and the context of

instruction at the level of the classroom, the school, the district, and higher levels of context as these impact on the teacher's aspirations and daily practice (p.7).

Thus, in the context of my educational and linguistic research, I felt that it was imperative for me to keep in mind that the nature of teacher identity is multi-dimensional, encompassing emotions, a link between identity and the self, personal narratives and discourse, personal reflection, beliefs, the ability to pursue valued goals, together with external factors such as the school environment and organisation, the context in which the identity is being shaped and the teacher education programmes being offered (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Shapiro, 2010). I was also aware of the fact that educators may be influenced by a variety of elements such as personal biography, culture, age, and gender, which are all a significant part of language teaching (Richards, 2015). Karimi and Mofidi (2019) describe this construct as, "a kaleidoscopic understanding of self, constructed when teachers' personal characteristics, including their past experiences, and cultural, historical, social, institutional, and environmental factors interact" (p. 124).

I recognised the fact that all these influences are not separate from one another and may either interrelate in alignment or in conflict (Trent, 2017). Issues related to the use of language within bilingual educational environments are generally related to the teachers' own beliefs, attitudes, identity, and social context (Borg, 2003; Barnard and Burns, 2012; Milton, 2016). Teacher's own ease with, personal preference, and their level of proficiency in each language are all influential in the language used during lessons (Twiselton, 2006). Additionally, their personal learning experiences are often influential in their preferred pedagogies (Cox, 2014; Oleson and Hora, 2014; Milton and Panzavecchia, 2019b). Their own educational experiences from school, to university; from pre-service to in-service also impinge on teachers' identities, as is continuous professional development through reading academic literature and attending conferences and seminars. Professional experiences and interactions with students, colleagues

and peers also shape teacher identities. The role of 'significant others' in teachers' personal lives such as partners, spouses, families and friends are also factors which need to be considered. Authority figures including heads of schools, inspectors, examination boards and education ministries are additional contributing factors to teachers' knowledge and views (Varghese, 2008; Barnard and Burns, 2012). I was cognisant of all these factors prior to, and as I was conducting my research, and hence endeavoured to explore and analyse them as elaborately as possible, since I believed these issues would ultimately provide me with the answers I was seeking.

In this respect, within the local scenario, the teachers' use of language often reflects their own family background. Hence, if Maltese is usually the medium of communication at home, teachers may generally use more Maltese and codeswitching strategies during the English lesson than those teachers who derive from English-speaking backgrounds; whilst teachers who would have received their education at private independent schools, and/or those who speak English at home, tend to favour the English language (Camilleri, 1996).

Teachers' viewpoints on language use may either embrace philosophies of linguistic purism hence emphasising language separation or embrace more fluid language pedagogies which may also promote cross-linguistic practices (Martinez, Hikida and Durán, 2015). Since teachers' instructional methods often derive from personal beliefs, their views play a significant, participatory, rather than passive role in the implementation of school policies and curriculum management (Palmer, 2011; Barnard and Burns, 2012). Pettit (2011) conducted an extensive literature review on teachers' beliefs about English language learners (ELLs) in mainstream classrooms, highlighting a powerful link between teacher's views and practices. These opinions and values often stem from personal experiences and research suggests that student success is often linked to teachers who hold beliefs which are aligned and conducive to, rather

than in conflict with the pedagogies advocated within their own particular educational environment.

Gu and Benson (2015) claim that in the context of English teaching, it would be ideal if non-native language teachers "were to outgrow the standard English discourse prevalent in society and establish a more flexible and open view on language varieties, thus empowering both themselves and their students" (p. 202).

Furthermore, Gu and Benson highlight the fact that dual language teachers have an important role to play and should capitalise on their bilingual capacity, thus empowering bilingual students' identities since the teachers' own "linguistic and cultural backgrounds could be exploited and their identity as bilingual/multicultural teachers could be constructed" (p. 202).

Borg (2003) claims that various elements of teacher cognition (what teachers think, know, and believe) are often linked with the relationships amongst teacher's own educational experiences and classroom practices. We need to encourage teachers to be flexible, thus welcoming change, and to "be desirous in their dealings with students, so that they seduce students into caring about the subject" (Hobbs, 2012, p. 727). This can be achieved through viewing teachers as "passionate beings", and by exploring the link between identity and practice (ibid.) In the words of Varghese et al., (2005, p. 22),

> in order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them.

Therefore we need to focus on teachers' identity, when conducting language teaching research (ibid.) We are all a product of our experiences and every individual teacher brings their own individual baggage into the classroom. In essence, it is this baggage that shapes teachers'

beliefs, values and ultimately their pedagogies, as I have endeavoured to explore throughout this research study, as to gain further insights into the inherent reasons behind educators' ideas, values, practice and decisions. These findings are subsequently evidenced and elaborately discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

This introductory section has offered a snapshot of the Maltese scenario which provides the context and background to my research. The linguistic situation in Malta, together with its educational position, forms the building blocks upon which I have based my investigation. Throughout my quest to immerse myself in my doctoral journey, I have relied heavily on the works of international scholars in the field, whilst interspersing my research with most of the local studies available on the subject. I believe that the situation in Malta is relatively unique, and although there are lessons to be learnt from global research, it is important to adapt this knowledge to our own culture and contextual background, in order to make it more relevant to our own particular circumstances and requirements.

The upcoming chapter will explore the afore-mentioned issues elaborately through a theoretical lens, as they would eventually bring me full circle to linking them to my own research, focusing on teachers' personal and professional backgrounds, attitudes, beliefs, and perceived practice. This can be observed in detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, which focuses on my own findings and analysis linked to the existing literature; and in Chapter 5, which concludes the study through answering the research questions posed.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter reviews features of the literature focusing on the key areas underpinning my study thus providing a theoretical framework guiding this research, in particular the development of the questions guiding my investigation, and the collection, analysis, discussion and interpretation of the collated data. It will provide an examination of current literature in the field of bilingualism, the role of L1 in L2 learning, codeswitching and translanguaging. It will also examine the increase in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, resulting from the current demographic shift on the island. These concepts are explored and critically reviewed through a theoretical lens both internationally and nationally to contextualise my research. The works of the main contributing experts in the field will be discussed. The main purpose of this chapter will be to serve as an insightful background to this doctoral study which aims to examine bilingualism, multilingualism, and flexible, multilingual approaches in education. As discussed in section 1.6 of Chapter 1: Introduction, this study explores how teachers' own experiences and biographical backgrounds impinge on their personal and professional teacher identities, and how teacher cognition, including attitudes and beliefs affect language use and pedagogy. In Malta, there has been relatively little research done in the area, and this study hopes to bridge existing gaps focusing on cross-linguistic practices, educators' perspectives, and the use of Maltese in local English language classrooms.

The first part of this chapter will focus on the field of bilingualism, including definitions and dimensions of bilingualism, language acquisition and development, bilingualism and identity, and bilingualism in education, with particular attention being given to the Maltese linguistic context. This section provides an understanding of current research on the topic and also

serves as a background to my study, where readers are able to familiarise themselves with the subject matter through a historical and sociocultural lens. This section also ties in well with section 1.5 in Chapter 1: Introduction, which describes Malta's linguistic heritage and how this has shaped its bilingual and educational system. The second part of this chapter critically analyses the controversial issue of cross-linguistic practices within bilingual and multilingual societies, with particular attention given to codeswitching and translanguaging, highlighting the salient issues and debates surrounding the concepts, in particular the differences and similarities between them, how these are instinctive and natural communicative practices of bilingual and multilingual speakers, and the implications of deploying these cross-linguistic practices as pedagogical resources within our classrooms. The chapter concludes with an investigation of Malta's current shift from bilingualism to multilingualism as a result of demographic changes on the island. Challenges related to these shifts together with a discussion on the way forward are explored.

This chapter provides a broad overview of this research area within and outside the Maltese context, with the aim of incorporating the different areas pertinent to the research questions, namely the field of bilingualism and multilingualism, bilingual biography and identity, and instinctive and strategic cross-linguistic practices. It also aims to broaden my own familiarity with the topic and scholarly context, whilst questioning my own pre-existing views on the subject matter (see section 1.4 in Chapter 1 Introduction) and positioning myself in relation to other researchers and theorists. The concepts covered throughout this chapter will be explored from multiple theoretical perspectives in order to establish an understanding of current research in this field which forms the backbone of my own investigation, and which would ultimately address my research questions and support my findings further. It may also serve as a point of reference for future research projects on the topic and themes emerging from the data.

2.2 Bilingualism

I have elaborately discussed Malta's bilingual situation in the previous chapter, since this provides the background of my study and of my research participants. I shall now review some of the literature related to the field of bilingualism, focusing on definitions and dimensions of bilingualism, language acquisition and development, bilingual education, benefits of bilingualism, bilingual identity, and the role of first language in second language learning, since these are the foundations of my study, the topics upon which I have built my knowledge and which subsequently spawned the research questions pertinent to my study

2.2.1 The field of bilingualism

Historically, bilingualism has been largely frowned upon throughout the years. The idea that bilingualism had detrimental effects on the human being's brain and spiritual development started in the early nineteenth century and persisted well into the 1960s (Wei, 2007). A variety of preconceived and unfounded notions were widespread for many years, amongst which was the idea that learning two languages would prove to be a confusing mental encumbrance, thus hindering the acquisition of L1, and that bilingualism may trigger identity struggles, divided allegiances, alienation and even schizophrenia. However, thanks to the growing body of research on the subject, this prejudice has decreased considerably during the past two decades or so (Baker, 2011). The rising global interest in multilingualism and multiculturalism is largely owed to an increase in worldwide immigration, a growing interest in ethnic minorities, indigenous languages, and language problems in literacy and education related to multicultural and multilingual societies (Leikin, Schwartz and Tobin, 2012). Proficiency in more than one language is an enriching and valuable skill which offers many benefits. There are links between bilingualism, enhanced meta-cognitive skills and superior divergent thinking abilities (Bialystok, 2007; Bialystok, Craik and Luk, 2008, 2012) together with better performance on some perceptual and classification tasks (Marian et al., 2009). Young bilingual children have

shown to generally outperform their monolingual peers in executive and attentional control tasks (Bialystok, Craik and Luk, 2008; Bialystok, 2011). Bilingualism is also linked to increased job opportunities and higher financial earnings (Gabszewicz, Ginsburgh and Weber, 2011). It is also linked to protection against cognitive decline and is hence linked to a delay in the onset of symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer's disease (Bialystok, 2011; Bialystok, Craik and Luk, 2012).

Although the advantages associated with bilingualism are numerous, some research states that exposure to language mixing may hinder cues that enable young bilingual children to separate their languages (Byers-Heinlein, 2013). Bilingualism may hence negatively affect language development, and is also correlated with delays in lexical acquisition (Marian et al., 2009). Disadvantages have also been observed for bilinguals in the size of their vocabulary, and in the speed of lexical access (Bialystok, Craik and Luk, 2008; Costa, 2020). Bilinguals encounter difficulties when attempting to switch off one language with the intent of using the other, which results in a constant selective competition among alternatives (Costa, 2020). Bilinguals are hence required to learn how to mitigate that competition by controlling the selection process. This conscious control in turn reduces the efficiency and/or the speed of language processing (Bialystok, 2011; Kroll, Bobb and Hoshino, 2014; Costa, 2020). Conversely, within the local context however, the findings of a Maltese study by Grech and Dodd (2008) indicate that for the majority of Maltese children, learning languages within a bilingual community enhanced both lexical and phonological acquisition. They attribute these findings to the fact that Maltese "motherese" (infant directed speech deploying the use of high-pitched speech, elongated words, exaggerated gestures and facial expressions which young children are exposed to) contains English vocabulary items which are considered to be easier to pronounce than their Maltese alternative. Maltese parents often choose to use certain English content words in their child-directed speech "thus limiting exposure to Maltese equivalents in daily communicative

contexts" (Gatt, Letts and Klee, 2009, p. 269). Interestingly, despite the fact that lexical mixing is ubiquitous among Maltese-speaking adults, some of the English lexical items, phrases and sentences featuring specifically in child-directed speech do not feature in adult language use. One such example is the frequent use of the English word "book" in child-directed communication in Maltese, used in place of its Maltese equivalent "*ktieb*", which has semitic origins, and which is normally used in adult interactions (see Gatt, Grech, and Dodd 2015; Gatt, 2017). Even those Maltese children who receive primarily monolingual exposure to Maltese at home are generally exposed to lexical mixings from their parents, together with "English and language contact manifestations in the wider community" (Gatt, Letts and Klee, 2009, p. 268). Gatt, Grech and Dodd (2015) hold that "English mixing results not only out of necessity, as in the case of established borrowings, but also because caregivers prefer to do so, often in line with language choice patterns employed with young children at a societal level rather than sporadically".

Grech and Dodd (2008) also attribute increased lexical and phonological acquisition in older children, to the fact that they have more exposure to the English language through school and social activities which in turn further supports their lexical and phonological acquisition (Grech and Dodd, 2008). These marked differences in language acquisition, production and learning are also a part of what makes the Maltese linguistic context somewhat distinct from that of some other bilingual societies (see section 1.5.3 in Chapter 1: Introduction). Across the globe, bilingualism or multilingualism is becoming more the rule rather than the exception (Cook, 1991; Grosjean, 2010; Leikin et al., 2012). The very idea of an "uncontaminated" monolingual is undeniably questionable, since exposure to fragments of other languages is unavoidable in this age of globalisation (Bialystok, 2011; De Houwer, 2005), yet there is no single, clear-cut definition of bilingualism. Costa (2020) sustains that defining bilingualism is "like trying to hit a moving target" (p. xi). He states that this is because "traditional definitions are either so

broad that they are not useful, or so narrow that they leave out many cases of people who use two languages" (ibid.). Cenoz (2019) argues that it is unjust to measure the competencies of a speaker of two or more languages from a monolingual perspective, hence comparing proficiency to that of a native speaker. Grosjean, (2010) defines bilinguals simply as "those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (p. 4). General definitions of a bilingual may include those who understand a spoken and/or written language albeit not necessarily being able to speak or write it, whilst a more common definition includes people who are able to maintain a conversation in the two languages (Wei, 2007). A bilingual may hence be loosely defined as a person who deploys two languages with varying degrees of proficiency, however the level of competence achieved, the diverse experiences involved in the acquisition of the two languages, together with the impact of social, psychological, and cultural variables all ultimately affect the degree of bilingualism. Bialystok (2001) holds that bilinguals cannot simply be defined as individuals who can speak more than one language since "identifying what counts as a language is not straightforward judgement. We take it for granted that we know what languages are – where one stops and the next one starts" (p. 5).

Liebkind (1995) sustains that bilingualism may be defined in the following ways:

1. According to origin – when a person has learned the two languages from their family, and when they have used both languages from birth.

2. According to language proficiency – when a person learns two languages and is proficient in both.

3. According to language function – when a person is able to switch between both languages according to personal choice and societal demands.

4. According to attitudes – when a person feels bilingual and is categorised as bilingual by others.

Wei (2013) sustains that bilingualism is the consequence of language contact at the societal level, highlighting the following as typical examples of societal bilingualism, amongst others:

- **Territorial bilingualism**, where groups of speakers are congregated within their own geographically or politically confined areas.

- **Diglossia**, where two languages co-exist within a community but are used separately for different functions, with one language usually having a higher status than the other. Due to the fact that language is dynamic, the relationship between the two languages may change over time, resulting in a more composite diglossic structure.

- **Widespread bilingualism,** where different native or indigenous languages co-exist with one or more languages used predominantly for communication.

According to Cook (2002) and De Groot (2002), languages can relate in the following manner in the bilingual brain:

- **Total separation**: two separate and independent languages.

- **Interconnection**: two connected languages (to varying degrees).

- **Total integration**: two languages forming one single system.

There is no distinct line of demarcation between competences, hence, bilinguals are generally positioned at different ends of the proficiency continuum with most bilinguals usually falling somewhere in between. Balanced bilinguals may have equivalent competence in both languages, although native-like adeptness in both languages is rare (Cook, 1992; Wei, 2007; Baker, 2011), whilst unbalanced or dominant bilinguals may have higher competence in one of the languages - usually the mother tongue, or majority language (Zurer Pearson, 2009). Assessing a bilingual's proficiency in a language may prove to be a difficult and arduous task, since all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) must be taken into account (Wei, 2007).

The Maltese speech community across the Maltese islands is largely Maltese-English bilingual, where the majority of Maltese children are exposed to both languages from birth, thus being classified as crib bilinguals. Proficiency in the two languages is shaped by different experiences and thus dependent on a number of factors related to the quantity and quality of exposure at home, within the wider community and at school, together with other issues related to family's socio-economic status and level of education (Gatt, 2017). Therefore, the heterogeneity of bilingualism needs to be taken into account when defining a Maltese bilingual. The majority of Maltese children are brought up in families using the Maltese language predominantly at home, however exposure to the English language is often extensive, both through the use of codeswitching within the family, and through the media, school, and the wider community (see section 2.2.1 in this Chapter). Although English is widely used in Malta, and it is both a language of instruction and a subject learned at school, Grech (2015) states that as is often the case in many English bilingual countries, the English language spoken in Malta is a variety in itself, which she refers to as "MaltE". (This is a play on words since the Maltese language is called *Malti* in the vernacular, pronounced in a similar way to MaltE). Grech states that the general perception is that this variety of English is "an example of bad English … [where] many of the features or characteristics noted as typical of this variety of English are therefore in fact seen to belie good education or minimally, a good command of English, although this is not necessarily the case" (p. 2). These issues are pertinent to my study, particularly when analysing issues related to language proficiency in Malta and in our young bilinguals. Many scholarly interpretations of bilingualism have been formulated by educators, psychologists, linguists, and politicians, amongst others (Baker, 2011). Specialists in the field differ amongst themselves about how bilingualism is conceptualised and the very incongruences between definitions have been influential in producing ongoing debates on how bilingualism should be marked. Definitions are wide and varied but rarely succeed in painting

a true and exhaustive picture. The reason for this is that the views of experts are somewhat subjective and may not always reflect the views of the speakers themselves. Being bilingual includes a vast array of concepts, hence the phenomenon of bilingualism is multifaceted (Luk and Bialystok, 2013).

2.2.2 Definitions and dimensions of bilingualism

Baker (2011) defines the different dimensions of overlapping and interacting bilingualism as follows:

- **Productive bilingualism** – the written and communicative ability in both languages.

- **Passive/receptive bilingualism** – the receptive ability of understanding and/or reading both languages.

- **Emergent/ascendant/incipient bilingualism** – the process of moving through the early stages of acquiring a second language.

- **Elective bilingualism** – the process of choosing to learn a language by adding a second language without losing one's first language.

- **Circumstantial bilingualism** – the process of learning another language because of circumstance (such as in the case of immigrants). In this scenario the first or indigenous language may be in danger of being replaced by the second language (this issue shall be discussed further in section 2.4.2 of this chapter).

Children acquire bilingualism under diverse circumstances, which undeniably results in different levels of proficiency in each. Bialystok (2001) refers to Romaine's (1995) six patterns of home language bilingualism as follows:

SIX PATTERNS OF HOME BILINGUALISM

Type 1	**One person, one language.** Parents have different mother tongues, however they are able to communicate in the other's language. One language is the dominant language of the community. Parents choose to communicate with the child in their own native tongue.
Type 2	**Non-dominant home language, one environment.** Parents have different mother tongues. One parent's language is the community's dominant language, which the child is exposed to outside the home (school/community). Parents communicate with the child in the non-dominant language.
Type 3	**Non-dominant home language without community support**. Parents share the same mother tongue which is not the community's dominant language. The parents communicate with the child in their own language.
Type 4	**Double non-dominant home language without community support**. Parents each have different mother tongues, both of which are not the community's dominant language. The parents each communicate with the child in their own language from birth.
Type 5	**Non-native parents.** Parents share the same dominant language of the community. One of the parents communicates with the child in a language which is not their mother tongue.
Type 6	**Mixed languages**. Parents mix two languages through codeswitching when communicating with the child.

Table 2. 1 Six Patterns of home bilingualism (Adapted from Bialystok, 2001).

The setting and participants provide the context of my research, which influences the outcomes of my study and impacts their significance. It is hence crucial that these aspects are thoroughly

considered and explored so that significant conclusions can be derived from the data. The situation in Malta, as described in section 1.5 of Chapter 1: Introduction, is generally that of widespread bilingualism without diglossia, where both Maltese and English are utilised and equally valued, and of Productive Bilingualism, since the majority of Maltese children are exposed to both languages from birth, and go on to learn them simultaneously at school. Most Maltese families may be classified as Type 6 (Mixed Languages), since notwithstanding the fact that they may possess a dominant language, both Maltese and English, together with varying levels of codeswitching are present in their everyday home communication. Due to recent demographic changes in Malta, one can also witness different dimensions and patterns of bilingualism becoming more widespread. These issues are further discussed in section 2.4 of this chapter, and they are relevant to my study, which aims to shed more light on the linguistic landscape within Maltese schools, whilst bridging existing gaps in local literature on this topic.

2.2.3 Bilingualism in education

According to García (2009, p. 5), "bilingual education is the only way which to educate children in the twenty-first century". Baker (2011) refers to Bilingual Education as the education of either students who are already speakers of two languages (as is the case for the majority of Maltese children), or the education of students who are learning an additional language and/or languages (which situation is becoming more and more widespread in Malta as a result of changing demographics). Notwithstanding the large and ever-growing literature on bilingualism, there is little consensus in terms of input, and on the amount of language exposure required in order to classify as bilingual education. There are also varying opinions based on age of acquisition and mastery of the language (García, 2009; Baker, 2011). Lynch (2017) states that there is a distinction between classifying a person as being bilingual, or as being a second language (L2) speaker, and that a number of factors must be taken into account

in order to attempt this differentiation, amongst which are "context, age of acquisition, degree of proficiency or ability, nativeness or native-likeness and social identity" (p. 2).

Hogan-Brun (2017) sustains that "language education choices are often governed by a pragmatic focus on the 'utility' and economic potential of languages" (p. 72). A variety of bilingual models exist around the world and differ in terms of their main aims, individual requirements of the learners, the structure of the programme, the amount of instruction in each language, pedagogical approaches and the extent of backing from policy makers and the community. Leung (2005) claims that the diverse ways in which languages are deployed in the classroom may define the characteristics and nature of a bilingual programme. He also sustains that bilingual education, in its many forms, can be used to serve several educational and social aims which include the promotion of a majority or minority, or both languages, in a linguistically diverse society.

Freeman (2007) defines the following different types of English language bilingual education programmes available:

- **Transitional bilingual education**, which encourages students with limited proficiency to rapidly transition to the all-English educational mainstream.

- **Dual language education**, which views first or foreign languages as advantageous resources in the teaching of English.

- **Second/Foreign language immersion programmes**, which teach at least one half of the curriculum in a second or foreign language.

- **One-way developmental bilingual education programmes**, which target solely the speakers of another language.

- **Two-way immersion programmes**, targeting a roughly equal amount of English speakers and speakers of another language using both languages to teach content.

English as a second language (ESL) programmes are wide and varied and usually take each country's particular sociolinguistic situation into consideration (Freeman, 2007). The vast majority of these programmes use a communicative approach, which is based on the notion that proficiency is the result of meaningful, natural, and real-life student interaction and simulation, rather than on grammatical perfection (Galloway, 1993).

García (2009) claims that there are significant differences between Bilingual Education and traditional language programmes that teach a second language, in that the latter teach the language as a subject, whilst the former use both languages as a medium of instruction. The scenario in Malta is unique due to the fact that the education system combines both pedagogies.

Mifsud and Vella (2020, p. 2), describe the bilingual education system in Malta as one where

> the whole school population receives some form of bilingual education in Maltese and English. Bilingualism is at the level of social organization and beyond the individual or nuclear family. The languages of schooling are available in the wider out-of-school environment and learners are in contact with both languages from a very young age.

The public education system in Malta has been bilingual, and for a period trilingual (Italian, English and Maltese) since its beginnings in the nineteenth century. The Maltese classroom has been English/Maltese bilingual since the period following the second world war (Camilleri Grima, 2016). Both Maltese and English are taught as subjects in schools, however they are also both used as a medium of instruction, due to a variety of reasons including the tendency for Maltese speakers to codeswitch or lapse into the other language (this will be discussed further in section 2.3.2 of this chapter), and also due to the fact that the majority of textbooks and some technical terms are usually provided in the English language (Farrugia, 2013; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Camilleri Grima (2016, p. 177) explains how "the division of labour" between English and Maltese lies mainly in the "spoken/written distinction" since most of the

reading and writing is done in the English language, whilst Maltese is often the preferred language of oral communication. Camilleri Grima holds that both languages fulfil different, yet essential pedagogical functions in the classroom, and that this "continual shifting from one language to another to satisfy social and pedagogical conditions results in translanguaging, or the drawing on all of one's linguistic resources" (ibid.)

García (2009) states that this style of education is in line with the latest trends in language teaching, which are increasingly advocating flexible language practices, hence utilising the students' entire linguistic resources whilst combining language and content. She describes bilingual education as an occurrence during which communication between the teacher and students includes multilingual practices which enhance the effectiveness of language learning and communication. García further states that these practices "foster and develop tolerance towards linguistic differences, as well as appreciation of languages and bilingual proficiency" (pg. 9). The table below, adapted from García (2009) highlights the differences between Bilingual Education and Language Education.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BILINGUAL AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

	Bilingual Education	**Foreign or Second-Language Education**
Overarching Goal	Educate meaningfully and some type of bilingualism	Competence in additional language
Academic Goal	Educate bilingually and be able to function across cultures	Learn an additional language and become familiar with an additional culture
Language Use	Language used as media of instruction	Additional language taught as subject
Instructional Use of Language	Uses some form of two of more languages	Uses target language mostly
Pedagogical Emphasis	Integration of language and content	Explicit language instruction

Table 2. 2: Differences between Bilingual Education and Language Education (adapted from García, 2009, p.7).

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Within the European Union, this pedagogic method, in which an additional language is the medium used for both content and language teaching, is being promoted under the acronym of CLIL, referring to *Content and Language Integrated Learning*. CLIL involves the use of language-supportive methodologies focusing on both topic and language of instruction (García, 2009; Marsh and Frigols, 2012). CLIL is a holistic, cognitive-based method of instruction, spawned by the relationship between constructivist theories and second language acquisition. The demand for more widespread proficiency in the English language, as an effect of globalisation, has given rise to the adoption of this form of instructional medium throughout educational institutions (Marsh and Frigols, 2012), together with the promotion and support through funded initiatives by the European Commission and the Council of Europe (Cenoz, Genesee, and Gorter, 2014). In Europe, this approach to learning is found in both primary and secondary education (Marsh and Frigols, 2012). In the Maltese context, CLIL generally signifies teaching most subjects in English at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels, where codeswitching is spontaneously utilised as a linguistic strategy and resource. Cenoz, Genesee, and Gorter (2014), however argue that CLIL's idea of dual focus is not always easy to achieve due to the difficulties associated with striking a precise balance between language and content. Moreover, they claim that there is an absence of necessary established guidelines in this methodology for academic institutions, due to the fact that CLIL is merely an "umbrella term" for a number of different approaches (p.246). McDougald (2016) argues further that implementation of CLIL poses logistical difficulties related to time tables, qualified teachers, budget and resources, together with other more complex issues namely subject teachers' resistance to language teaching, CLIL programs still being at an experimental stage, the specific skills required by subject content teachers and a lack of CLIL teacher-training programmes.

Immersion programs are possibly the most widespread bilingual and multilingual education programs around the world (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter, 2014). Ruiz de Zarobe (2008) considers Immersion programs synonymous to CLIL, whilst Varkuti (2010) claims that Immersion programs are merely an adaptation of CLIL. Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2014) sustain that although there are many similarities between CLIL and Immersion programs, there are also a number of disparities stemming from the students' particular motivations for learning the target language, student and teacher identities, the balance between content and language teaching and learning, together with other pedagogical concerns.

According to the 2015 Council of Europe's Language Education Policy Profile for Malta, Malta has adopted the Immersion pedagogical method. Immersion programmes are suitable for the Maltese educational scenario since the majority of local children are either dominant or balanced bilinguals, where bilingual education is understood to mean the teaching of both English and Maltese including a variety of teaching methods designed to meet the requirements of learners. The National Literacy Strategy (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014) states that this approach ensures that,

- Bilingual education commences at an early age and continues over the educational lifespan and beyond.
- Both languages are used to learn subject content.
- Bilingual education should contribute to both language development and cognitive competences.

High quality Immersion programmes involving qualified teachers together with ongoing teacher training and the use of a variety of resources, offer major benefits to learners and are also rewarding for the professionals involved (Leung, 2005; Hickey and de Mejía, 2014). Immersion programmes in bilingual education have been shown to benefit students in both

reading and math achievement (Marian, Shook and Schroeder, 2013). Bilingual students perform higher on average on tasks that involve multi-tasking, creative thinking or problem solving because they are used to constantly switching from one language to another (Wei, 2007; Bialystok, 2011; Leikin, 2013; Kroll et al., 2014).

Two-way immersion dual language programme designs however usually include strict language separation and heterogeneous language grouping (Torres-Guzman, 2007), which is rarely the case in Malta. The extent of instruction and communication time allotted to each language also depends on whether the school is a state, church or independent institution, since state schools view Maltese as L1 and therefore tend to use the language more frequently than English as an instructional and communicative tool, as opposed to independent schools which view English as L1 (Camilleri Grima, 2013a; Farrugia, 2013; Milton, 2016). The situation in church schools may vary, depending largely on school policies. Teacher's home background and personal preferences are also influential in language use and the amount of code switching that takes place (Camilleri Grima, 2013b; Milton, 2016) (this shall be discussed in more detail in section 2.3 of this chapter). The catchment area of the students in each particular school together with the increasing influx of migrant children entering Maltese schools is another factor influencing the language environment and type of instruction provided (Camilleri Grima, 2013a; Farrugia, 2017; Paris and Farrugia, 2019).

The following table compares the Maltese bilingual model to other models.

MALTESE BILINGUAL MODEL

	Integrative Table: Bilingual Education				
1	Theoretical Framework	Subtractive	**Additive**	Recursive	*Dynamic*
2	Language Goal	Monolingualism; monoglossic	**Bilingualism; monoglossic**	Bilingualism ; heteroglossic	*Bilingualism ; heteroglossic*
3	Literacy Goal	Monoliteracy	**Full biliteracy**	Functional biliteracy	Functional biliteracy
4	Cultural Goal	Monocultural	Bicultural	Bicultural multiplicity	**Transcultural**
5	Initial Linguistic Position of Children	Monolingual	**Monolingual**	Different points of bilingual continuum	*Different points of bilingual continuum*
6	Language arrangements	Flexible convergent	**Strict separation**	Separation to flexible multiple	*Flexible multiple to separation*
7	Models of Bilingual Pedagogy	Convergent	**Immersion**	Immersion	Multiple

Table 2. 3: Maltese bilingual Model compared to other models (Malta Ministry for Education and Employment Council of Europe's Language Education Policy Profile Malta, 2015b, p. 38).

Bilingual education in Malta covers all levels of schooling from early childhood to post-secondary, and is present in all Maltese schools, albeit at different levels. Communication between teachers, students and other members of staff is both instinctively and intentionally bilingual as the interplay between the two languages is constantly practiced (Camilleri Grima, 2018).

Although the use of codeswitching in examinations is generally disallowed, in some subjects such as Religion, Environmental Studies, Social Studies and History, students are permitted to answer questions in either language. This practice is also carried on in the national 16+ SEC examinations which are held at the end of formal secondary schooling. Both languages are also given high importance at tertiary level, where English and Maltese at Ordinary level are

prerequisites for entry (for Maltese students). Many courses including Medicine, Law and Education, amongst others require students to be fully proficient in both languages, and have specific course entry requirements ranging from passes at Intermediate or Advanced level, or passes in Medical Maltese, or Maltese and English proficiency tests organised by the Department of Education (depending on the course). Proficiency in both languages is therefore necessary at all levels of schooling, however, the use of English in higher education is imperative, since most textbooks are in English. Students opting to follow degree courses at university are expected to be fully proficient in the English language since this is in effect the language of tertiary education (Baldacchino, 2018), with many lectures being held in the language.

Camilleri Grima (2018, p. 38) points out that both Maltese and English are thus important elements of the Maltese educational system, however she holds that as a result of demographic changes on the island, Maltese classrooms seem to be shifting to "an English-only medium of instruction". This is because teachers often tend to use the English language predominantly if not exclusively, for the benefit of migrant non-Maltese speaking children. This is leading to a new, unfortunate situation where teachers may be "ignoring the pedagogical functions of codeswitching, because they assume that the Maltese children are able to follow the lesson in English, while the non-Maltese would not be able to understand any Maltese". This is an interesting observation, which may shed a different perspective on the future of Malta's bilingual educational system. These observations also need to be taken into consideration when designing policies and recommendations, and when conducting studies such as this present one about linguistic practices in schools.

2.2.4 Policies in education

The first mention of Bilingualism in education in Malta was made in 1999, where this was referred to in The National Minimum Curriculum. This policy document advocated a model of bilingual education which supported the strict separation of languages, and which discouraged the use of codeswitching unless this was deemed an absolute necessity in order to mitigate pedagogical difficulties. This monoglossic view of language education is certainly not in line with the current trends which favour fluid and flexible heteroglossic practices. García (2009) promotes the development of "an integrated plural vision for bilingual education, by which bilingualism is not simply seen as two separate monolingual codes" (p.5), for the benefit of multilingual communities worldwide. However, the philosophy of language education advocated in The National Minimum Curriculum, (which was at the time considered to be a bible of sorts within the teaching profession), was passed on to many educators who were being trained at the time, and these ideas are still in ingrained in many teachers in our classrooms, despite changes in current trends. These very incongruencies are manifested in these teachers' dilemmas and feelings of guilt when faced with situations which demand flexible language pedagogies, and are hence salient elements of my study, particularly in view of limited research in the local field (see section 4.4 in Chapter 4 Findings, Analysis and Results). This monoglossic way of teaching was promoted extensively up till 2011, when the recommendations made in The National Minimum Curriculum were revised through the development of The National Curriculum Framework (Malta Ministry for Education, 2012). This document is built on the assumption that Maltese is L1 and English is L2 for the majority of Maltese children and is based on learning outcomes conducive to lifelong learning, promoting language as key to facilitate communication. It recommends bilingual development through the promotion of and exposure to both Maltese and English through a heteroglossic,

rather than a monoglossic model. This policy also takes into account the recent demographic changes happening in Malta (which are discussed in section 2.4 of this chapter), and advocates a multilingual education policy, focusing on an additive theoretical model whereby students are given the opportunity to extend their initial repertoire with other languages, with English being the primary language of focus.

The concept of Bilingualism in education gained further popularity through the development of two other important documents. The National Literacy Strategy for all in Malta and Gozo (Ministry of Education 2014) advocates the teaching of both languages as from a very early age through language immersion practices. The Language Education Policy Profile, Malta (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2015b), holds that the Maltese bilingual education system follows a dynamic theoretical framework of bilingualism, which according to García (2009, p. 119), "considers all students as a whole, acknowledges their bilingual continuum, sees their bilingualism as a resource, … allows the simultaneous co-existence of different languages in communication [and] accepts translanguaging".

In 2016, The Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta was launched, which states that,

> Maltese and English are to be introduced and developed in tandem in the Early Years. Early Years education settings should provide an environment for children to develop age-appropriate concepts and language skills. All children should have ample opportunities to practise and consolidate their languages in the Early Years. Language development depends on the quality of the provision, including the language skills of staff, and meaningful interaction (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2016 p. 5)

The year 2019 saw the development of another consultation document, The National Policy of the Teaching of Maltese as a Foreign Language within the Framework of Bilingualism and Plurilingualism (Ministry for Education and Employment 2019). This document focuses on the bilingual development of migrant children, emphasizing the need to strengthen balanced bilingualism in our schools, and to promote migrant children's heritage languages, without however providing any clear guidelines on how this could be achieved if the child's mother tongue is not taught as a subject at school. This is one challenge which migrant learners are facing in Malta, since their education operates on a deficit model, focusing on learning Maltese and English, without being offered appropriate support for the maintenance of their heritage language. This predicament often leads to the social impairment and academic underachievement linked to home languages not being adequately celebrated and valued (Micallef Cann and Spiteri, 2014; Scaglione and Caruana, 2018; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020).

Although the development of these documents was a major step in the right direction since they all promote a heteroglossic view of language teaching and learning, advocating flexible language practices such as codeswitching and translanguaging, and encourage multilingualism, they still fall short on providing teachers with practical guidelines on how this can be realistically achieved.

Issues focusing on bilingual education in Malta are pertinent to my study since the linguistic challenges faced by both student populations and teachers alike are at the forefront of my research, and are even more salient in view of the fact that this is still a relatively poorly researched area in Malta. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceived classroom practices in this regard shall be elaborately discussed and analysed in sections 4.3 and 4.4 of Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results. Ultimately, this study aims to provide teachers with much needed concrete guidelines on how to manage the flexible language practices which mirror

linguistic practices in the community and which are lacking in current policies and documents (see Chapter 5: Conclusion).

2.2.5 Benefits of bilingualism

Following the 'Babelesque' concept of a confusion of tongues, human beings have evolved to speak more than one language and historically, languages have evolved into intricate, communicative systems. Bilingualism and Multilingualism are associated with a myriad of cognitive, social, personal, academic, professional, and health benefits. Kroll and Bialystok (2013) state that "the bilingual is indeed a mental juggler at all levels of language processing and that there are a host of consequences that result, many of which can be characterized as benefits" (p.16).

On the other hand, bilinguals' performance on rapid lexical retrieval tasks has been shown to be poorer than that of their monolingual peers, due to a smaller vocabulary repertoire. Moreover, monoglots outperform bilinguals in memory tasks which rely mainly on verbal recall. However, monolinguals perform more poorly in tasks that rely on executive control, a command system that directs the attention processes used for mentally demanding tasks (Bialystok, 2009). Bilinguals continually exercise their executive control since they are constantly selecting from two active target languages. This in turn gives bilinguals superior concentration, problem solving and multitasking skills together with an enhanced mental plasticity (Bialystok, 2011; Athanasopoulos and Bylund 2013; Kroll et al., 2014), and these benefits are evident in all stages across the human life span (Bialystok, 2011). Kroll et al., (2014, p. 161) sustain that,

> The evident permeability of the bilingual language system, both with respect to language co-activation and language reorganization, raises the possibility that the

influence of bilingualism is not isolated to the linguistic system but effectively reconfigures the cognitive network as a whole.

Speaking a second language also enables bilinguals to gain a deeper understanding of another culture. Bilingualism hence facilitates immersion in multicultural experiences which is a powerful advantage in today's increasingly globalised world and is linked to social and employment benefits and increased job opportunities (Duff, 2005). Hogan-Brun (2017) sustains that, within supportive and appropriate environments, multilingualism may also result in "upward social mobility, greater employment prospects and access to wider markets" (p. 72). In the United States, workers who are fluent in two or more languages are more likely to be employed than monolinguals. There is also a high demand for linguists within the European Union with an expenditure of around 1% of the annual EU budget allocated to translation services (Hogan-Brun, 2017). Furthermore, balanced bilinguals are reported to have higher earnings than their counterparts who only speak one language. This could also be correlated with academic attainment (Agirdag, 2013, 2014). In Malta, proficiency in the English language supports our economy, especially within the tourist, financial and TEFL industries (Francesconi, 2010; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Multilingualism is also proving to be an issue of concern among professionals in health care or social welfare, who need to communicate and care for individuals with whom they do not share a common language (Angouri, 2014; Hogan-Brun, 2017). According to Angouri (2014), social relationships and professional development and wellbeing are also attributed to multilingualism, since, communication skills and language proficiency are not solely a means of accessing the job market, but also a way through which workers can network, socialise and establish themselves as part of a team.

2.2.6 Bilingualism and identity

Language cannot exist in a vacuum but is a social entity which is sensitive to a variety of external social, cultural, economic, environmental, and historic forces. Language serves a

communicative, cultural, and social function. Through language, human beings are able to express emotions, convey feelings and profess their identity. Language also allows for distinction between nations, cultures, and social groups. Wei (2007, p. 3), describes language as a "human faculty: it co-evolves with us, homo-sapiens; and it is we who give language its life, change it and, if so desired, abandon it" (Wei, 2007, p. 3). In the words of Blommaert and Rampton (2016),

> the traditional idea of a language … is an ideological artefact with very considerable power – it is played out in a wide variety of domains (education, immigration, education, high and popular culture, etc.), and it can serve as an object of passionate personal attachment (p. 25).

Bilingualism and multilingualism are in effect sociolinguistic and interactional phenomena. The social identities of very young bilinguals are shaped through language acquisition and socialisation (Lanza, 2004; Bailey, 2008). Bialystok (2001) holds that bilingualism also carries a psychosocial dimension which has the power to form identities. Lanza (2004) states that bilingual children are not only learning two languages, but are also gaining communicative competence, as they develop both social identity and proficiency simultaneously. As they are immersed in a bilingual environment, young children are exposed to significant features of language socialisation as they learn how to distinguish between languages and the implicit rules of codeswitching according to the needs of the social circumstances (Baker, 2011). As Lanza (2004) points out, "what is defined as 'appropriate' will vary from culture to culture, from social group to social group, from family to family, indeed from conversation to conversation" (p. 7).

According to Speech Accommodation theory, speakers adjust their speech style depending on their audience to increase or decrease perceived social distance from a social group, or to effectively enhance communication (Giles and Ogay, 2007). Bilinguals appear to shift between

languages depending on different social requirements and contexts, which in turn affect attributions, values, attitudes, feelings, and behaviour. Bilinguals indeed demonstrate a marked personality shift depending on the language they are speaking (Grosjean, 2010; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2013). This is especially true within bicultural rather than monocultural contexts (Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter and Pennebaker, 2006; Grosjean, 2010).

Wei (2007) claims that language choice, together with culture, religion and history, forms social and ultimately, national identification, as the speaker consciously selects to communicate in one language out of their linguistic repertoire which is made up of one or more languages. Moreover, both family environment and education have an impact on both fluency and identity formation (Aspachs-Bracons, Clots-Figueras, Costa-Font and Masella, 2008). An educational setting which respects its learners' linguistic backgrounds improves a child's self-esteem, enables them to establish themselves as part of their community and encourages them to become effective and capable learners (Ball, 2011). Norton (2010) sustains that language learning holds psycholinguistic, sociological, and anthropological dimensions, which translate into power relations in educational environments which may either encourage or inhibit learning, claiming that,

> when learners speak or remain silent; when they write, read or resist, we need to understand the extent to which the learner is valued in a particular classroom, institution, or community … language is thus theorized not only as a linguistic system, but as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated (p.351).

The tendency to use different languages depending on the social situation or topic of conversation is common within bilingual communities (Ariza, 2018), and this is also referred

to as situational or metaphorical codeswitching, terms first coined by Gumperz and Blom in 1971 (Javier, 2007).

Baker (2011) holds that "codeswitching is not just linguistic; it indicates important social and power relationships" (p. 110). The history of the Maltese language being a blend of a variety of Semitic, Romance and Germanic, together with its contact with the English language as a result of colonialism, has impacted the current sociolinguistic situation in Malta. Camilleri Grima (2013b, p. 47) describes the islanders' attitudes towards language mixing as follows:

> There is a flexibility in the Maltese mind set about using languages bilingually which provides a fertile ground for quick evolution, not many hang overs related to language purism, but ways of keeping the Maltese language alive and ever developing in accordance with the changing needs and way of life of modern society.

Notwithstanding the fact that the situation in Malta is one of bilingualism without diglossia (Camilleri Grima 2013b), English is nevertheless highly valued for its importance within educational and professional fields. It is hence considered to be the "language of the educated" and is normally the preferred language used within professional environments. It has been and is still regarded as a high prestige or high class language, stemming from the time when Maltese was perceived to be the language spoken by the lower class and labelled as *'il-lingwa tal- kċina'* "the language of the kitchen" (Sciriha, 2002, p. 95), and hence many people still opt to speak the English language due to the positive connotations it holds (Camilleri, 1996; Francesconi, 2010). On the other hand, the majority of Maltese people prefer to use the Maltese language to discuss politics, jokes, secrets, and intimate things (Angermann, 2001). Bilingual speakers do in fact feel that they are able to express deep emotions more effectively in their native language, particularly when swearing, worshipping or during intimate exchanges, whilst the

second language is favoured for more formal communication (Dewaele, 2004; Pavlenko, 2005; Javier, 2007; Dewaele, 2010; Degner, Doycheva and Wentura 2012; Caldwell-Harris, 2014).

Pavlenko (2004) argues that language preference is influenced by a variety of issues, amongst which are language competence and dominance, social context, and emotional factors. Pavlenko states that this is apparent within bilingual or multilingual families "where communication is often fraught with emotions, conveyed not only through prosody or lexical choices, but also through language choices and codeswitching" (p. 180). Van der Walt, Mabule and De Beer (2001) hold that bilinguals also codeswitch in order "to emphasize, to show off, to joke, to stereotype" (p. 173). Codeswitching is also frequently used by Maltese bilinguals to express emotions not encoded in the other language. In this scenario, it is not the lack of proficiency in one language which produces the switch, but rather the lack of emotional connection (Pavlenko, 2014). Pavlenko also sustains that bilinguals' two spoken languages are often linked to "verbal repertoires, behavioural norms and voices assimilated in the process" (p. 237). Milroy and Muysken (1995) hold that bilingual speakers usually distinguish the contexts in which to use each of their languages separately, and this holds true for the situations depicted above. However, Malta's sociolinguistic situation often combines both languages in many contexts and hence Maltese speakers "are expected to function bilingually in the same domain and for the same purpose" (Camilleri Grima, 2013b, p. 49). Examples of such instances are highlighted by Camilleri Grima as she describes situations where "both languages are used within the same contract [or document], albeit separately, and the public is expected to understand all that is written in each language" (ibid.). Additionally, many terms in the Maltese version of said documents and contracts usually retain the English version, despite the existence of the Maltese equivalent. Camilleri Grima also describes similar situations related to religious ceremonies, such as weddings where mass booklets highlight this

constant interplay between the two languages, and other scenarios related to what is commonly witnessed on the media and in schools, where codeswitching is rampant and ubiquitous.

These issues are particularly important to my study, since it focuses on sociolinguistic situation in Malta, the bilingual practices of my participants, and how these may in turn impact their attitudes, perceptions and pedagogy. This is elaborately discussed in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis, and Results, section 4.3.

2.2.7 The Role of the first language in second language learning

Prior linguistic knowledge plays a significant, albeit two-sided role in second language learning. According to Behaviourist learning theories, the similarities between L1 and L2 positively influence second language learning, however, the differences between the languages may play a critical negative role, since learners would have to unlearn the rules and practices of L1 in order to avoid errors. All language learners make generalisations, and cross linguistic transfers are common amongst bilingual communities, however, second language learners tend to generalise from their first language. Conversely, scholars advocating language transfer as a cognitive process, claim that L1 is the foundation of L2 acquisition (Du, 2016).

Tang (2002) refers to Krashen's Natural Approach to language acquisition which supports the idea that students learn a second language in the same manner in which they learn their native language. This concept corroborates the long held pedagogical ideology that full immersion in L2 is necessary to learn a second language (Edstrom, 2006). Cummins (2007, p. 222) terms the monolingual idea of strict language separation as the "two solitudes assumption", which is an analogical illustration of how languages are completely independent from one another, within this context. Cenoz and Gorter (2020), argue that a monolingual view of language learning is counterproductive. This is because this method ignores students' "rich multilingual trajectories" which enable them to acquire additional languages, as they are often simply

viewed as "empty vessels, learning from scratch and with the monolingual speaker of the target language as a model" (p. 1). Cenoz and Gorter are also critical of learning environments which discourage teachers from using their students' first language, even if they are fluent in it.

Research conducted during the past two decades leans towards the idea that L1 use in L2 learning may be a valuable tool of instruction, enhancing both learning and comprehension (Wells, 1999; Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002; Edstrom, 2006; García, 2009; Genesee, 2010). This approach follows a Vygotskian perspective, which advocates the concept of giving learners experiences that are within their zones of proximal development, where the idea of "scaffolding" proposes that teaching should start at the child's level of knowledge and build up from there (Berk, 2003; Bee, 2004). Hence, in this scenario, the strategies employed by L1 learners would provide the foundational model for L2 learning (Foley, 1991).

Edstrom's (2006) personal reflections on her use of Spanish as L1 in teaching an English as L2 classroom, highlight multiple motivations for her using this method, amongst which is a respect and morality issue which she voices as follows, "my concern about my students as individuals, as human beings, at times transcends my concern for their L2 acquisition process" (p. 286).

Other motivations include the need for teacher and learner's use of the native language to express themselves better during particular discussions and also what Edstrom describes as teacher's "laziness" or lack of motivation at times. Teacher's use of L1 is often related to clarification, giving instructions, explaining vocabulary or complex ideas and grammar concepts, or during interpersonal relations (Tang, 2002; Ferguson, 2003; Van der Walt, 2009).

Macaro (2005) states that the main areas of L1 use in the classroom are

- When building a good rapport with learner.
- During complex explanations or giving instructions.
- For classroom management.

- Translating and assessing understanding due to time constraints.

- During exam time and other activities involving time pressures.

- When teaching grammar explicitly.

According to Van der Walt, Mabule and De Beer (2001), all teachers mix languages for specific reasons, even if these are unspoken. The boundaries of language mixing in L2 classes are usually either set by teachers or negotiated by teachers and students together (Van der Walt, 2009). For this reason, my study focused on my participants' own personal views on language mixing, together with what is effectively occurring in practice, as there are often incongruences among the two. The use of L1 in L2 lessons resulting out of necessity, where the students' individual requirements often set the pace is discussed in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, Section 4.4.

According to Van der Walt, Mabule and De Beer (2001), L1 should generally be used judiciously and the larger part of teaching should ideally be done in the target language. The use of L1 in the L2 class should be based on facilitating learning and not simply during classroom management discourse. Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012a) hold that co-languaging or translation from L2 to L1 as a main pedagogical strategy, may lead to student disengagement as they are involved in passive as opposed to interactional learning.

In Palviainen, Protassova, Mård-Miettinen and Schwartz's (2016) study of "the language practices of five bilingual preschool teachers working within three different sociolinguistic settings" (p. 602), all participants reported that they were proponents of the flexible use of both languages including responsible codeswitching to ensure "facilitating understanding of the new language, getting or sustaining attention, introducing abstract topics, giving instructions, or handling emotional content or conflicts" (p. 614).

Due to the heterogeneity of young bilinguals, research on early childhood dual language learning often incorporates simultaneous bilinguals and both preschool and school age L2 learners, which aggregates children with different levels of exposure and proficiency (Genesee, 2010). Lanza (2004) refers to children who acquire both languages simultaneously, thus having what she refers to as bilingualism as L1. These children only differentiate between languages by the end of their fourth year. Although Maltese children are considered to be crib bilinguals due to the constant exposure to both languages from birth (see section 1.6 in Chapter 1: Introduction), the amount and nature of home exposure may differ considerably from child to child. Our education system is such where English is generally considered to be L2 in a typical local classroom, apart from some private, independent schools, as mentioned in previous sections of this chapter. There is a natural interplay between the two languages which is practiced in the majority of schools and Camilleri Grima (2018) holds that a bilingual medium of instruction is generally well accepted because "the use of English [is] not perceived a threat to Maltese. On the contrary Maltese [holds] a rightful place as a medium of instruction and serve[s] as a scaffold to the learning of English" (p. 38). However, following recent demographic shifts, the situation in Maltese classrooms is becoming such that it may include children with various language acquisition histories, and hence learners may have bilingualism, Maltese, English, or another language as L1. These issues are discussed in detail in sections 4.3 and 4.4 Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, where the language backgrounds of both my participants and their students are put under an analytical lens, due to their relevance to ongoing classroom practices.

2.3 Cross-linguistic Practices within bilingual and multilingual societies

Language contact, which may be simply defined as a transfer of linguistic features amongst speakers of different languages or dialects, when they interact with one another, owes its roots to migration and colonisation (Appel and Muysken, 2006). This contiguity between languages

produces language shifts, language creation and cross-linguistic practices, which are ubiquitous within bilingual and multilingual societies worldwide.

2.3.1 Codeswitching as bilingual practice

Codeswitching is a widespread phenomenon within bilingual communities, where people alternate between two or more languages to communicate and convey meaning. According to Macaro (2005, p. 63), "switching between two or more languages in naturalistic discourse" happens when two people have two or more languages or dialects in common. In this respect, speakers engage in codeswitching practices because they feel that this facilitates their communicative needs better than when restricting themselves to a monolingual mode.

There seems to be a general misconception that bilinguals codeswitch due to a lack of proficiency in one or both languages (Reyes, 2004). Although this may sometimes hold true, as in the case of a person being unable to immediately retrieve a word in one language from their lexical repertoire (Wei, 2007), and notwithstanding the fact that monolinguals are less likely to have tip-of-the-tongue (TOT) occurrences than bilinguals (Kreiner and Degani, 2015; Costa, 2020), codeswitching is nonetheless typical among multilingual communities (Wei, 2007; MacSwan, 2017), and rather than being a language deficiency, it often proves effective cognitive and communicative abilities (Toribio, 2004; Macaro, 2005; Wei, 2007; Paradis et al., 2011). Muysken (2007) describes this phenomenon as "a quite normal and widespread form of bilingual interaction requiring a great deal of bilingual competence" (p. 280). Wei (2007) sustains that codeswitching, in fact, "involves skilled manipulation of overlapping sections of two (or more) grammars" (p. 15). The level of a bilingual's language proficiency is in effect correlated with the nature of codeswitching deployed (Toribio, 2004). Interestingly, Myers-Scotton (2006) claims that codeswitching is often not a result of poor lexical retrieval in one language, but it is generally because the utterance in the other language serves the speaker's pragmatic requirements better.

Baker (2011, p.108 -110) highlights thirteen overlapping purposes of codeswitching as follows:

THIRTEEN PURPOSES OF CODESWITCHING

Emphasis	Stressing a central word in a sentence, in order to accentuate a particular point.
Substitution	Lack of proficiency or weaker lexical repertoire in one language leading to the use of its equivalent in the other language, particularly in the case of technical or academic terminology.
Expression of a concept that has no equivalent	Reverting to one language when a word does not have an equivalent within the culture of the other language.
Reinforcement	To reinforce a concept or to assert authority.
Clarification	Repeating a phrase or passage in another language in order to clarify a point. This is especially true within bilingual educational environments.
Expressing identity	To express identity, reduce social distance, connect informally and intimately with friends or family members and in order to be accepted within a peer group.
Relating a conversation	To repeat verbatim the contents of a previously held conversation.
Interjection into a conversation	As a signal in order to interrupt an ongoing conversation.
Easing tension/injecting humour	To change the mood and pace of a conversation.
Changing attitude or relationship	To break boundaries, reduce social distance and improve relationships, or conversely to establish a more formal business relationship, elevate status or set boundaries.
Excluding people from a conversation	To exclude those who do not understand that same language.
Discussing particular topics	To discuss certain topics, particularly monetary or mathematical terms.
Copying peers and adults	When bilingual children model peers or significant caregivers.

Table 2. 4: 13 purposes for codeswitching (adapted from Baker, 2011).

Myers-Scotton (2007) refers to codeswitching as being either an unmarked or marked choice.

When the conversation's participants are bilingual peers, this unmarked choice does not change

the situation in the least. In the local scenario, peers usually alternate between the two languages without any consequences or importance. Codeswitching as a marked choice, on the other hand is always significant and carries either positive or negative connotations. In line with Baker's list, Myers-Scotton also claims that a bilingual may choose to codeswitch due to changes in topic or when new participants join the conversation. This code alternation may also happen to narrow or increase social distance (as mentioned above). My study addressed this by delving into the reasons why my participants choose to codeswitch in both their personal and professional lives, and how they instinctively employ this strategy to meet their linguistic demands. This is discussed in section 4.4 of Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results.

The extent to which bilinguals codeswitch depends on the perceived status and linguistic competence of the listeners, the nature of the relationships between the persons involved in the conversation, together with the environment in which the exchange takes place (Baker, 2011). Codeswitching in childhood is mainly influenced by what parents and significant caregivers model, and also depends on "the interaction between adults and the child, the nature of the adult input, increasing self-awareness in the child, adjusting to adult norms, varying context and the child's relative proficiency in each language" (Baker, 2011, p. 96).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, bilinguals as young as 2 years of age are conscious of the implicit context-sensitive appropriateness of language use and mixing (Lanza, 2004; Baker, 2011). However, Meisel (2007), claims that although bilingual children do have the ability to codeswitch as early as age 2, they do not develop the required pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills associated with codeswitching prior to their fifth year or even later. The most common way young children codeswitch is through intrasentential switching, thus beginning a sentence in one language, then switching to another, which is typical of early bilinguals (Paradis et al., 2011). The pedagogical implications for these findings are that educators, administrators and main stakeholders should familiarise themselves with the ever growing body of research on the

subject in order to be aware of the fact that codeswitching in class is not a hindrance to language learning, as was previously assumed, but on the contrary, may prove to be a beneficial instructional tool in particular settings.   Macaro (2005), and Chen and Rubinstein-Avila (2018), state that codeswitching in educational settings is considered to be a contentious issue due to a variety of reasons, amongst which is the notion that it reduces the amount of exposure time in the target language. In this respect, Paradis (2011), however suggests that quality is as important as, if not more than, the quantity of language input in childhood.   Macaro (2005) also states that the lack of teacher autonomy, whereby educators are constrained to practise methodologies imposed on them by national agencies, is another reason why codeswitching has been largely frowned upon for many years. Macaro also sustains that most teachers seem to hold that L2 should be the main language of interaction in target language classes, however, the majority of them are also against totally eliminating L1 during the lessons.   Unfortunately, due to the negative connotations related to codeswitching, educators experience feelings of guilt when using L1 as a pedagogical tool for L2 or foreign language learning (Simon, 2001; Macaro, 2005), which Macaro (2005) refers to as an "[unhealthy] outcome of a pedagogical debate" (p.69).   Ferguson (2003), argues that, within bilingual societies especially where codeswitching "is endemic in the community", it is impractical to impose the strict separation of languages on teachers. Ferguson suggests that this is "probably counterproductive", when taking into consideration the current growing research in the field highlighting the benefits of codemixing as a "useful communicative resource" (p. 11).

Macaro (2005) sustains that codeswitching is a natural phenomenon, particularly in our increasingly globalised world, and hence should not be disapproved of in bilingual settings since it merely "mirrors a natural process happening in naturalistic discourse" (p. 80).   Macaro further suggests that codeswitching should be an essential part of the objectives when planning the curriculum, however the switch should be done judiciously and only when that very switch

is deemed to be more beneficial than full immersion in the target language. Striking this balance may by all means not be an easy feat and Macaro claims that,

> The answer may therefore lie in a dynamic interaction between functionally based codeswitching ('I need to use the L1 as a means to a better end') and a quantitative one ('if I gradually and constantly increase my use of L1 it will eventually stop being a foreign language lesson'). This dynamic interaction, based on evidence and reflection, will eventually empower the bilingual teacher rather than make him or her a victim of historical language learning developments, a puppet of the latest methodological fashions, or the scapegoat of uninformed government policies (p. 82).

2.3.2 Codeswitching and the Maltese context

Language is dynamic and its main, primary purpose is that of being a communicative tool. Hence, if this phenomenon is proving to be a valuable resource within multilingual groups, the use of more than one code should also be progressively recognized and encouraged within educational institutions as a means to enhance communication skills (Simon, 2001). The Language Education Policy Profile, Malta advocates the use of codeswitching as a pedagogical tool and states that,

> this idea of the strict separation of languages is inconsistent with the discursive – and cognitive – functioning of plurilingual speakers and, specifically in the case of Malta, the language practices of Maltese society as a whole, where the alternation of languages (Codeswitching) is common practice. Indeed such codeswitching is a practice widely shared in all multilingual situations and by all plurilingual speakers (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 40).

The Language Education Policy Profile for Malta also claims that the results obtained from current local research indicate that codeswitching is "extremely beneficial for the effective

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management of learning processes and teaching activities" (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 41), and hence the current trend is moving towards the development of "plurilingual and uncompartmentalized practices in the classroom" (p. 41). The judicious use of codeswitching is once again emphasised in this scenario and should not be,

> the same as blanket permission for the pupil always to use the language in which he or she (and often the teacher as well) feels most comfortable. In this case pupils would be deprived of the amount of quality input needed for them to construct their linguistic knowledge and competences and they would be less likely to access a quality education available to all (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 41).

The recommendations advocated in this document are to give due recognition to current successful teaching practices in codeswitching, to identify problematic areas and to improve current practices through the use of action research and the development of teacher training programmes (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012).

Camilleri Grima (2013b) states that Malta's sociolinguistic context is somewhat unique and cannot be appropriately compared to other bilingual populations such as linguistically differentiated communities as those in Belgium and Canada, or to immigrant and indigenous minority or postcolonial multilingual groups. Malta was a British colony up until 1964 and the English language is an integral part of Malta's postcolonial heritage. However, it has always been viewed as a privilege and a welcome addition to our linguistic repertoire, rather than a threat to the Maltese language, and there are no pro- or anti-imperialist connotations attached to the use of the English language. English is hence widely spoken in conjunction with Maltese at both the macro- and micro-levels, where widespread bilingualism without diglossia prevails.

Although the majority of the Maltese people are bilingual and proficient in both languages to varying degrees, and notwithstanding the fact that neither language is assigned high or low

function, there is nonetheless a form of implied social divide attributed to language choice. English speakers are usually considered to be posh and labelled as "tal-pepe" (snobs), whilst Maltese speakers are sometimes labelled as "ħamalli" (chavs/pejorative term referring to individual or groups of uneducated, lower social class people). Camilleri Grima (2015) sustains that Maltese is the first language learned at home by around 90% of the population. An undergraduate contemporary study carried out by Fenech (2014) regarding bilingualism and codeswitching in Malta reveals that although Malta is officially considered to be a bilingual country, Maltese is nonetheless the preferred language of communication chosen by the majority of the population. In her study of the local phenomenon she labels as the "North-South divide", Fenech claims that geographical distinction manifests itself in linguistic attitudes towards the use of Maltese and English. Notwithstanding the small size of the island (316 km²), inhabitants of certain localities such as Sliema, St Julians and the areas in proximity are usually more proficient in English, whilst residents of Southern areas are usually perceived to be less fluent. Reference to this undergraduate study is being made due the lack of local literature on the subject, and potential issues of academic rigour should therefore be acknowledged. In her Malta and Gozo travel guide, Rix (2010, p. 159) also refers to this phenomenon, aptly describing this area and its inhabitants as follows,

> Sliema isn't just a place, it's a type (like 'Sloane' in London). If you are 'Slimiz' [*person from Sliema*] you are likely to be a well-educated, English-speaking member of the professional classes with a cosmopolitan outlook and, although not necessarily rich, certainly not poor. Sliema is the place where Maltese families can still be heard speaking English in preference to Maltese, or unselfconsciously mixing the two into 'Manglish'.

The most recent Census of Population and Housing (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2012) proves that Maltese is still the predominant language in Malta, and also that the level of fluency

is related to geographical district. The age of Malta's inhabitants also determines the level of fluency in each language, which is possibly attributed to a better and more accessible educational system available today. The 2011 census depicts the Maltese population aged 10 and over by age group and languages spoken and by district and languages spoken as shown in the Tables below.

LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY DISTRICT

Language	Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo and Comino	Total
Maltese							
Well	69,950	98,597	53,987	50,249	50,608	26,909	350,300
Average	310	2,257	294	630	856	172	4,519
A little	207	1,189	215	330	589	106	2,636
Not at all	191	534	125	223	296	100	1,469
English							
Well	40,088	71,678	32,536	34,278	38,526	17,152	234,258
Average	13,543	14,864	10,514	8,312	7,468	4,842	59,543
A little	8,436	8,352	5,948	4,625	3,743	2,738	33,842
Not at all	8,591	7,683	5,623	4,217	2,612	2,555	31,281

Table 2. 5: Maltese population aged 10 and over by district and languages spoken (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2012).

LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY AGE

Language	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	Over 89	Total
Maltese										
Well	45,280	54,618	53,321	47,627	56,322	50,968	27,833	12,510	1,821	350,300
Average	1,255	795	654	720	543	338	147	60	7	4,519
A little	587	315	363	436	405	329	155	38	8	2,636
Not at all	193	172	215	226	206	246	133	66	12	1,469
English										
Well	36,984	44,206	39,247	32,878	35,299	27,840	12,619	4,493	692	234,258
Average	7,092	7,139	8,794	8,711	10,631	10,048	4,970	1,911	247	59,543
A little	2,009	2,631	3,978	4,345	6,374	7,149	4,765	2,300	291	33,842
Not at all	1,230	1,924	2,534	3,075	5,172	6,844	5,914	3,970	618	31,281

Table 2. 6: Maltese population aged 10 and over by age group and languages spoken (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2012).

Camilleri Grima (2013b) claims that bilingualism is practically an implicit requirement within the Maltese community, as can be observed in many widely distributed legal and government

documents which offer information in either Maltese, English, or both. There are instances when such documents do not offer direct translations but some information/instructions in one language, and additional information in the other. In this scenario, anyone who is not proficient in both languages would obviously be disadvantaged. Church services and religious activities, in Malta's predominantly catholic scenario, are also performed bilingually. Television and radio stations, as mentioned in section 1.6 of Chapter 1: Introduction, transmit in both languages, and the same applies for the majority of local newspapers and magazines. The language policy in education has promoted bilingualism for many years and is now also moving from one promoting the strict separation of the two languages towards the concept of a harmonious marriage of both as an educational resource. Nonetheless, examinations in both languages strictly forbid the use of codeswitching and mixing the two languages in any of the examinations' written or oral components would guarantee penalisation. Therefore, the situation in Malta requires that its inhabitants be both monolingually and bilingually proficient in the two official languages, since a variety of social situations necessitates the use of Maltese and English either separately or alternatively, depending on the circumstances. The use of both languages in the same context often results in the endemic practice of codeswitching which Brincat (2004) refers to as "the weaving of Maltese and English phrases" (p. 213). Even when Maltese speakers use the Maltese language in what is perceived to be monolingual code, it is still influenced by the English language, especially on a lexical level; whilst when Maltese people speak in English, this is often tainted by Maltese syntax, phonology and lexical choices (Camilleri Grima, 2013b).

Codeswitching in Malta is a mixture of two completely diverse languages, combining Maltese, with its largely Semitic roots, with English, which has Germanic origins. Codeswitching is the common term used for any kind of language switch within bilingual communities, however, there are several terms referring to codeswitching. These include code-mixing, code-changing

and tag-switching, situational, and metaphorical codeswitching. Codeswitching may also be intersentential or intrasentential, thus differing in the point at which the language switch takes place (Poplack, 1980; Saville-Troike, 2003; Baker, 2011). Myers-Scotton (2007) claims that codemixing and codeswitching are sometimes confused.   Some writers refer to mixing for intrasentential alternations and switching for intersentential switches.   Distinguishing codeswitching from borrowing may also prove to be challenging at times.

Zirker (2007) describes code mixing as "a brief insertion of a few words from one language into the other" (p. 8). This can be observed in Maltese daily utterances such as "*ħierġa shopping" (*I'm going shopping). Code-changing, on the other hand, is defined by Zirker as "a long clause(s) inserted into one language before or after a segment of the other language" (p.8) as can be seen in the following example - "*Mela tfal, illum ser naħdmu fuq l-Assedju l-kbir, so find page twenty-one on your textbooks please*" (Children, today we are going to be working on The Great Siege, so find page 21 on your textbooks please).

Tag-switching occurs through the speaker's insertion of a tag statement from one language to the other (Zirker, 2007), as in the case of discourse markers and interactional signs such as *"mela"* (so), *"ifhem"* (understand), *"ħeqq"* (well), "*allura*" (so), *"insomma"* (well) , *"hux"* (right), and *"u ejja"* (come on) in a sentence that is in English. "*Mela you're not joining us this evening*?" (So aren't you joining us this evening?) *"We are going to Sliema, hux?*" (We are going to Sliema, right?) *"ħeqq you're the one who is always changing plans!*" (Well, you're the one who is always changing plans!).

Situational codeswitching depends on a language shift due to a change in the environment, people taking part in the discussion or topic of conversation. This change in Malta is often demographic, where people automatically switch to English when shopping, for example, in the Sliema/St. Julians areas of Malta, which are considered to be English speaking localities,

or when in the company of English-speaking people. Sometimes, this switch also occurs during formal encounters, such as job interviews, where the use of English is often considered to be more appropriate. Metaphorical codeswitching is normally used for emphasis or to add meaning to what is being conveyed, such as in the case of reiterating or drilling a point, or in the case of replaying a conversation (Saville-Troike, 2003; Wei, 2007; Zirker, 2007; Baker, 2011).

The point at which the language switch occurs is defined as intersentential or intrasentential switching. Both inter- and intrasentential code alternations are ruled by social, situational, and structural factors (Wei, 2007). Intersentential marks a clear indent between one phrase and another where the switching takes place "at phrasal, sentence, or discourse boundaries" (Zirker, 2007, p. 10). For example, Maltese speakers may convey their thought about a particular topic in Maltese, and subsequently switch to English to express their consequent thought. "*Rajtha l-logħoba taċ-Champions League ilbieraħ? I think that Ronaldo really shouldn't have missed that penalty!*" (Did you watch the Champion's League match yesterday? I think that Ronaldo really shouldn't have missed that penalty!).

Intrasentential codeswitching is attributed to the highest fluency out of all types of codeswitching due to the skill required in order to mix rules of grammar and syntax half-way through a sentence (Zirker, 2007). Saville-Troike, (2003) sustains that some sociolinguists define intrasentential switching as code-mixing, however, she feels that this might convey the pejorative notion that it "involves a random or unprincipled combination of languages" (p. 50). On the contrary, the latter type of switching is not a casual fusion of two deficient languages but is usually systematic and adheres to explicit language rules, hence demonstrating the bilingual's ability and proficiency in each language (Toribio, 2004). This kind of codeswitching is usually performed "without pause, interruption or hesitation" (Zirker, 2007, p. 10). "*ħa ngħidlek, jien I'm very much in favour of bilingual education, għax naħseb li it is*

the way forward għall-istudenti tagħna" (Let me tell you, I am very much in favour of bilingual education, because I think that it is the way forward for our students).

The exemplification and processing of L2 syntax strongly hinge on the previously shaped L1 system (Santesteban and Costa, 2006). Relexification and the syntactic properties of Maltese hence frequently affect speech production in the English language. *"Trid immorru l-Belt?"* (You want we go to Valletta? Instead of: Would you like to go to Valletta/Shall we go to Valletta?) *"Kiltha it-tuffieħa?"* (You ate the apple? Instead of: Did you eat/have you eaten the apple?) "*Kemm hi sabiħa l-libsa*" (How nice your dress! Instead of Your dress is nice!). Although all these statements are still somewhat grammatically correct, Maltese speakers often prefer to use the first version, which follows the Maltese word order, where the statement is merely changed into question or exclamation form by the use of a rise in intonation. Stress and intonation in English are in fact very often structured on the Maltese language. English is also influenced by Maltese phonology on many levels. Some examples may include over stressing consonants, sounding out the "r" at the end of the word, sounding out silent letters, (such as the "l" in salmon), and pronouncing the "th" sounds as "t" or "d" (as in tree instead of three/der instead of there/mudder instead of mother).

The Maltese language is affected by the English language, mainly on a lexical level, where many English words have not only infiltrated the Maltese language, but have also been adapted to Maltese spelling rules and structure, and/or pronounced in Maltese (Camilleri, 1995) e.g. *"Kowċ - Kowċijiet"* (Coach – Coaches), *"Kejk - Kejkijiet"* (Cake – Cakes), *"Futbol"* (Football), *"Ners - Nersis"* (Nurse – Nurses), *"Wajtbord – Wajtbords"* (Whiteboard – Whiteboards), *"buz – buzijiet"* (Boots – Boots), "*essaċċ*" (As such), "*maniġer/meniġer*" (Manager).

There are a variety of English loan verbs which are imported by using a Semitic/Maltese special verb class, notwithstanding the fact that these verbs already have a Semitic/Maltese counterpart. One example is the verb "*tibbejkja*" (to bake), which takes the English root "bake", and imports it by changing the spelling to Maltese (bejk), and by using the special verb class. This Anglicised version gives way to its Semitic/Maltese equivalent "*taħmi*", of which use seems to be unfortunately decreasing in popularity, especially among the younger generation. Other such examples are "*tiddawnlowdja*" (to download) instead of "*tniżżel*", "*tikkomplejnja*" (to complain) instead of "*tgerger*" (to grumble) or "*tilmenta*" (to complain - which however, originates from Italian), "*tistreċċja*" (to stretch) instead of "*titmattar/tistira*", "*tirrileksja*" (to relax) instead of "*tistrieħ*", "*tirreppja*" (to wrap) instead of "*tgeżwer*", "*tixxerja*" (to share) instead of "*taqsam*", amongst a multitude of others. This way of using the language is becoming increasingly more popular but is nonetheless often criticised as a corruption of Maltese (Fabri, 2010).

Some loan words are however used as a result of the influence of popular culture, technology and social media, such as "*teddja*" (to add a friend on social media), "*tillajkja*" (to like an online post or picture), "*tixxerja*" (to share an online post or picture), "*tiggugilja*" (to google), "*tippostja*" (to post something online), "*timmesiġja*" (to message online or via mobile phone), "*titteggja*" (to tag somebody on social media), "*tiċċettja*" (to chat online), "*tissejvja*" (to save a doc or file), "*tiċċarġja*" (to charge a phone, laptop etc.). Other loan words have been adopted simply because there are no Maltese equivalents to replace them. Some such examples include "*tipparkja*" (to park), "*tittajpja*" (to type), "*tixxutja*" (to shoot a ball), "*tiddilitja*" (to delete), "*tistartja*" (to start a car), "*tibblaffja*" (to bluff), amongst others. The root of these verbs generally adheres to the English stem in terms of pronunciation, but however takes on Maltese spelling to follow the added verb class.

There are also many literal translations of Maltese idioms and expressions which are commonly used by local speakers of English, which would not be understood by native English speakers (Camilleri, 1995) e.g. *"Affarjiet li jiġru"* ("Things that run", instead of "things that happen"), *"Naqta qalbi"* ("I cut my heart" instead of "I give up"), *"Nieħu għalija"* ("I take for me" instead of "I get offended").

The following is a satirical example of codeswitching in Malta, also including childish diminutives such as "fishies", "bally" and "shoesies", which are commonly used when talking to small children. This is taken from the Facebook page of Għidabilmalti (a page which subtly smacks of linguistic purism, since it advocates the use of standard Maltese over English).

Figure 2. 1: A satirical example of codeswitching in Malta.

(Translation: *The language of children in 2017. Today we went to the beach by car, we splashed in the water. I dived and watched the fish swimming. The man and the lady next to us had a boy my age, and I played with him with the ball. When time was up, my mum told me to wipe my hands and wear my shoes to go. Today was so much fun!*) Source: Għidha bil-Malti (with permission).

As mentioned previously, the media is a prime example of the amount of codeswitching which occurs amongst the majority of the Maltese population. The following is a transcription taken from parts of a local popular television cooking show.

"Bħala kejk għandkom lemon and poppyseed cake, minn ġewwa fin-nofs għandu r-raspberry jam u secret ingredient użajtu bħala syrup biex il-kejk ikun aktar moist, bħala buttercream użajt il-lemon butter cream u l-ganache, użajt il- white chocolate ganache bit- three is to two ratio, biex inġib aktar id-dripping effect ..." (As a cake, you have a lemon and poppyseed cake, inside in the middle it's got raspberry jam and I used the secret ingredient as a syrup to moisten the cake, as for buttercream I used the lemon buttercream and for the ganache I used the white chocolate ganache in a three is to two ratio, so that I bring out the dripping effect even more).

"It's a strawberry cake ... ippruvajt indaħħal in between the layers mal-butter cream it-togħma tal-kafe ... kelli nuża l- ingredjent nispera li jimmaċċjaw it-togħmiet, it- tema hija love bil – ward ... ridt inkun eleganti imma at the same time ma nagħmilx too much things għax id-dripping effect kien ha jidher ħafna. Il-buttercream vanilla on the outside, tal- kafe in between u dik hija chocolate ganache u colour bil- food colour ..." (It's a strawberry cake ... I tried to insert the taste of coffee in between the layers together with the buttercream … I had to use the ingredient, I hope that the tastes match (*blend in*), the theme is love with roses … I wanted to be elegant but at the same time did not wish to put in too much (*many*) things because the dripping effect was going to be very prominent. The vanilla buttercream is on the outside, the coffee in between and that is chocolate ganache and colour with food colouring …).

Language use in the media generally mirrors the processes of sociolinguistic trends and shifts (Spilioti, 2017), and hence the constant interplay between Maltese and English can be often observed on television and radio programmes.

The dominance of the English language around the world owes its roots to British colonialism, where English was disseminated worldwide as a legacy of the British Empire (Kayman, 2004). Since then, however, the 'ownership' of English is being challenged in many countries, as the English language has further evolved into a global language in such a way that "English no longer belongs to the English" (Kayman, 2004, p. 2). Shifts in migration patterns have given rise to multilingual societies, many of which incorporate the English language as lingua franca (Cenoz, 2019). "The more English becomes 'everybody's' language, the more it dissociates itself from English as a native language" (ibid. p. 2). Malta has been shaped linguistically and culturally through its many rulers and its British colonial heritage, and this legacy offers important insights into its bilingual and multilingual status. Language contact has led to endemic intrasentential codeswitching and borrowing in Malta between two languages which are typologically distinct. The above examples and excerpts are prime examples of the way Maltese and English are increasingly in co-use in our bilingual communication. As discussed above, there are some English loan-words such as "cake" that have been given a phonetic rendering, and are now considered to be Maltese words, finding themselves in our Maltese dictionaries, transcribed according to the Maltese alphabet (kejk). One can also note that there both individual words that are uttered in English, such as "syrup", (instead of than the less often used Maltese equivalent "*ġulepp*"), and terms of fixed phrases such as "white chocolate ganache" and "secret ingredient". This presentation is also peppered with actual English phrases such as "at the same time" and "dripping effect", which is given the Maltese article "id-", instead of "the". As discussed previously, the English verb "to match" is creatively conjugated using Maltese grammatical rules (***jim*match*jaw/jim*maċċ*jaw***)*, hence creating a linguistically hybridised verb, instead of using the English clean verb version *match* or the Maltese equivalent *jaqblu*. The grammatical rule of countable and uncountable nouns is not followed when using the phrase "*too much things*", and this is a grammatical error which is

commonly made by Maltese English speakers. The noun/adjective sequence also takes on the Maltese rule in the case of "*buttercream vanilla*", where contrary to English grammar rules, the noun precedes the adjective (see Fabri, 2010). Therefore, in the English phrase "the black cat", the adjective "black" comes before the noun "cat", whereas its Maltese equivalent is *il-qattus iswed*, where the order is reversed with the noun *qattus* (cat) coming first and *iswed* (black) coming second. Language transfer in language learners and bilinguals can occur at different linguistic levels, namely, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and grammar (Paradis and Genessee, 1996; Brooks and Kempe, 2014). In bilingual societies, there are cases where the two languages have different grammatical rules, particularly in syntax and morphology.

When elements from two languages having different grammatical rules are combined, speakers usually follow either a "symmetric or asymmetric approach". The "symmetric approach does not assume priority for any one language but allows for lexical items to be drawn from either language and for their features to determine the possibility of their combination" (Deuchar, 2013, p. 5). The. The "asymmetric approach" is associated with the concept of the Matrix Language Framework. Myers-Scotton and Jake (2007) claim that during bilingual codeswitching, the two competing languages do not participate equally in the utterances, however they are both constantly activated at different levels. The Matrix Language (ML) is what provides the grammatical foundation, whilst the Embedded Language (EL) contributes components to be embedded in the structure. These elements must match the ML lexical-conceptual, predicate-argument and morphological realisation structure. Moreover, lexical insertions, often construed as borrowing, are normally integrated into the grammar of the matrix language. The Matrix Language Framework, moreover, contains constraints known as "Embedded language Islands" consisting solely of "Embedded Language morphemes" that are well-formed by "Embedded Language grammar", but which are inserted in the Matrix

Language frame (Myers-Scotton and Jake, 2007, p. 248). These constraints validate the concept of codeswitching being a structured, rather than a random phenomenon.

2.3.3 Translanguaging and codeswitching: differences and convergences

Both translanguaging and codeswitching refer to an alternation between languages, although they are diverse theoretical and analytical concepts. Translanguaging is similar to codeswitching since it also refers to a natural shift between languages for various communicative functions. Both codeswitching and translanguaging may be spontaneous or intentionally pedagogical, and rely on both teachers' and students' input, views, and perceptions of multilingual language practices. Goodman and Tastanbek (2020) posit that differentiating between codeswitching and translanguaging is not an easy task. In this respect, they warn that "if translanguaging and its nuances are poorly understood, it may become a buzzword that is used in teaching and research in ways that limit translanguaging practices to mere codeswitching" (ibid. p. 2).

There are multiple views on what distinguishes translanguaging from codeswitching, some of which include the idea that translanguaging is an umbrella term incorporating a variety of language practices, which may include codeswitching (García, 2009), that the concept is based on a different understanding of the way the bilingual mind works (Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019), and that there are points of convergence between the two concepts (Baker and Wright, 2017; Goodman and Tastanbek, 2020).

Goodman and Tastanbek (2020) claim that "research from the codeswitching past can still inform a translanguaging present and future" (p.11). They sustain that the main difference between codeswitching and translanguaging is that the former holds a diglossic view of languages as two separate, labelled entities which speakers find themselves alternating between; whilst the latter holds a heteroglossic view of a unitary fusion, or hybridised

repertoire of languages, which speakers delve into according to their particular requirements at any given time. Similarly, Otheguy et al. (201, p. 281) hold that codeswitching is the mere process of shifting between two separate linguistic systems, whereas translanguaging is the controlled cognitive process of accessing and deploying a "speaker's full linguistic repertoire", in order to express oneself.   Blommaert and Backus (2013) define "repertoire" as an embodiment of

> all the means of speaking, i.e. all those means that people know how to use and why, while they communicate … [ranging] from linguistic ones (language varieties) over cultural ones (genres, styles) and social ones (norms for the production and understanding of language) (p. 11).

They go on to state that biographical contexts impact language acquisition and learning and hence, repertoires are the result of "polycentric learning experiences", which include "a range of learning trajectories, from maximally formal to extremely informal", to others which happen subconsciously (p.21). García (2009, 2017), and Otheguy et al. (2015), further differentiate between codeswitching and translanguaging by stating that codeswitching is essentially an external interpretation of language, whilst translanguaging looks at language from the internal view of speakers, and their idiolects (people's own unique and personal language practices, which have developed through social interaction). Idiolects are also comparable to Busch's (2012, p. 19) notion of language practices which are "subjected to the time-space dimensions of history and biography". In this respect, Otheguy et al. (2015 p. 281), sustain that "the two named languages of the bilingual exist only in the outsider's view. From the insider's perspective of the speaker, there is only his or her full idiolect or repertoire, which belongs only to the speaker, not to any named language".   This is further corroborated by their 2019 work stating that "myriad lexical and structural features mastered by bilinguals occupy a cognitive terrain that is not fenced off into anything like the two areas suggested by the two

socially named languages" (p. 625). This is pertinent to my research, since it focuses on the

way my Maltese bilingual participants acquire and utilise language, where the concept of

naturally and spontaneously occurring cross-linguistic practices such as codeswitching and

translanguaging emerge strongly throughout my study (see sections 4.3 and 4.4 in Chapter 4:

Findings, Analysis and Results).

Translanguaging practices include codeswitching, but they go beyond merely facilitating

communication with others, since translanguaging focuses on constructing a deeper

understanding (Creese and Blackledge, 2015). Translanguaging and codeswitching are similar

because they both hold that multilingual speakers shift between languages in a natural manner.

However, translanguaging further evolved into a pedagogical practice, where two languages

are combined systematically within the same learning task, and where it may enhance both

language and content learning, through "making meaning, shaping experiences [and] gaining

deeper understandings and knowledge" (Park, 2013, p. 50). Translanguaging consists of fluid

language discursive practices where multilingual speakers are free to flexibly merge two or

more languages (García, 2009), and where they are given a social space which incorporates

their own personal history, experience, background, attitude, views and academic performance

(Wei, 2011). The distinction between codeswitching and translanguaging may be ideological,

in that codeswitching is linked to language separation, while translanguaging legitimises the

fluid practice of learning through two or more languages (Lewis, Jones and Baker, 2012b).

The concept of codeswitching focuses on a speaker's constant switch between language codes

that are considered to be separate, thus viewing the bilingual speaker as being "two

monolinguals in one" (García, Johnson and Seltzer, 2017, p. 20).   This view of language

alternation has led to the idea of codeswitching being stigmatised and negatively viewed, as it

is often linked to a violation and infringement of language, or language rules (ibid.).

Translanguaging, on the other hand is focused on one's individual, personal language use,

which is made up of individual language repertoires, as opposed to the perspective of national or standard labelled languages. Camilleri Grima (2015) distinguishes translanguaging from codeswitching as follows:

> While the term codeswitching is used in official documents and by non-linguists who perceive reality through a 'monolingual consciousness' (Camilleri Grima, 2003), as a result of language separation in writing, the term translanguaging has been adopted by experts in the field of bilingualism in education who have dissected bilingual classroom discourse and who have explained the pedagogical benefits of a spoken bilingual medium of instruction (p. 220).

The following figure adapted from Goodman and Tastanbek (2020, p. 12) defines the "key overlap, differences, and shift from codeswitching to translanguaging".

Codeswitching and Translanguaging
Alternation, fusion, hybridity of named languages
Spontanous/natural or intentional as pedagogy
Teacher and student views and practices may be hegemonic, resistant or transformative

Codeswitching
Separation of languages
Monoglossic ideologies
Practices are indicators of language fluency or dominance

Translanguaging
Holistic view of languages (repertoire)
Heteroglossic ideologies
Practices are paths to making meaning and forming identites

Figure 2. 2: Framework of the conceptual shift from codeswitching to translanguaging (adapted from Goodman and Tastanbek, 2020, p. 12).

2.3.4 Translanguaging: practice and pedagogy

Translanguaging can be a very powerful pedagogical tool since students are leveraging resources from different languages to communicate more effectively, without the restrictions imposed by the boundaries of named languages. Translanguaging can be an extremely valuable resource within our classrooms because it encourages students to explore concepts, widen their knowledge, establish links between ideas and express themselves better and more freely. Accuracy in each of the bilingual students' spoken languages is still a concept which should be preserved, however, space for translanguaging may be given when focusing on other communicative skills.

García et al. (2017) claim that translanguaging can leverage student bilingualism for learning. Otheguy et al. (2015) state that "under translanguaging the mental grammars of bilinguals are structured, but unitary collections of features and the practices of bilinguals are acts of feature selection, not of grammar switch" (p. 281).

There are four main aims of this pedagogy namely, "supporting learners as they engage with … content and text", enabling students "to develop linguistic practices for academic contexts", encouraging students' bilingualism and cognition, and supporting students' socioemotional growth whilst celebrating their bilingual identities (García et al., 2017, p.7).

The monolingual perspective of bilingual education, which advocates the strict separation of languages, stems from the idea that mixing two languages is detrimental to learning, and has been promoted for decades (Reyes, 2004). However, scholars across the globe have been questioning the effectiveness of this practice, and have been seeking ways to enable students to naturally and flexibly capitalise on their entire linguistic repertoire, in order to reach their full potential (García and Wei, 2014; Beres, 2015). The increasing number of bilinguals around the world and the availability of a wide range of linguistic resources at the touch of a

button through digital technology (Creese and Blackledge, 2015), calls for progressive bilingual pedagogies and "it is necessary to shift from approaching bilingualism as two separate, rigid and static languages, to viewing them as fluid, flexible and permeable" (Beres, 2015 p. 104). The concept of translanguaging was developed as a result of this shift in attitudes concerning bilingual and multilingual education during the past two decades and follows the naturally occurring language practices of bilingual children (García, 2009). Translanguaging supports heteroglossic language ideologies, since it focuses on the diverse and unique ways in which bilinguals communicate with each other and which views bilingualism as a valuable community resource (MacSwan, 2017). García and Wei (2014) sustain that "translanguaging is the discursive norm in bilingual families and communities" (p. 23) and is a natural part of bilingual communicative practices, as speakers choose to select features from their entire linguistic repertoire, depending on the context they find themselves in. Different contexts may include those pertaining to family intimacy and those which are linked to external societal conventions (Lanza, 2004; García and Wei, 2014). In this respect, Jaworski and Coupland (2006, p. 10), sustain that in social interaction, speakers communicate at many levels as "the meaning of an event or of a single utterance is only partly accounted for by its formal features (that is, by the 'direct meaning' of the words used)". In other words, one needs to analyse discourse by looking deeper than the mere linguistic meaning of utterances, and also take into account the social, cultural, economic, demographic context in which interactions occur. With this understanding as an underpinning, a novice approach in bilingual education may very well be the key to a positive transformation in this field (Gort and Sembiante, 2015). For this reason, my study focuses on my participants' insights on cross-linguistic practices, and their views on how these are in effect naturally occurring within their bilingual and multilingual classrooms. This is still a relatively under-explored area at a local level, even because as a result of the current demographic shifts on the island, our classrooms have only recently been

experiencing significant shifts in language use and practices. I believe that exploring these issues is a step forward to the possible development and implementation of these practices as pedagogy in Maltese classrooms, and to sow the seeds and set the pace for future research in the area.

Translanguaging originated in Wales, starting off as a pedagogical practice in bilingual secondary schools where input and output within the same lesson alternated between different languages (Williams, 2002). Welsh and English were historically regarded to be very different both in prestige and status, and were thus in constant competition in what Lewis et al. (2012b) refer to as a "language battleground" (p. 642), hence their concurrent use was viewed as a giant stride in uniting the two languages for the benefit of education and society in general. Translanguaging was initially coined in Welsh as *trawsieithu* by Cen Williams, a Welsh educator in 1994 (Williams, 2002), and has since been developed by other educators such as Baker, García, Otheguy, and Wei, (amongst others), who have been influential in further disseminating the concept of translanguaging outside Wales and its context (Lewis, Jones and Baker, 2013; Beres, 2015). Prior to the idea of translanguaging, other studies highlighted the benefits of bilingual pedagogies, however, most of this research focused on monoglossic ideologies of L1 and L2 and codeswitching, whilst translanguaging took on a diverse, more holistic perspective (Wei and García, 2017). García (2019) argues that during the past decade, views related to cross-linguistic practices are experiencing an important shift, as,

> what had been previously dismissed as errors, interference, interlanguage, incomplete acquisition, inappropriate, is being turned around by many scholars, mostly bilingual themselves, who have felt their feet, tongues, and lives move in ways other than the monolingual steps or bilingual lock-steps that nation-states and schools prescribe (p. 370).

García (2009), extends Cen William's initial concept of translanguaging, arguing that it is more than input and output in diverse languages, but rather a spontaneous, natural, and fluid switching between languages amongst bilinguals. García and Otheguy (2020), sustain that worldwide, multilingual societies have existed throughout history, and that people have always "either spoken more than one named language or have languaged in ways that do not fit the definition of named languages" (p. 17). An eventual evolution in the way speakers use and view language has been attributed to nation-building and colonial formation, where the ideas of "monolingual white elites and their way of languaging" eventually prevailed, leading to a "reductive situation" where a multilingual repertoire is largely believed to consist of standardised named language(s) (ibid. pp. 17 - 18).

Globally, the growing interest in translanguaging has stemmed from a different perspective of bilingualism which opposes the negative concepts of bilinguals and bilingualism which were held during the first half of the 20th century. This led to viewing dual or multi language capability as beneficial, rather than a drawback (Lewis et al., 2012b), promoting the idea of additive rather than subtractive bilingualism; a holistic, rather than a compartmentalised conceptualisation of the bilingual brain, and viewing mixing societally named languages as a natural part of early childhood language development (García, 2009; Grosjean, 2010; Baker, 2011; Lewis et al., 2012b). This shift in attitudes moves away from language separation, to advocating the use of two or more languages within the same lesson (García, 2009; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Baker, 2011, Lewis, et al., 2012b). This upholds the idea that children pragmatically apply all their linguistic resources in order to maximise their learning at home, school and beyond (Lewis, et al., 2012b). García and Otheguy (2020), explain that this practice, "incorporates an understanding of how different modes, including our bodies, our gestures, our lives etc., add to the semiotic meaning-making repertoire that is involved in the act of communication" (p. 24). Gort and Sembiante (2015) posit that this is the typical mode of

communication within bilingual and multilingual societies since, "bilinguals pragmatically draw on their entire linguistic repertoires to maximize understanding and performance across a variety of contexts, to shape experiences, and to make sense of the world" (p. 8).

García and Wei (2014) stress that "the emphasis on the 'trans' aspects of language and education enables us to transgress the categorical distinctions of the past" (p. 2). The **trans** prefix in translanguaging refers to a **trans**-system and **trans**-spaces which signify the fluidity of the language that **trans**cends socially constructed language systems, the **trans**formative ability of translanguaging practices for language, cognition and social structures, and the **trans**disciplinary effect of reframing language teaching, learning and use (García and Wei, 2014; Wei and García, 2017).

Makoni and Pennycook (2005), sustain that the idea of named languages is a social construct, having historical, cultural, geographical, political, and nationalistic roots. García and Kleyn (2016) refer to the "construction of named languages" (p. 10) to demonstrate that labelled languages such as English, Arabic, Spanish etc. are in effect socially created. They state that although a person may be known as a member of society who speaks a particular language, each individual deploys their own unique and particular language or idiolect, which may differ to that of others in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation and structure. These idiolects are in fact so unique that they transcend named languages in such a way that at times, speakers of the same language encounter difficulties when attempting to communicate with each other, such as may be the case of Irish and American speakers of "English".

Makoni and Pennycook (2005, p. 137) advocate for a "disinvention and deconstruction" of the concept of languages, which moves away from viewing them as separate entities. The concept of translanguaging in the field of bilingualism, multilingualism and the education of bilingual and multilingual speakers "is built on the idea that language practice is a hybrid of a

multilingual person's complete linguistic repertoire, without the formal separation of societally constructed languages into distinct autonomous systems" (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, p.162). Otheguy et al. (2015) describe translanguaging as "... the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (p. 281). Alamillo, Yun and Bennett, (2016) claim that "translanguaging involves the process of hybridising and flexibly using languages, systematically and strategically, in service of meaning-making and communication within various contexts" (p. 472).

Translanguaging pedagogy challenges the idea of strict language separation and a clear distinction is made between the language of the curriculum (which includes formal assessments and examinations), and the whole language repertoire, which is used to learn, teach, share and communicate. Bagwasi (2017) describes this approach as one which "appreciates the fuzziness of language boundaries, the fluidity and creativity of languages instead of their distinctiveness" (p.199). In this way, translanguaging not only legitimises but also leverages the fluid language practices of bilinguals. García (2009) claims that translanguaging is the communicative norm within bilingual societies.

García et al.'s, (2017, p. 21) analogy "translanguaging *corriente*" compares translanguaging to a current in a flow of water, maintaining that,

> a current in a body of water is not static; it runs a changeable course depending on features of the landscape. Likewise, the translanguaging *corriente* [current] refers to the dynamic and continuous movement of language features that change the static linguistic landscape of the classroom that is described and defined from a monolingual perspective.

They compare a bilingual speaker's two languages as two separate riverbanks which "shift and change their features" depending on the current, albeit having one terrain at the bottom, thus meaning that the two banks are in effect "one integrated whole" (ibid.).

"Translanguaging encourages the strategic shifting between these two 'languages' during instruction time, depending on the circumstances and the requirements of the task involved" (Panzavecchia & Little, 2020, p. 111).   Students may find it extremely beneficial to tap into their full linguistic repertoire when supporting an argument with text-based evidence, when making inferences, during discussions, brainstorming sessions, debates, or during oral presentations. This approach encourages and supports students to develop their critical metalinguistic awareness in order to learn when and where it is appropriate, or less so, to use some language features from their whole linguistic repertoire, thus being in control of their own academic and social learning (García and Wei, 2014). Translanguaging may be used in the initial planning stages of a creative writing lesson (discussion, brainstorming and drafting), whilst more formal, pure and grammatically correct English would be used for the publishing, presentation or final written product (Canagarajah, 2011b; García et al., 2017). Language and communication should be kept separate and hence, "testing the proficiency of children in a language must be kept separate from testing their proficiency in language" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 299). Translanguaging practices ensure that students are effectively understanding and making meaning of the subject taught, since learning in one language and subsequently processing and discussing it in another requires a deep level of comprehension, as opposed to monolingual methods where children are merely regurgitating what they have been taught (Baker, 2011). This approach is once again grounded on Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development", where further learning builds on previously acquired knowledge (Berk, 2003; Bee, 2004). It may also be linked to Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory, which states that learning is a social process and that human beings learn through social interaction (Berk, 2003;

Bee, 2004). Learners' communication with their peers and educators within a context of social interaction maximises learning. Language is a tool for communication and socialisation, therefore if language barriers are removed or less defined in this context, this interaction may be facilitated, therefore.

Park (2013) sustains that translanguaging enables children to assume a more participatory and interactive role during lessons, since they feel less inhibited, and hence freer to make full use of all their language resources. Wei (2011) sustains that through translanguaging, students are utilising both their creative and critical skills, since they are innovatively breaking the norms of traditional language use whilst utilising their full range of resources to inquire, discuss or voice opinions. Levine and Swanson (2019) advocate for the development of translanguaging practices which promote compassionate interactions.   This can be achieved through creating affordances for students to use their home languages during lesson activities, thus creating a compassionate environment where the mother tongue is viewed as a valuable resource. They state that through this approach, learners are given the space to communicate and voice feelings in their own language and are thus empowered to feel like "social equals, validated, even eloquent and culturally savvy", as opposed to "inferior, or at the very least tongue-tied and inadequate" when they are pressured to communicate exclusively in the host country's language (ibid. p. 168). Looking deeper into the reasons behind, and the beneficial aspects of translanguaging practices is particularly relevant to my study, since it focuses on teachers' perceived use of language, how these flexible language strategies occur naturally and spontaneously within bilingual and multilingual societies, and how these cross-linguistic practices may be the way forward in our increasingly diverse classroom environments. Translanguaging in class is often utilised as a pedagogical resource, regardless of whether these practices are occurring naturally and spontaneously or are strategically planned to serve a particular purpose at any given time. This is a very important feature of my study, since

whether, why and the way in which my participating teachers may in effect be implementing translanguaging strategies for their bilingual and multilingual students, offer insights on the methods which are being utilised within our schools, and how we can effectively improve and/or promote them. Another important aim of my study is to shed more light on instinctive and instructional translanguaging within the Maltese-English dyad, through the views and perceived experiences of my participants, juxtaposing this scenario with other language combinations.

García and Wei (2014, p. 121) claim that teachers utilise translanguaging practices in their classrooms for the following reasons,

- "To differentiate among students' levels and adapt instruction to different types of students in multilingual classrooms.

- To build background knowledge so that students can make meaning of the content being taught and of the ways of languaging in the lesson.

- To deepen understandings and socio-political engagement, develop and extend new knowledge, and develop critical thinking and critical consciousness.

- For cross-linguistic metalinguistic awareness so as to strengthen the students' ability to meet the communicative exigencies of the socio-educational situation.

- For cross-linguistic flexibility so as to use language practices competently.

- For identity investment and positionality, that is, to engage learners.

- To interrogate linguistic inequality and disrupt linguistic hierarchies and social structures".

Baker (2011, pp. 289,290) lists four potential advantages of translanguaging in classroom environments, namely:

1. To promote a "**deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter**" through a more profound processing in both languages.

2. **To** "**develop oral communication and literacy in the students' weaker language**" since they would be encouraged to utilise both languages and not choose the one that poses less challenge.

3. **To** "**promote better home-school cooperation**", where parents are able to support children with homework in both languages.

4. **To** "**develop their second language ability concurrently with content learning**", in order to improve the students' academic skills in both languages.

According to Cen Williams' studies of bilingualism in Wales, through translanguaging practices, the use of two languages leads to a reinforcement of both (Williams, 2002). Williams sustains that translanguaging is a pedagogical tool which

- Strengthens proficiency in both languages.

- Is naturally occurring in bilinguals.

- Enables students to internalise, process, translate, and ultimately fully understand and supplement the message/concept.

Williams (2002) however, makes a clear distinction between translanguaging and translating. He argues that translanguaging requires,

> a full understanding of the language in which the message is received, and sufficient vocabulary and a firm enough grasp of the other language in order to express the message, that is a passive understanding of both languages and an active knowledge and mastery of at least one of the languages (p. 40).

In this respect Williams claims that translanguaging is an approach which is appropriate to use to teach students who are fairly proficient in both languages in order to enable them to preserve

and improve their bilingual skills, rather than for the basics of second language learning. Additionally, the success of translanguaging is also dependant on both educators' and students' views on multilingual practices, and their stance on language purism. Monoglossic ideology and negative attitudes towards fluid language practices may lead to considering translanguaging as "not a resource but a crutch" Goodman and Tastanbek (2020, p. 10), and this is another area which my study explores, when investigating whether or not educators are open to utilise cross-linguistic language practices as pedagogy, and the reasons behind their views (see section 4.4.4 of Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results).

Creese and Blackledge's (2010) research on translanguaging pedagogies used in complementary schools conclude that both languages are equally required in bilingual environments, so that students may fully grasp the information conveyed, in order to maximise their learning experience, confidence and identity performance. The teachers and students in Creese and Blackledge's study utilised all the linguistic resources at hand to "connect with one another, indexing disparate allegiances and knowledges and creating new ones" (p. 112). This was pedagogically achieved through the blurring of boundaries between languages and through teachers' flexibility, as opposed to practising strict language separation. Some of the knowledge and skills that were observed throughout this study of flexible bilingualism included the following:

- Repetition and translation across the two languages.
- Student engagement as a result of translanguaging and heteroglossia.
- Identity performance as a result of translanguaging.
- Permeability and fluidity of languages together with a recognition that all languages are necessary for a deeper knowledge, comprehension, and collaboration.

- Validating the use of "simultaneous literacies and languages" to reach the task's main aims.

- Acknowledging the fact that teachers and students use different languages for different objectives.

- Shifting between languages to interpret texts, access the curriculum and successfully complete lesson tasks.

Beres (2015, p 107) claims that,

> through the systematic use of both languages in the same lesson, translanguaging enables students to internalise new knowledge, process it and then make sense of it in the other language. This process requires the use of a number of cognitive skills, both receptive and expressive, and results in a deeper understanding of the subject taught.

García and Lin (2016) claim that there are two contending philosophies of translanguaging, namely one which supports national languages but advocates for more flexibility of their confines in bilingual education; and that which posits the concept of a single linguistic repertoire being the crucial element of bilingual education.

According to García, Aponte, and Le (2019, pp. 86-87), in order for primary classrooms to promote translanguaging practices, they need to ensure that "children's full linguistic repertoire be made available to them to make meaning of their lives and of the politics surrounding their language use". They believe that new linguistic features are not incorporated separately from those of the children's spoken language but are fully integrated into their own unitary language repertoire, rather than added as a second language.

Goodman and Tastanbek (2020, p. 8) sustain that translanguaging is the way forward in today's multilingual societies, and postulate that it "bridges the worlds of multilingual learners within and outside the classroom using their whole linguistic and cognitive repertoire". It is therefore

imperative that initial teacher education programmes focus on multilingual pedagogies to develop and promote productive multilingual environments (Kirsch, 2020). Menken and Sanchez (2019), Back (2020), and Gorter and Arocena (2020) also advocate professional development sessions for experienced teachers of emergent multilingual learners, which focus on translanguaging as the way forward within bilingual and multilingual societies. They sustain that teachers' stances on fluid language practices often experience positive shifts, following training sessions and the implementation of learnt strategies in the classroom. My study addresses this by advocating further training for both trainee and experienced teachers, together with more focus on empowering teachers to have more "voice" in decision making (see section 5.2.3 in Chapter: Conclusion).

2.3.5 Translanguaging in early childhood education

Translanguaging with older bilinguals and multilinguals has been relatively well researched, however, comparatively few studies have focused specifically on translanguaging within early childhood education (Anderson, 2017; Kirsch, 2017). This approach is particularly aligned with early years' philosophies, due to the flexibility and security that it offers (García and Wei, 2014; Jones and Lewis, 2014). Alamillo et al. (2016) corroborate this view, and state that translanguaging in the early years promotes the idea that children are free to express themselves without any set language boundaries. They further advocate using fluid language practices within Reggio Emilia inspired schooling, which promotes student-centred and constructivist approaches, using self-directed experiential learning. They describe children utilising translanguaging practices naturally as they "codeswitch(ed), blend(ed) and blur(red) their languages in efforts to communicate" (ibid., p. 482). Infants who are not bound by linguistic rules and regulations, but are free to use their full language repertoire, often thrive socially and academically (Garrity, Aquino-Sterling and Day, 2015). Within the early years, one can observe the "flexible use of language features combined with gesture, other acts, and images"

(Anderson, 2017, p. 178), therefore, suggesting that "gesture and body language are part of translanguaging, providing multiple resources that enable the young multilingual learner to make meaning" (ibid. p. 167). This concept is in line with De Costa et al.'s (2017) notion of "looking at communication beyond language itself, to accommodate diverse other modalities and semiotic resources". It also views fluid language practices as "the way words align with the body, objects, space, and environmental ecology, among other symbol systems, for making meaning" (ibid. pp. 469 – 470). García and Otheguy (2020) also substantiate this view, stating that translanguaging views a speaker's communicative repertoire holistically, encompassing "gestures, gazes, posture, visual views and even human-technology interactions" (p. 26), whilst similarly, Lin's (2020) view of classroom interactions is one involving "unfolding speech/action events across multiple materials, media and timescales" (p. 4). Lin also suggests that a dynamic perspective of communication includes participants' "human bodies and brains, the immediately available artifacts in the environment, as well as their past histories and ongoing development" (ibid.).

Paradoxically, García, Makar, Starcevic, and Terry (2011) sustain that when administrators strive to control language use through strict language separation, children still cross these linguistic boundaries through the spontaneous use of translanguaging, thus naturally shifting monoglossic views to more heteroglossic ones. Through translanguaging approaches within bilingual early childhood education, young learners benefit from home language support and culturally relevant content, which promote the students' English literacy formation and also their own identity development (Lenis, 2015). These practices support theories of natural language acquisition within sociocultural contexts, as opposed to other more rigid methods of dual-language learning.

García et al. (2011, p.33) sustain that young children make use of translanguaging in the following ways:

1. **To facilitate understanding with others and themselves**. Children often use flexible language practices in order to communicate and be understood. They also "mediate understanding" through interpreting and translating within a social context.

2. "**To co-construct and construct meaning" when they are making use of the alternative language for comprehension purposes.** When children communicate in social contexts, they endeavour to make meaningful interactions, even if proficiency in each language is not comparable amongst the participants. Translanguaging in this context enables children to improve their proficiency and maximise their learning without teacher intervention.

3. **To construct meaning within oneself.** Children's private speech is prevalent within the early years and this "thinking aloud" enables children to make use of both languages in order for learning to take place.

4. **To foster an inclusive environment**. Bilingual play often enables children who are less fluent in one of the two languages to participate in play and other activities, which they would otherwise be excluded from, due to a lack of proficiency in one of the languages.

5. **To exclude (other children from participation).** Conversely, translanguaging could also be used for exclusion purposes as children may switch languages in order to exclude children with weaker linguistic abilities in a particular language from participating in play or other activities.

6. **To demonstrate and confirm knowledge.** Children may use translanguaging in order to "show off" previously acquired knowledge in one of the two languages, particularly on a lexical level.

Translanguaging could also be a valuable pedagogical approach for the teaching of literacy within early years contexts. Creating translanguaging spaces for young learners to practise biliteracy using cognates (words having a common etymological origin), may be one way of highlighting children's "interlinguistic abilities specific to print, phonology and meaning across languages" (Velasco and Fialais, 2016, p. 1). In this way, young children are given the opportunity to reflect on their bilingual practices, skills and identities. Velasco and Fialais, (2016, p. 14), advocate the deployment of translanguaging pedagogies in early years literacy classes, since it develops "the linguist that lays dormant in every bilingual child, eager and curious to understand the oral and written characteristics of the languages they are in the process of mastering"

Martínez-Álvarez (2017, p. 273) sustains that when young children focus on "separating their linguistic resources" to adhere to the rules of socially constructed languages of instruction, literacy and content development is reduced and children's knowledge is wasted. Martínez-Álvarez gives the example of children encountering a stumbling block in their writing process due to slow lexical retrieval in the target language. Through translanguaging pedagogies, young children feel uninhibited as they are encouraged to use all their linguistic resources to make sense of schooling, and eventually the outside world. A holistic approach to bilingual education ensures that the two languages are working in tandem to support each other's development. This view is also held by Kirsch (2017) who sustains that young children who speak two or more languages, spontaneously utilise translanguaging strategies in order to communicate, to make meaning of knowledge, and to celebrate their multilingual identities, becoming more proficient in each language in the process of leveraging all their available resources. Durán and Palmer (2014, p. 385) suggest that policy makers should support children's translanguaging practices through creating "some explicitly open times and spaces; celebrate, notice and name the times when students are translanguaging; and in general

encourage them to bring all their linguistic resources to bear in a given situation" (p. 385). They also suggest that teachers should endeavour to look into ways of explicitly teaching translanguaging, rather than simply "allowing" or supporting this practice.

Although the general view on multilingual practices in early childhood education is a positive one, Kirsch (2020, p. 9) also highlights some challenges which may be experienced by teachers who implement translanguaging pedagogies, amongst which are "negative attitudes, a monolingual policy, their understanding of learning theories and pedagogy, and the need to monitor languages to guarantee responsible translanguaging". Kirsch claims that these challenges may be mitigated through long-term, collaborative and inquiry based professional development, however argues that this is not always practical due to time constraints, sustainability, and a lack of resources, and therefore advocates for initial teacher training which prepares educators for multilingual classrooms as a more pragmatic and hence preferable solution.

Although translanguaging in early childhood education is still a relatively under-researched area, it is evident that there is great potential for the development and promotion of translanguaging practices with very young children. This could be achieved through future research studies in the field, which could examine the development and implementation of multilingual pedagogies within a variety of early childhood contexts.

2.3.6 Emerging issues related to research and pedagogy of translanguaging

The concept of translanguaging has also received some criticism. Poza (2017) warns about the dangers of merely "repackaging" codeswitching and assigning a new terminology to this practice. Flores (2014) wrote an interesting blog "The Educational Linguist", where he argues that the two practices start from "two different premises" as,

codeswitching presupposes the existence of discrete languages which are, in fact, socio-historical constructions that have been used to marginalize bilingual language practices that do not fit neatly into these discrete languages. Translanguaging historicizes the creation of these linguistic boundaries and examines the ways that language-minoritized communities take-up, resist, and are marginalized by these socio-historical constructions (para 5).

Translanguaging seems to be the current "buzzword" in linguistic research (Goodman and Tastanbek, 2020), and its very fixed definition may lead to it losing its innovative and powerful potential. The theoretical foundations of translanguaging may be undermined through the injudicious over-use in academia, thus leading to a "blurring of the sharpness of the original intent" (Poza, 2017 p. 103), or what Canagarajah (2011a) claims to be a romanticisation of this concept.

It is not surprising that scholarship on translanguaging makes multilingual communication appear more diverse, dynamic, and democratic than "monolingual" competence. We have to critique this new binary – multilingual and monolingual – and adopt a critical attitude towards the resources/limitations and prospects/challenges of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2011a, p. 3).

Canagarajah (2011a) sustains that translanguaging research should be deeper than simply documenting and analysing instances of translanguaging. Translanguaging as a teachable educational approach needs to be further explored, since this practice is indeed a naturally occurring phenomenon, which can never be completely controlled within educational institutions, and which may, for this very reason, provide a challenge when educators attempt to transform it into a mindful and intended pedagogical strategy. In this regard, Canagarajah (2011a; 2011b) argues that since it occurs naturally with or without the school's input, there

might very little more that educational institutions may contribute towards translanguaging, other than providing a safe and supportive environment for it to occur. Additionally, Canagarajah poses an interesting question, being that once translanguaging is an innate and automatic occurrence, then does it essentially need to be taught at all?

Canagarajah (2011b) however, also argues that despite translanguaging being a naturally occurring phenomenon, multilingual students may still benefit from additional knowledge in the field, specifically those aimed at improving reading, writing and communicative practices. He advocates for a practice-based model which clarifies how this practice stems from socialisation and language contact, which in turn maximises competence and proficiency. Canagarajah also states that research on multilingual classroom communication needs to delve into discourse and rhetorical strategies as one way to evaluate the benefits of translanguaging strategies, and to effectively align assessment and instructional methods.

Translanguaging research should also focus on how naturally occurring practices of language-minoritized communities are ostracised by language purists and some members of society in general (Flores, 2014). Poza (2017) also states that some scholars are wary of using translanguaging to facilitate learning for language minority students "without disrupting prevalent ideologies of language and power relations among linguistic communities" (p. 103). Some research is also concerned with the idea that translanguaging may threaten minority languages (García and Lin, 2016), which may not be adequately promoted and supported through the legitimisation and pedagogical implementation of this concept. Canagarajah (2011a) claims that the current research on translanguaging seems to be more focused on translanguaging competence and highlights the need to investigate this practice from different perspectives, including all language domains, and to develop better instructional approaches of translanguaging.

MacSwan (2017) challenges traditional philosophies of translanguaging, such as those promoted by the likes of García (2009), Wei (2011), Otheguy et al. (2015, 2019), and García and Otheguy (2020). This emerging model proposes a holistic view of bilingualism and multilingualism, characterized by a revolutionary way of regarding language, speakers, and repertoires (Cenoz, 2017). García and Otheguy (2020), hold strong views on the matter, stating that translanguaging pedagogies are "deeply critical and political" as they bring to light speakers' meaning-making potential. They claim that named languages "continue to exclude those who have come out on the short end of the processes of nation-building, coloniality, and global capitalism, and who have been the victims of wars, violence, and racialization associated with these processes (p. 27).

In this regard, García (2019) analogically compares translanguaging to capoeira since it has to potential to "arm[s] speakers with ways of kicking back the oppression of their souls and minds that language education has performed in the past" (p. 373). MacSwan (2017) argues that philosophies which are misaligned with the notion of multilingualism, view bilinguals not as merely a combination of two monolinguals, but as speakers making full, concurrent use of all their coexisting language resources.

This view, as discussed in section 2.3.4 of this chapter, posits that the linguistic system of bilinguals (referred to as an idiolect) is unitary and undifferentiated. This standpoint, according to MacSwan, would in theory also signify a rejection of the concept of codeswitching, which validates the idea that bilinguals are shifting between two separate linguistic structures. MacSwan further cautions that,

> the consequences of denying the existence of multilingualism and therefore of
> codeswitching are far reaching. If codeswitching does not exist, then neither does the

empirical basis for the repudiation of a deficit perspective on language mixing, a

critically important and frequently cited body of basic scientific research (p. 169).

This view is also sustained by Makoni and Pennycook (2005) who warn that the rejection of named languages is akin to a negation of other concepts such as "language rights, mother tongues, multilingualism, or codeswitching" (p. 147). MacSwan (2017) claims that these views mistakenly imply that the idea of "named languages and other identifiable speech communities" (p. 190) is misguided, as is the idea that that bilinguals are balancing two separate grammar systems, which he refers to as language specific internal differentiation. In this respect, MacSwan (2017) also argues that "bilinguals, like monolinguals, have a single linguistic repertoire but a richly diverse mental grammar" (p. 167). The distinction between

codeswitching and translanguaging research is that the former is based on a monoglossic view of separate mental grammar systems, whilst the latter views grammar as unitary. MacSwan maintains that,

this attribution is not only factually incorrect, but taken seriously, it would undermine

critical research support for a view of bilingualism as a linguistic talent rather than a

worrisome deficit … codeswitching research has shown through detailed analysis that

bilinguals are exquisitely sensitive to an incredibly rich and intricate underlying system

of rules for both languages in their repertoires (p. 190).

Conversely, Otheguy et al. (2019) claim that the concept of two linguistic systems is not strongly substantiated, and that bilinguals develop both a unitary repertoire and a unitary linguistic system and lexicon. It is worth noting, however, that García and Wei (2017) recognise an anomaly regarding the way translanguaging philosophies address the concept of multilingualism and acknowledge that translanguaging is not an easy concept to engage in by either speakers, students or educators. They concede that paradoxically the concept of

translanguaging in itself is contradictory, since it focuses on bilingualism/multilingualism, which is understood to being socially constructed by nation-states, whilst promoting the idea of a hybridised repertoire free from the notion of labelled languages.

Interestingly, MacSwan proposes an alternative view of translanguaging, which he refers to as a "multilingual perspective", which accepts the notion of multilingualism as both a psychological and universal reality, and where codeswitching is therefore considered to be an integral part of translanguaging, together with other "bilingual phenomena such as translation (and) borrowing" (p. 191).

On the other hand, Auer (2019) is highly critical of Garcia's concept of translanguaging which holds a unitary view of languages, and which postulates that named languages are in effect societally constructed. He argues that languages are specifically separated by multilingual speakers who utilise this very separation for communicative purposes. He refutes the view of multilingual speakers having one repertoire of unnamed languages, warning that the idea of blurring the boundaries between languages may be linked to "a wholesale rejection of all prior sociolinguistic work on codeswitching and similar linguistic practices" (p.25), which are built on the very premise of distinct languages. He sustains that a large part of current research focusing on translanguaging practices, in effect proves "the opposite" of what it claims that it does, that is, evidence the natural fusion and hybridity of (unnamed) languages, but demonstrates instead that speakers are naturally inclined to separate codes as a means of interaction. Auer's critical stance on this interpretation of fluid language practices leads him to argue that,

> what is perhaps even more deplorable is the fact that disconnected phenomena of
>
> language contact and highly diverse bilingual practices are all subsumed under the new

term, losing sight of the complex and much more differentiated distinctions that have been established on empirical grounds over decades of bilingual studies (pp. 15 – 16).

Similarly, Jaspers (2018, p. 3) believes assertions related to the personal and social transformative effects of translanguaging are too "ambitious", arguing that there are limits to the myriad benefits some scholars attribute to the concept, which he refers to as the idealistic "chameleonic capacity of translanguaging". Translanguaging pedagogy and practice is claimed to "result in new subjectivities, to give back voice, transform cognitive structures, raise well-being and attainment levels, and eventually to transform an unequal society into a more just world", which he believes to be unrealistically high expectations of linguistic practices at school. Jaspers argues that "it is a matter of intellectual honesty" to question the validity of the concept's predicted outcomes, particularly those related to social justice, which he fears may eventually be dismissed as being unattainable, misguided and erroneous (ibid. pp. 3-4).

Issues related to language separation surface in Lewis et al.'s (2013) five-year study of Welsh classrooms, involving the observation of one hundred lessons. Only approximately one third of these observed lessons utilised translanguaging as a predominant and pedagogically effective tool for teaching and learning, especially within the later years of primary schooling and in arts and humanities, rather than in Maths and Science lessons. The results of this study indicate that although Wales is considered to have a progressive stance on bilingual education, and despite the origins of translanguaging being rooted in Wales, there is still a surprisingly high element of language separation at classroom level. This is partly attributed to sociolinguistic communities' and teachers' emphasis on language purism to safeguard the Welsh language (Lewis et al., 2013; Jones, 2017). Conversely, the children themselves, seem to desire the freedom to be able to utilise both languages to maximise their learning experience. Hence, Lewis et al. (2013) conclude that teacher training and in-service courses should focus on concurrent approaches promoting intellectual, (rather than language) development to uphold

the multidisciplinary achievement of children. They suggest that that the way forward to promote translanguaging and evaluate its success involves "moving from advocacy to action, from ideas to their evaluation, from compartmentalisation to concurrency in language strategies in the classroom" (Lewis et al., 2013, p. 130). Canagarajah (2011b) also claims that there is a lack of teachable pedagogical strategies for developing these practices within educational institutions. He argues that there is a need for the development of a "taxonomy of translanguaging strategies and theorising these practices", through observing the very practices which multilingual students adopt since "it is possible to learn from students' translanguaging strategies while developing their proficiency through a dialogical pedagogy" (p. 401). Additionally, Creese and Blackledge (2010) claim that there is a need for teachers to lessen the feeling of guilt related to translanguaging practices in order to further explore this pedagogical resource within bilingual educational contexts. Lewis et al. (2012b) claim that "there can be no exact or essentialist definition as the meaning of translanguaging will become more refined and increasingly clarified, conceptually and through further research" (p. 642).

Vaish (2019) argues that translanguaging has been thoroughly researched and documented within the English-Spanish domain, but it is not representative enough of other language combinations. She also states that research nearly always focuses on the positive, but there are gaps in literature focusing on the challenges faced by both educators and students when implementing translanguaging as pedagogy. Some of these challenges may include "superdiversity in the classroom, culture of pedagogy, and negative attitudes towards the Mother Tongue" (p.287). Vaish sustains that bilingual teachers who are only proficient in two languages may encounter communicative challenges when faced with speakers of multiple languages in class. Breaking up the classroom into different groups representative of the many different languages in class is not always a pragmatic or attainable solution. Vaish also mentions the fact that although there may be children who are dominant in one area of the

target language, they may still encounter weaknesses in literacy which need to be addressed. Additionally, translanguaging may not work within educational environments which promote a "tightly scripted", teacher centred approach, since the fluid nature of this practice requires a "more free flowing interaction … where the teacher is willing to let go of control" (ibid. p. 288). Finally, Vaish points out that within diglossic societies where negative attitudes towards mother tongue are pervasive, the use of L1 during L2 lessons might prove to be problematic.

Similarly, Lyster (2019) argues that not all contexts of bilingual education can benefit equally from translanguaging, since this concept appears to offer more advantages to minority-language, rather than English L1 students. This is because within these contexts, the English language usually holds a high status, which in turn may negatively affect the use of minority language/s. Lyster claims that within bilingual contexts where English is considered to be L1, the sustained use of the minority language may offer more benefits "for pushing its development forward than recourse to English - given appropriate instruction and sufficient scaffolding to sustain use of the minority language" (p. 341).

Fürstenau, Çelik and Plöger (2020) argue that employing cross-linguistic practices in class is not yet widespread amongst schools around the globe, and thus educators who wish to utilise translanguaging pedagogy are encountering numerous challenges. Similarly, Ticheloven, Blom, Leseman and McMonagle (2019) conclude that there are incongruencies between theory and practice in the field of translanguaging, which inevitably lead to pedagogical challenges. They list the following 7 major areas of concern which they believe require further investigation and research, together with consultation with stakeholders to bridge any existing gaps hindering the smooth implementation of this practice.

1. **Side effects.**   The isolation of both students and teachers who do not speak other languages. Cross-linguistic practices may "prevent teachers from keeping track of what their students are doing" (p.10) and discussing during class time.

2. **Goal formation.** Lack of clearly delineated goals, together with the inability to adhere to pre-defined objectives since translanguaging often occurs spontaneously and naturally.

3. **Learning the language of schooling.**   Translanguaging (vis-à-vis full immersion) may be counterproductive to the learning of the school language, as students are free to communicate in any way they feel comfortable. "Too much" translanguaging may hinder the acquisition of the school language, which is obviously a requirement for educational achievement.   Challenges related to balancing between "two perceived evils: student mutism and scaffolding as crutch" (p. 13).

4. **English and other semiotic resources.** Students may find that the use of multimodal resources and communicating in the English language may serve the same goal as using their home language. If they are relatively fluent in the lingua franca, then this might be an easier choice since English is more widely used and understood.

5. **Affective functions.** There is a "need to examine the role of socioemotional factors, such as well-being, in multilingual teaching and learning" (p.15). These are often overlooked issues where academic achievement is often the main focus.

6. **Effort.**   Using translanguaging in a structured way is taxing on both teachers and students. When students can already speak the language of the school, the use of translanguaging may slow down the pace of the lesson. Translanguaging may also put students who are not so fluent in their home language at a disadvantage, leading students to feel "lost between languages" (p. 16). This in turn adds on to teachers'

concerns, especially when they are not fluent with the students' home languages and are hence unable to assist them in this area.

7. **Confusion.** "Some students admit to becoming confused when alternating languages" (p. 17), especially when they are not particularly confident in one or both.

Notwithstanding, the criticism received, and the challenges involved in implementing translanguaging as pedagogy, it is interesting to note that the ever growing body of research on the subject, although still somewhat at its infancy, generally supports the notion that there are multiple benefits of translanguaging as a concurrent and pragmatic teaching and learning strategy in bilingual and multilingual education. Cenoz (2017) distinguishes between translanguaging as pedagogy, which is teacher planned and has specific instructional aims at its basis, and spontaneous translanguaging, which occurs organically amongst members of bilingual communities. It is the link between the two which should hold the key to a pioneering and effective way of steering bilingual and multilingual education, however more research is required in this area, in order to discover the full pedagogical implications of this practice, together with its potential within bilingual and multilingual communities (Goodman and Tastanbek, 2020).

These perspectives are particularly salient to my research, since I believe that one can harness the advantages of translanguaging pedagogy by adapting the concept to suit the particular requirements of specific bilingual contexts, such as those of Malta. These translanguaging practices may already be occurring naturally and spontaneously, and therefore it is up to us educators to ensure that we are maximising their potential. This will be further explored and discussed in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, and Chapter 5: Conclusion of this thesis.

2.4 Malta's Shift from Bilingualism to Multilingualism

Globalisation has led to unprecedented levels of human mobility as the number of international migrants worldwide has been rapidly increasing in recent years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017). As a result of this, societies are inexorably becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse, and Malta is one such example. Demographic changes on the island are resulting in a rapid and unprecedented shift from bilingualism to multilingualism, and this shift is becoming especially noticeable in our schools (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020; Paris and Farrugia, 2019; Bonello, 2020). For this reason, my study which initially focused on bilingualism in education, was broadened to explore the issue of increasing multilingual classrooms on the island, and how this shift is providing both enrichment and challenges for teachers and students alike. These issues are discussed in detail in section 4.5 of Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results.

2.4.1 Demographic changes in Malta

In 2017, Malta's population stood at 475,700, indicating the highest relative rise in population in Europe during this year (+32,9 per 1000 residents) (Eurostat, 2017). Ironically, the Maltese islands also had the lowest birthrate in Europe in 2017 (Eurostat, 2017).

The total population (Maltese and non-Maltese residents) for the following year 2018 was 493,559 (+36,8 per 1000 residents), which once again showed Malta having the largest population growth of any EU country. During this year, Maltese residents stood at 410, 292, whilst the number of non-Maltese residents was 83,267 (Macdonald, 2019; National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).

Malta and Gozo's estimated population stood at 514,564 (+42 per 1000 residents) at the end of 2019, seeing a four percent rise in comparison to 2018. This increase in 2019 was a result of

a net migration (immigration less emigration) of 20,343 people. Not taking adoptions into account, third-country nationals made up the largest share of migrants (12,355) followed by other EU nationals (7,489). The number of births throughout 2019 showed a decrease of 2 percent over the previous year (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020; "Population of Malta hits 500,000 for the first time", 2020).

These numbers suggest that as a result of globalization and rising migration trends, asylum seekers and refugees are entering the island at unprecedented rates. Ever since 2002, due to its geographical location, asylum seekers have been considering Malta to be a symbolic gateway to Europe. Additionally, following Malta's accession to the European Union in 2004, the island has experienced an ongoing increase in transnational migration, as more EU citizens are exercising their right of free movement within the European member states (International Organization for Migration, 2016). According to Jobsplus Malta statistics (2020), the trend of the top three employed EU nationalities over a period covering 2014 – 2018 sees Italian nationals ranking first, with UK nationals and Bulgarians ranking second and third, respectively. Migrants originating from Philippines, Serbia, and India make up the top three non-EU nationalities, which numbers have been progressively rising over the said period.

The number of non-Maltese students in local schools has nearly tripled over the span of five years. In the academic year 2012/2013, there was a total of 1890 migrant students registered in schools. This number rose to a total of 5,055 in the academic year 2017/2018, now making up over 10% of the overall student body, with a larger percentage at primary level (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020), as can be seen in the following graphs.
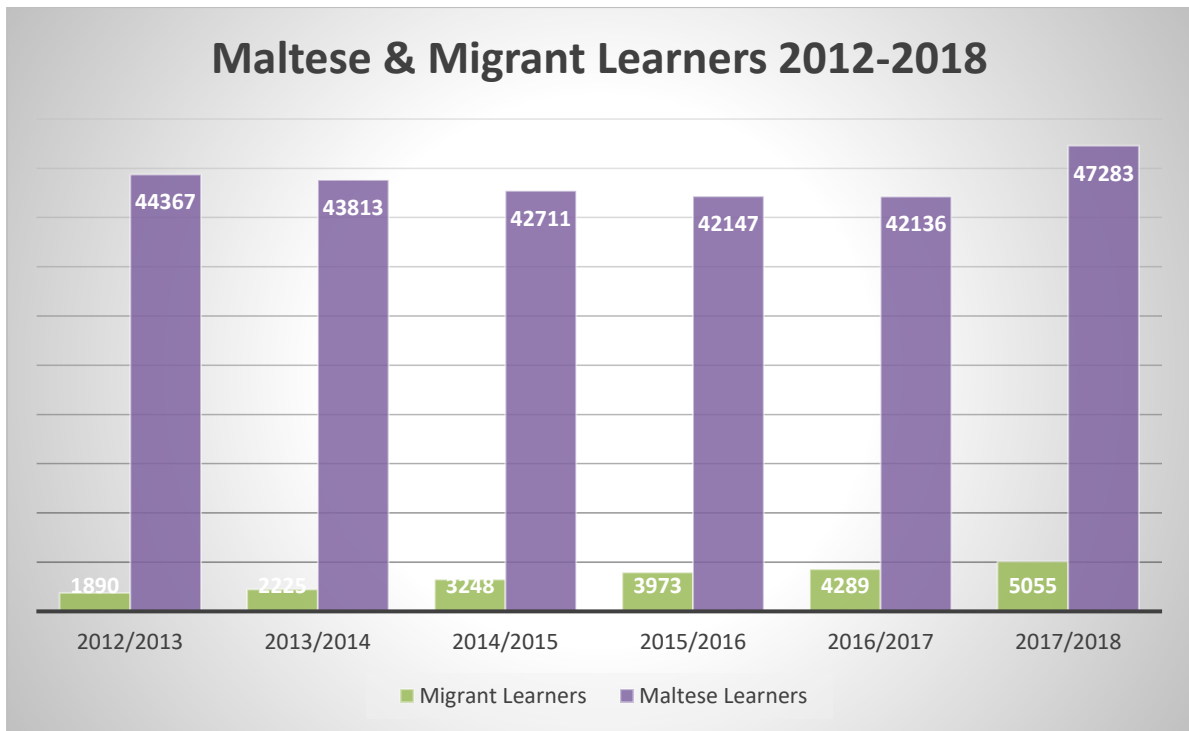
Figure 2. 3: *Maltese and Migrant Learners 2012 – 2018 (Data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).*
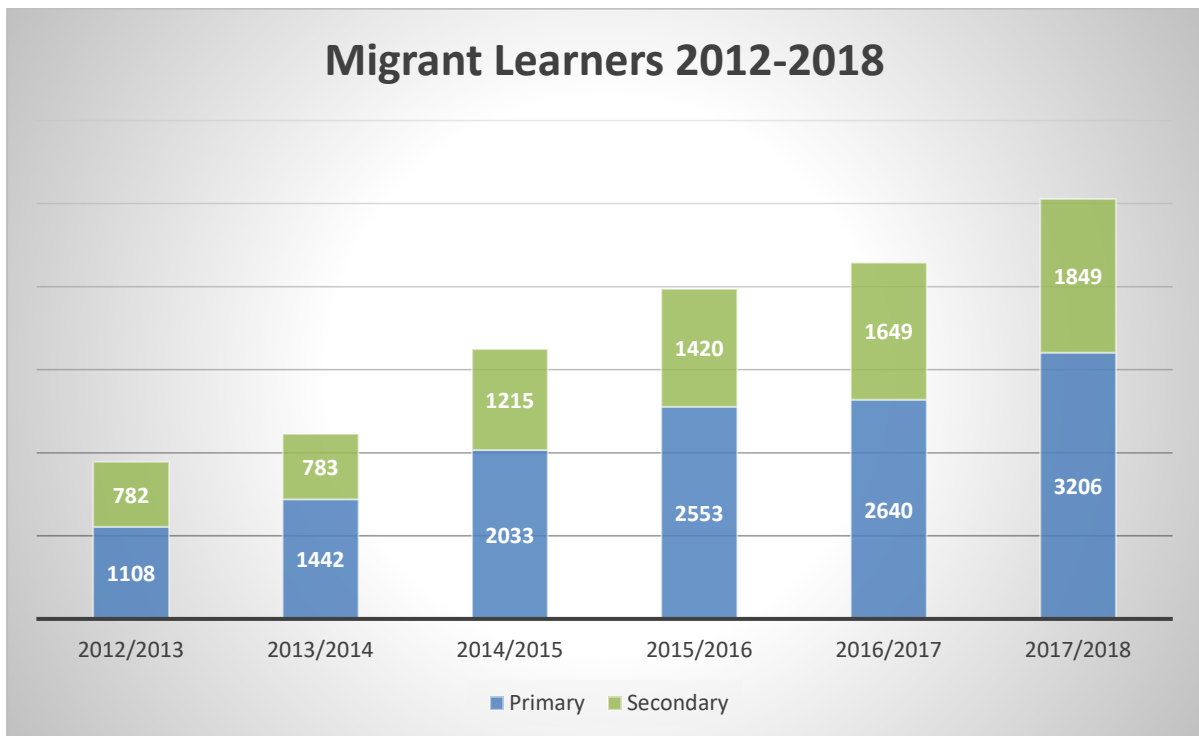
Figure 2. 4: *Migrant Learners 2012 – 2018 (Data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).*

In the academic year 2017-2018, 65.09% of these migrant learners were enrolled in public state schools, whilst 31.83% attended private independent schools, and a mere 3.08% were enrolled in church schools (National Statistics Office, 2020). In Malta, asylum seeking migrant learners are automatically placed in public state schools as required by law, whilst the children of non-Maltese business owners and workers are often enrolled in fee-paying private independent schools, whilst only a few attend Catholic church schools, possibly since these schools are only accessible through a ballot system, thus intake relies on the luck of the draw. In theory, all children can apply to attend church schools, however these much-coveted institutions are known to have impossibly long waiting lists, and siblings of children already attending these schools, together with the children of staff are given priority.

Although the large part of migrant learners in Malta come from bordering EU countries (especially Italy), there are other students hailing from literally every corner of the globe, as can be seen in the following figures, tables, and map visualisations illustrating these trends. This is indicative of classrooms which are truly becoming cultural and linguistic melting pots, signifying that our students may have very diverse educational, cultural, and linguistic requirements which educators need to address. This unprecedented reality necessitates educational institutions to urgently adapt their strategies in ways which promote the successful integration of migrant learners within the school community, together with addressing the challenges, and leveraging on the opportunities which diversity brings into the classroom (Attard Tonna, Calleja, Galea, Grech and Pisani, 2017).
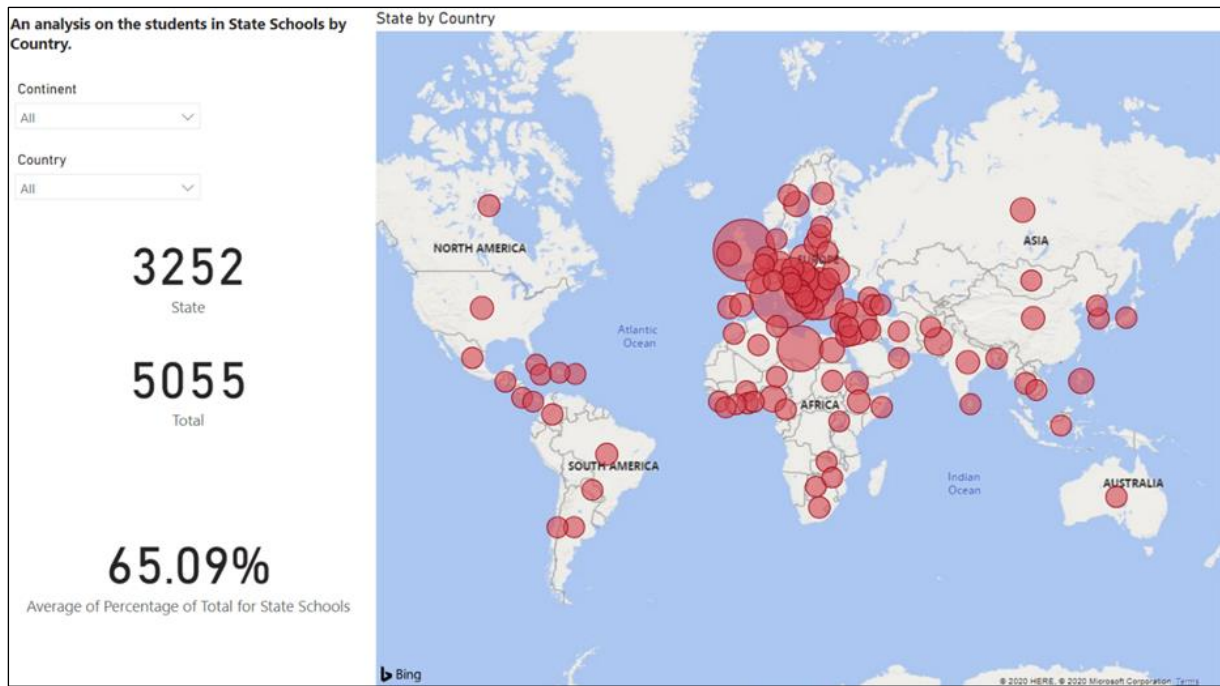
Figure 2. 5: Migrant Learners in State Schools by Country (data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).

Figure 2. 6: Migrant Learners in Private Independent Schools by Country (data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).

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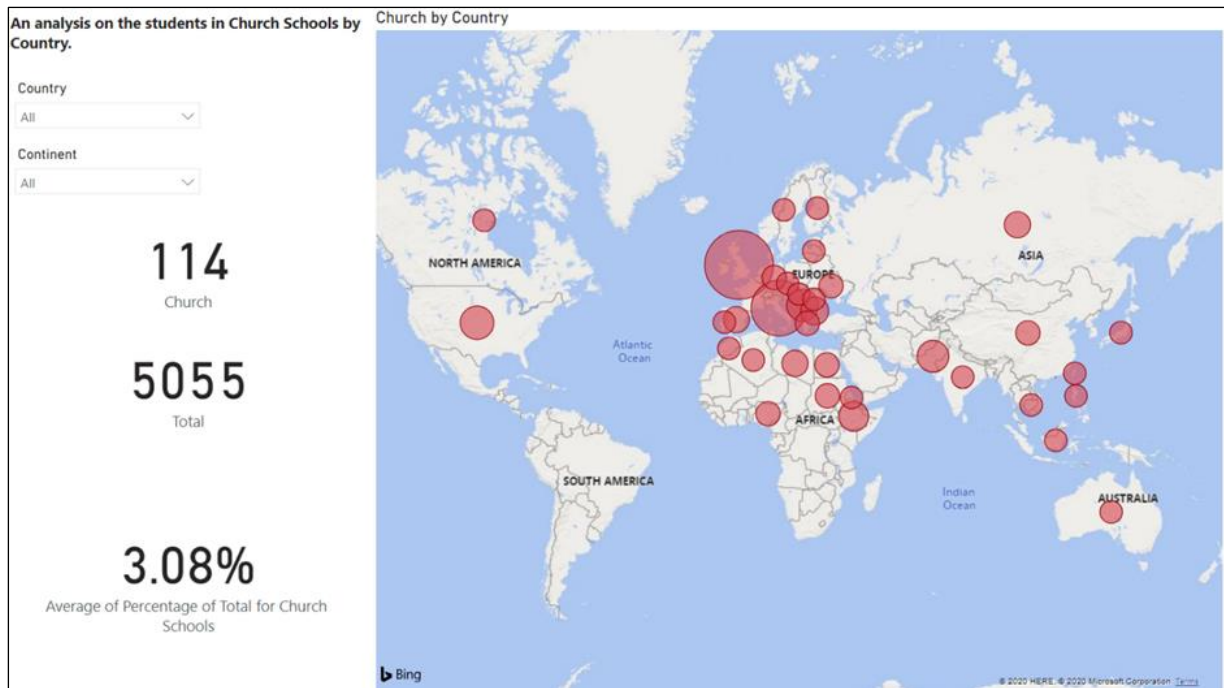
Figure 2. 7: Migrant Learners in Church Schools by Country (data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).
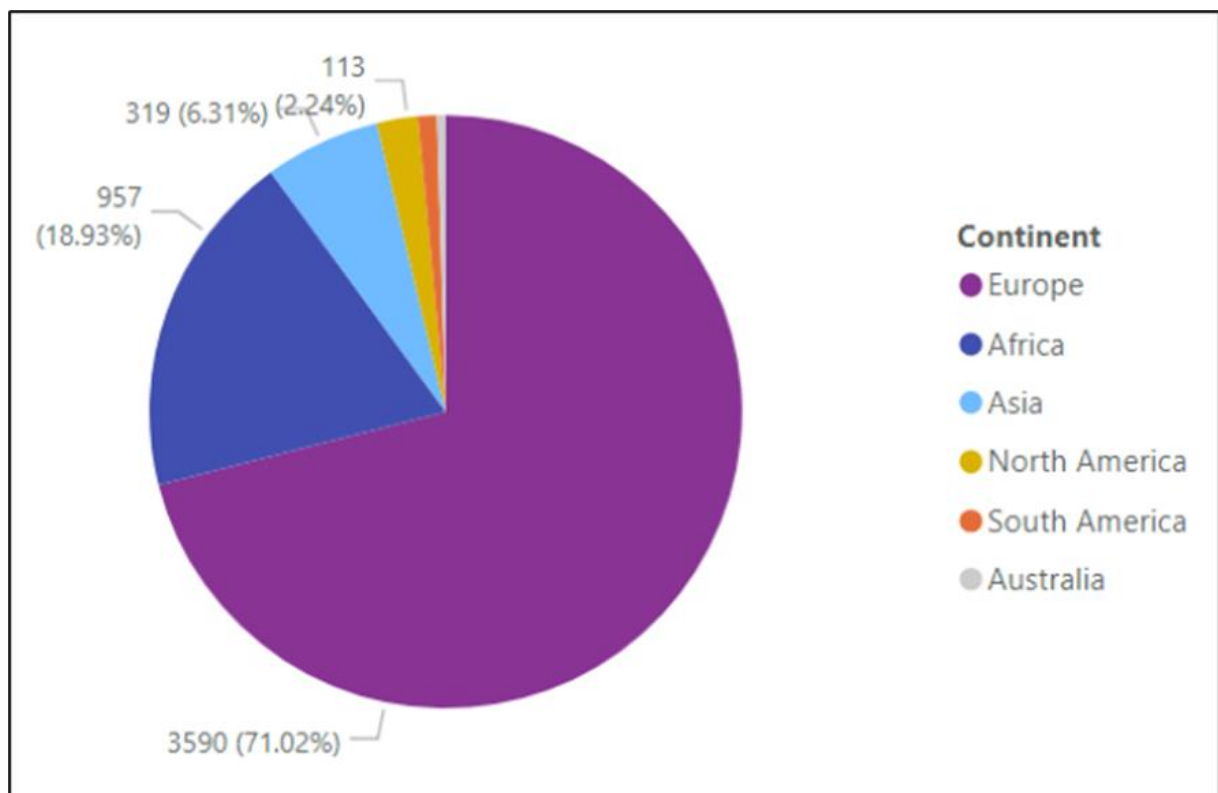
Figure 2. 8: Distribution of migrant children in Maltese schools by continent (percentages). (Data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).

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DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN MALTESE SCHOOLS BY CONTINENT 1

Continent	Average of Percentage of Total for Church Schools	Average of Percentage of Total for Independent Schools	Average of Percentage of Total for State Schools
Africa	2.89%	14.76%	82.35%
Asia	9.15%	33.27%	57.58%
Australia	4.17%	75.00%	20.83%
Europe	1.05%	40.32%	58.63%
North America	5.90%	59.79%	34.31%
South America	0.00%	27.19%	72.81%
Total	**3.08%**	**31.83%**	**65.09%**

Table 2. 7: *Distribution of migrant children in Maltese schools by continent (percentages). (Data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).*

DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN MALTESE SCHOOLS BY CONTINENT 2

Continent	Total	State	Independent	Church
Europe	3590	2295	1221	74
Africa	957	668	272	17
Asia	319	210	95	14
North America	113	37	68	8
South America	52	37	15	0
Australia	24	5	18	1
Total	**5055**	**3252**	**1689**	**114**

Table 2. 8: *Distribution of migrant children in Maltese schools by continent (numbers). (Data supplied by the National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).*

2.4.2 Challenges related to multilingual classrooms

These figures are significantly small when compared to the nearly-20% of children speaking English as an additional language in England (Tinsley and Board, 2016), however they are still suggestive of a cultural and linguistic shift, especially when one considers that "even a small increase in the number of these learners can cause strong demands on the educational system of a country like Malta" (Bonello, 2020, pp. 17 -18). The number of migrant learners in Maltese classrooms who cannot communicate in either Maltese or English is rising at unprecedented levels. Notwithstanding Malta's multilingual and multicultural heritage, this rapid and sudden demographic shift is resulting in unparalleled challenges for the island's inhabitants, as the country is struggling to accommodate and provide for the ever-growing number of migrants within its communities and educational institutions. This consistent, upward trend in the number of migrant learners in our classrooms, is indicative of a rapid and unavoidable linguistic shift from bilingualism to multilingualism in Malta (Facciol et al., 2015; Farrugia, 2017; Scaglione and Caruana, 2018; Ariza et al., 2019; Caruana, et al., 2019; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020; Paris and Farrugia, 2019; Bonello, 2020). The 2019 EPIC report (p. 37) claims that the support of migrant children "is one of the most urgent policy challenges facing European countries" (European Commission, 2019c, p. 37). These children are classified as "the most vulnerable groups in society, at risk of social exclusion and in need of support and protection" (ibid.). Research shows that children of ethnic or linguistic minorities are often underachievers at school (OECD, 2012), and hence European countries are presently facing urgent humanitarian and policy challenges in order to ensure their wellbeing and support. Facciol et al. (2015, p. 19) sustain that,

> Schools need to accept the fact that the phenomenon of migrant non-Maltese learners is here to stay. Some schools are visibly in denial and hoping that this issue will go away. Training in this aspect of inclusion, in the handling of multi-ethnic and multi-

cultural classes, in the detection of discrimination and xenophobia, cannot be put off anymore.

The concept of superdiversity coined by Vertovec (2007), refers to the past decade's migration paradigm shifts associated with the demographic and social changes brought about by a rapid increase in population varieties (Vertovec, 2007; Blommaert and Rampton, 2016; Cenoz, 2019). Pavlenko (2018) is however cautious of this description and identifies other past eras defined by mass migration, arguing that hence, superdiversity is hardly a novel concept, but is rather a new "buzzword" (p. 163), "academic term", "trendy keyword", and a name which is "sexier than others" (p. 145). Similarly Cenoz (2019) states that multilingualism is an age-old phenomenon, referring to the Behistun Inscription (sixth or fifth century BC), and the Rosetta Stone (196 BC) as prime examples of past linguistic diversity. Aronin and Singleton (2008, pp. 1-2) however sustain that although the existence of multilingualism can be observed throughout the history of humankind, current linguistic diversity is in fact relatively different to previous situations. They state that the following contemporary factors differentiate between past and present concepts of multilingualism:

1. "Multilingualism is ubiquitous, on the rise worldwide, and increasingly deep and broad in its effects.
2. Multilingualism is developing within the context of the new reality of globalisation.
3. Multilingualism is now such an inherent element of human society that it is necessary to the functioning of major components of the social structure (in the broad sense, encompassing, inter alia, technology, finance, politics, and culture)".

Cenoz (2019), is in agreement with this view, and proposes an additional feature of contemporary multilingualism, which incorporates English as lingua franca. She highlights the way in which the English language plays an important role in school curricula across the

globe as one example of this. Whichever way one looks at it, there is however, no doubt that population diversity and multilingualism are salient factors in sociolinguistic research.

Until the 1970s, Southern European countries including Malta experienced mass migration to other continents and European states, as people sought better employment and quality of life away from their shores (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018). The situation is now in reverse, and this sudden shift in migration patterns requires urgent considerations, especially in the field of education. Maltese classrooms are becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse. This diversity also varies amongst catchment areas, as it is further observed within certain parts of Malta which are inhabited by more migrants than other localities (International Organisation for Migration, 2016). This shift in educational paradigms necessitates that Initial Teacher Education, together with Continuous Professional Development for experienced teachers focus on adequately addressing issues related to multicultural and multilingual classrooms. Teachers are currently endeavoring to meet the diverse needs of the students in their care through "their individual goodwill, rather than on a sound professional basis" (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018, p. 143). These trends are also mirrored across Europe, where teacher training initiatives focusing on integrating migrant learners, is appropriately monitored in Spain, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Serbia only (European Commission, 2019a). The European Commission's (2017) report on Preparing Teachers for Diversity and the role of Initial Teacher Education, states that in view of demographic shifts around Europe, educators need to possess the necessary skills to "provide support to newly arrived pupils, to address the specific needs of all learners, and to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in all school communities" (p. 12), hence, European teachers need to be equipped with "relevant intercultural competences, including valuing and adapting to diversity as well as being culturally self-aware" (p. 20). Based on research focusing on "teacher competences for intercultural diversity", the Council of Europe has developed a set of competences that Initial

Teachers should acquire to cater for the requirements of their diverse student population (see Table below). My study addresses this by proposing recommendations for policy and practice, which also include proposals for further focus on preparatory sessions and rigorous training for both future and experienced teachers (see section 4.6 in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, and section 5.2.3 in Chapter 5: Conclusion).

FRAMEWORK OF TEACHER COMPETENCES FOR DIVERSITY

FRAMEWORK OF TEACHER COMPETENCES FOR ENGAGING WITH DIVERSITY
Knowledge and understanding of: • The political, legal, and structural context of sociocultural diversity. • International frameworks and understanding of the key principles that relate to socio-cultural diversity education • Different dimensions of diversity (ethnicity, gender, special needs etc.) and understanding their implications in school settings. • The range of teaching approaches, methods, and materials for responding to diversity • Skills of inquiry into different socio-cultural issues • One's own identity and engagement with diversity
Communication and Relationships • Initiating and sustaining a positive rapport with pupils, parents, and colleagues from different socio-cultural backgrounds • Recognising and responding to the communicative and cultural aspects of languages used in school • Creating an open-mindset and respect within the school community • Motivating and stimulating all pupils to engage in both individual and cooperative learning activities • Encouraging parental involvement at different levels • Dealing with conflicts to prevent marginalisation and school failure
Management and Teaching • Addressing socio-cultural diversity in curriculum and institutional development • Establishing a participatory, inclusive, and safe learning environment • Selecting and adapting teaching methods according to the needs of the pupils • Critically evaluating diversity within teaching resources (textbooks, videos, media etc.) • Using a variety of approaches to foster culturally sensitive teaching and assessment • Systematic reflection on and evaluation of own practice and its impact on students

Table 2. 9: Framework of Teacher Competences for Engaging with Diversity. (Adapted from Arnesen, Allan, and Simonsen, [Council of Europe, 2010], in European Commission, 2017, p. 25).

Scaglione and Caruana (2018) state that racial intolerance is one issue which needs to be addressed to promote effective multilingual and multicultural education, and to support the

preservation of migrant learners' heritage languages. They suggest that in in southern European inbound countries, the public opinion on immigration tends to be "alarmist" in nature, which, "generally leads to a climate of mistrust, which promotes attitudes tending towards intolerance or assimilation, while diversity is viewed with suspicion" (p. 143). This view is supported by Bezzina and Vassallo (2019, p. 214), who claim that,

> the largely disputed irregular immigration heading towards Maltese shorelines has had an undesired bearing on the perception of the Maltese towards multicultural education with many associating multiculturalism with irregular immigration in an aura of mistrust, deep concerns, and anxiety.

Migrant learners need to be supported not only through integration, induction, and language programmes, but also through educational institutions which adequately "identify and address processes that lead to discrimination, exclusion and racism" (European Commission, 2017 p. 12). Attard Tonna et al. (2017) sustain that "schools can be the places where citizens and migrants learn how to live together without feeling excluded because of their ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds and the colour of their skin" (p. 78).

The European Commission (2017) recognises that there are societal and educational opportunities linked to diversity, which if appropriately harnessed "can function as a rich educational resource in classrooms, to enrich the competences and creativity of all pupils, promote inter-group contact, opportunities for reflection and peer-learning" (p. 20). Although this shift is reaping rewards on many levels, educators are also encountering hurdles related to language use, as they strive to meet the diverse cultural and linguistic requirements of all their students. Blommaert and Backus (2013, p. 14) claim that superdiversity has several implications on sociolinguistics, amongst which are,

- "an increasing problematization of the notion of 'language' in its traditional sense – shared, bounded, characterized by deep stable structures.

- an increasing focus on 'language' as an emergent and dynamic pattern of practices in which semiotic resources are being used in a particular way – often captured by terms such as 'languaging', 'polylingualism' and so forth.

- detaching such forms of 'languaging' from established associations with particular groups – such as 'speech communities' or 'cultures' ".

In order to access the curriculum, students in Maltese classrooms are required to be proficient in not one but two languages, thus introducing families to complex considerations regarding English, Maltese, and the heritage language (Micallef Cann and Spiteri, 2014). These competing languages are often the reason behind tensions and conflicts within migrant families, due to the complexities of negotiating language use within the host country (Pavlenko 2006; Little, 2017). García (2013) sustains that the home language practices of migrant children are often very different to the two standard languages taught at the host countries' schools. In this respect, Kirova and Adams (2006, p. 325) sustain that that many immigrant parents feel "a loss of control" as their children tend to rapidly conform to the mainstream culture and language of their new host country. For pragmatic reasons, the utility of the heritage language diminishes within the community, and migrant children often end up adopting the country's main language or languages as their primary means of peer interaction, a practice which may unfortunately lead to eventual native language loss as a consequence (Harris, 2006; Kirova and Adams, 2006). It is therefore important to work towards ensuring that "immigrant students in Malta are 'empowered' and not 'caught in power' by Malta's two official languages" (Micallef Cann and Spiteri, 2014, p. 24).

Even when bilingual and multilingual families are able to communicate in more than one language, and when they hold flexible interlingual ideologies, this does not always translate into flexible home language practices. These families often find themselves facing an emotional dilemma, being conscious of the fact that mixing languages may not be the best way to develop their child's home language (Wilson, 2020).

2.4.3 Malta's shift from Bilingualism to Multilingualism: The way forward

García's concept of transglossia (2009) is already evident in the way English and Maltese are being used in the Maltese classroom, as well as in daily life, however educators need expert guidance and support in extending this transglossia in ways which include pupils' home languages, since this practice improves children's self-esteem, encourages integration within their community, builds cultural identities, and promotes children's learning. When migrant learners' mother tongues are not valued and respected within their communities and at school, this often leads to cultural and social impairment and academic underachievement (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020). Notwithstanding the fact that preserving linguistic and cultural diversity is of pivotal importance within multi-ethnic classrooms, heritage languages are still mistakenly considered to be a hindrance to academic performance, thus implicitly implying that their value is one of lesser significance (García, 2005; Little, 2010; Little, 2017). Contrary to these beliefs, inclusive ideologies which ensure that students' multicultural and multi-ethnic identities, including their linguistic differences, remain valued and celebrated promote cognitive development and lead to academic achievement (Little, 2010; Little, 2017). Scaglione and Caruana (2018) argue that schools often operate on a deficit model, with the main focus being that of integrating migrant learners through teaching them the host country's language/s of instruction. These efforts are not analogous to what is being invested to encourage the preservation of the students' home languages, and this disparity often results in academic underachievement. The current trends hence necessitate the re-evaluation of the role

schools plays in preserving and nurturing the home languages of multilingual pupils, whilst addressing the potential perils faced by national and indigenous languages throughout this process. Although Maltese schools are experiencing this upward trend, and are striving to meet the requirements of their diverse student population, they are not capitalising on the "extent and value of immigrant children's language repertoires and of the potential benefits that could result if children's languages of origin were adequately exploited" (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018, p. 141). Mother tongue support programmes are not always feasible within multilingual school environments, for a variety of economic and pragmatic reasons, together with a lack of adequately trained human resources. It is unrealistic to expect teachers to be proficient in all their students' home languages (García and Seltzer, 2016), however, they can provide learning environments which include books and signage in the children's home language, programmes which welcome parental involvement at different levels, together with the provision of safe spaces for linguistically diverse pupils to utilise their native language, to break from the "linguistic hierarchies that exist in school" (García and Seltzer, 2016, p.24). Duarte (2020, p. 12) states that in this scenario pupils themselves could also take the lead, using translanguaging as a means of linking the different native languages in class, which she defines as,

> fulfilling a scaffolding function offering temporary bridges between languages which allow pupils to build links between official instruction languages and between home and school languages. These scaffolding moments acknowledge all different languages by giving them the same role and relevance in daily classroom routines.

Peers scaffold each other's learning through discursive mediation, and these peer interaction strategies should be harnessed as educational resources within multilingual classroom environments, since they promote inter-group contact, and provide opportunities for peer-learning (European Commission, 2017; Kibler, 2017; Martin-Beltrán, Daniel, Peercy and Silverman, 2017).

In the current sociocultural context of education, it is imperative that educators are adequately trained in ways to be able to harness the potential of multilingualism and multiculturalism, to address the specific requirements of all students, and to support children's own cultural identity and linguistic heritage, whilst preparing them for a globalized world. This can be achieved through pedagogies which include flexible language strategies such as translanguaging, programmes that promote the universal value of English, whilst supporting the preservation of the Maltese language, and structures that provide adequate measures to support and celebrate migrant learner's own cultural and linguistic heritage (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020). Engaging teachers with their cultural environments (Moll, 2015), together with exploring potential parental involvement may also be other ways to foster, celebrate and value student diversity through promoting integration, together with cultural and linguistic understanding (Ariza, 2000). Ariza (2000) and Attard Tonna et al. (2017) advocate for the support of migrant parents, particularly minority language ones, in order to encourage their involvement in their children's education since this is known to be pivotal for academic success. These issues are addressed in my study which also offers proposals for teacher training, a review of syllabi, curricula and pedagogy, enhanced teacher agency, the provision of parental educational sessions, together with parental involvement at different levels, amongst others, as recommendations for future policy and practice (see section 4.6 in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, and section 5.2.3 in Chapter 5: Conclusion).

The recent demographic changes on the island have led to the presently ongoing major paradigm shift in education. One newly introduced initiative aimed at addressing multi-ethnic Maltese classrooms is the introduction of Ethics as a subject as an alternative to the teaching of the state religion Catholicism (International Organisation for Migration, 2016). Additionally, the establishment of a Migrant Learners' Unit within the Ministry of Education and Employment is one other initiative targeting "the inclusion of newly arrived migrant

learners into the education system, focusing on the acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural competences" (Migrant Learners' Unit, n.d.). Current educational reforms aim towards a more holistic view of teaching and learning, with additional focus on valuing, and adapting to, increasingly diverse classroom environments, however, these changes are still in their embryonic stages, and require additional research and evidence based practice in order to be fully effective.

Multilingualism and multiculturalism are quintessential elements of Maltese society, and "what is essentially 'natural' for the Maltese themselves is very surprising to visitors who, as soon as they land in Malta, immediately perceive the multicultural component to life in Malta" (Sciriha, 2001, p. 36 – 37). Malta's multilingual and multicultural heritage may thus be the foundation for informing its multilingual future. Maltese educators hybridise languages spontaneously, shifting between Maltese, English, and possibly other languages as they endeavour to address the language requirements of all the students in class. Instinctively delving into their linguistic repertoire according to the particular requirements of the moment, has always been a part of Maltese bilinguals' everyday communication. These organically occurring practices also form part of Maltese classrooms, as both teachers and students deploy their full linguistic repertoire to ensure effective communication and understanding. Owing to Malta's multilingual history and solid support for foreign language education, many teachers are proficient in languages beyond English and Maltese, and a substantial part of Maltese nationals also consider themselves to be trilingual, albeit to varying degrees of proficiency. Maltese bilingual classrooms often include a number of Maltese born students who do not speak either Maltese or English at the same level as their peers. Teachers endeavour to mitigate these challenges through spontaneous and naturally occurring flexible language practices, together with the use of resources and multimodal teaching. The changing classroom demographics necessitate that these practices are also extended in ways which support migrant children who are encountering

difficulties related to Malta's two official languages. These teachers may also serve as linguistic role models, as these practices celebrate linguistic diversity, foster inclusion and an appreciation for a variety of languages, strengthen the children's global citizenship and often lead to a variety of languages being spoken amongst the students themselves.

Further research in the area, such as this research study, could eventually lead to the development of specialised and specific training programmes for both student and established teachers, and for the development of communities of practice amongst educators themselves.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have endeavoured to review and discuss some of the literature, and hence the theoretical foundations that are pertinent to this study, making links as appropriate. I have explored, compared, and contrasted the scholarly works of key contributors in the field, and identified a snapshot of bilingualism and multilingualism in educational contexts. I have also attempted to depict a clear picture of the bilingual and multilingual situation in Malta, and how these afore-mentioned issues are being conceptualised locally, since this is the socio-cultural background of my participants.

Although as highlighted earlier in this chapter, there is a vast body of research focusing on bilingualism, and more recently on cross-linguistic practices, "a wealth of future research is needed to establish when, where, and how translanguaging is a suitable teaching approach" (Lewis et al., 2012b p. 652). The National Literacy Strategy (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014) states that in early language learning, appropriate pedagogical methods are to be adopted, "where the second language is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content" (p. 29). Kirsch (2017) posits that,

> in order to ensure that researchers and teachers develop a fuller understanding of
> translanguaging as a leverage for language learning and learning in general, we need

both more research and more outreach work to professionals. Further research could examine the teachers' perspectives on translanguaging as these are likely to impact on their practices (p. 15).

In this context, Wei and García (2017), Cenoz (2017), and Vaish (2019), amongst other scholars, all make recommendations for researchers to conduct further translanguaging research, particularly on educating dominant language students. There is also a need to explore the best ways in which to merge practice with pedagogy within educational institutions (Canagarajah, 2011b; Lewis, Jones and Baker, 2013), and how to implement translanguaging practices within a variety of linguistically diverse dual language learning environments (Vaish, 2019), such as the Maltese scenario, which I am exploring through this study. Furthermore, there appears to be a lacuna in literature focusing on bilingual language teachers' views and beliefs about language pedagogy, and specifically cross-linguistic practices such as translanguaging. This gap is even more pronounced at a local level, where notwithstanding the fact that there has been a noticeable growth in current research in the field, this is still somewhat limited, especially taking into consideration the rapidly changing demographics on the island, which necessitate urgent focus in this direction.

The aim of this study is to draw from linguistic research in order to explore this phenomenon through the eyes of educators themselves. Key findings provide evidence on Maltese teachers' views of and perceived practice and pedagogy related to language use as valuable contributions to this field of study. This insight on the local educational scenario contributes to the development of recommendations to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners, which will be elaborately discussed and presented in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, and Chapter 5: Conclusion, of this research study.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The aims of this chapter are to present and justify the research methodology for this study. This is done through exploring relevant literature, together with discussing the background, rationale, and research process of this project.

The research I present involves the views of nine Maltese teachers on bilingual and multilingual English language classrooms. The data was collected through a series of nine interviews with the participants throughout approximately one year. The data are presented through transcriptions of interviews that were subsequently processed and analysed qualitatively, thus giving depth to the study.

This research study aims to provide a basis for critical reflection and discussion amongst English language primary school Maltese teachers, to explore how their bilingual identities may affect their pedagogical practices, and to investigate whether or not they believe they draw on their first language in ways relevant to the teaching of English. The study would further probe into teachers' perceptions on whether, why and how cross-linguistic pedagogies are beneficial within bilingual and multilingual English language classroom settings. The main aim of this enquiry was to explore the language use of Maltese teachers in Primary Schools. The development of the research questions stemmed from a personal interest in the subject as a primary school teacher, educational leader, and teacher educator. The questions were guided by answers which I sought for my own professional development. The research was not led by pre-determined hypotheses and hence, the research questions and the study were interconnected throughout the process (Silverman, 2017).

This thesis attempts to provide a framework for addressing the research questions (see section 1.3 in Chapter 1: Introduction) through key bodies of literature in bilingualism and multilingualism, second language learning, codeswitching, translanguaging and teacher cognition. As an English language teacher and educational leader, I think that this research study is valuable because there exists a gap in current local research regarding teachers' views on cross-linguistic practice in English language primary classrooms. In view of these findings, recommendations could be made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of our professional practice. As a visiting university lecturer, I also believe in the importance of this study because insights on language teaching and learning could help with the development of initial teacher education programmes. Goodson and Sikes (2001) sustain that researching the lives of individuals, such as schoolteachers, whose stories are not usually viewed as sufficiently important or significant to be heard, may be emancipatory and empowering due to changes to social policy and practice, which may ensue as a result of these voices being heard.   Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018, p.61) sustain that "qualitative research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers' lives".

This study is not based on classroom observation sessions since my main aim is to "listen" to the voices of teachers, through their language biographies, to gain a deeper insight into their ideas, perspectives and perceived pedagogical practices, through the lens of existing literature on bilingual education and cross-linguistic pedagogy in ESL classes. In the words of Richards (2009, p. 193), "letting others speak through you can be a humbling experience, especially when these are voices that are not usually heard. This is something that makes qualitative research, and interviews in particular, very powerful".

Murray (2009, p. 60) states that a researcher needs to "listen intently" in order to make sure that participants' voices are heard. Mason (2002, p. 225) compares "knowledge excavation",

where the interviewer's skill lies in eliciting pertinent and precise data, to "knowledge construction", where the interviewer and interviewee are co-participants in the generation of in-depth data. Mason argues that asking, listening and interpretation are key elements in qualitative research and,

> how we ask questions, what we assume is possible from asking questions and from listening to answers, and what kind of knowledge we hear answers to be, are all ways in which we express, pursue and satisfy our theoretical orientations (ibid. p. 225).

Furthermore, Mason suggests that "listening" to our participants involves being sensitive to emotions within their responses, to make inferences based on the way they express themselves, to be aware that meaning can be derived also through what is unsaid, and to explore non-verbal cues. Davis and Dwyer (2017) substantiate this belief stating that "we are not only required to hear the story that is spoken or covertly demonstrated … we need to develop analytical frameworks which would enable us to notice the absences and silences that are created within stories" (p. 232).

Similarly, Yin (2016, p. 28) states that "listening" "calls upon all the senses, including intuitions" to gauge participant's mood and approachability. He also stresses on the importance of giving interviewees adequate space and time for responding, rather than controlling the conversation with interviewer's input. Therefore, researchers also need to be skilled in recognising the importance of being silent at times, and at "listening between the lines" of what their participants are communicating.

As a school leader and teacher myself, I firmly believe in the importance of "listening" to educators in order to elicit their beliefs and ideas about education. I feel that very often these are not given the importance that they deserve within result driven environments where targets, examination performance and statistical data are often given priority over attitudes and

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feelings. The concept of active listening in research will be discussed further in section 3.4.2 of this chapter.

3.2 Philosophical Assumptions and Theoretical Frameworks

Crotty (1998) suggests that prior to developing a research proposal, a researcher considers the methodologies and methods they are planning to utilise, and how these choices are justified. Crotty states that the answer to the latter lies within the study's research question itself since the purpose of the chosen methodologies and methods is for the researcher to be able to answer that very question. Furthermore, the reasoning behind choosing the methodology and methods also extends into our own philosophical assumptions, which we inevitably inject into our work (Crotty, 1998; Dwyer and Emerald, 2017). Crotty (1998) states that at the base of the research process, there are four basic elements, namely methods, methodology, ontology, and epistemology.

Creswell and Poth's (2018, p. 79) analogy compares qualitative research to "intricate fabric" and they maintain that "this fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general assumptions and interpretive frameworks hold qualitative research together". Personal experiences shape the assumptions or concepts we hold about the nature of the world, which can in turn be linked to theory. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) sustain that "the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated" (p.19). Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018), argue that although we may not always do this consciously, an element of personal beliefs and philosophical assumptions is always injected into our research. This may include our deep-rooted beliefs about the problems we wish to examine, the answers we are searching for, or our data collection methods. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that these beliefs make their mark on us through a variety of sources ranging from our own educational training, academic reading, guidance from our academic advisors and through our scholarly

communities. They further argue that a researcher's philosophy and choice of framework are closely related.

Creswell and Poth (2018), sustain that our philosophical assumptions are usually the building blocks of our research, and that our philosophical world-view may be better understood through evaluating its value within research, how it may be embedded within the overall development of the research, and finding ways of including it in the study. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 54) explore these philosophical assumptions and present implications for practice as can be seen in the following table.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Assumption	Questions	Characteristics	Implications for Practice (Examples)
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is multiple as seen through different views.	The researcher reports different perspectives as themes develop in the findings.
Epistemological	What counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?	Subjective evidence is obtained from participants; the researcher attempts to lessen the distance between themselves and that being researched.	The researcher relies on quotes as evidence from the participant as well as collaborates, spends time in field with participants and becomes an "insider".

Table 3.1: Philosophical Assumptions and 1mplications for Practice (adapted from Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 54)

My ontological and epistemological assumptions have been formed through my experiences of, and ideas on bilingualism, multilingualism, language teaching and learning, and relate to many of the theories drawn out from the literature review. Conversely, throughout the course

of my studies, I also encountered previously unchartered theories, which encouraged me to think deeper about, and re-evaluate some of the suppositions I had previously held. This enabled me to critically think about the bilingual and multilingual situation within my context.

Following the work of Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), Creswell and Poth (2018, p.73) compare the philosophical assumptions of ontology and epistemology as can be seen in the following table.

COMPARING INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Interpretative Frameworks	Possible Researcher Goals	Potential Researcher Influences	Examples of Researcher Practices
Social Constructivism	To understand the world in which participants live and work	Recognition of background as shaping interpretation	Interprets participants' construction of meaning in their account
Transformative frameworks	To act for societal improvements	Knowledge of power and social relationships within society	Adopts an action agenda for addressing the injustices of marginalized groups

Table 3.2: Comparing Interpretative Frameworks (adapted from Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 73).

My background as a Maltese bilingual educator was the driving force which led me to better explore the world within which my participants lived and worked, which was essentially also very much my own world, and hence I was aware that my own background would inevitably shape my interpretation. I was also aiming for societal improvement within the field of education, as I endeavoured to give "voice" to teachers, since I felt that their ideas were not always given merited importance. These ideas would eventually help shape some guidelines for an audience of educators.

My ontological and epistemological assumptions, underpinned by Social Constructionist and Transformative interpretative frameworks, form the basis upon which I developed my research methodology and the methods adopted within this study. This was fundamental in generating comprehensive data to answer my research questions.

Building on the work of Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 74) state that philosophical assumptions may take different forms depending on the interpretative framework the researcher chooses to use. They explore the Interpretive Frameworks and their Associated Philosophical Beliefs as can be seen in the following table.

INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND ASSOCIATED PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS

Interpretative Frameworks	Ontological Beliefs (the nature of reality)	Epistemological Beliefs (how reality is known)
Social Constructivism	Multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others.	Reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences.
Transformative	Participation between researcher and communities or individuals is being studied. Often a subjective-objective reality emerges.	These are co-created findings with multiple ways of knowing.

Table 3.3*: Interpretative Frameworks and Associated Philosophical Beliefs (adapted from Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 73).*

My own beliefs and pedagogy stem from my own personal and professional background together with my lived experiences with others, as a result of my upbringing, education, and collegiality. The same can be said of my participants, who also construct their bilingual and teacher identities through their lived experiences. My research questions explore these experiences, which result in a co-construction of reality and co-created findings between me

and my participants, of which the ultimate aim is to ameliorate the lives of educators and students alike.

3.3 Research Design

After taking into consideration the different design frameworks in relation to the research questions, I decided to opt for a qualitative rather than quantitative research design. This was because, as highlighted in Table 3.4 hereunder, I was mainly interested in my participants' lives, experiences and shared culture, whilst a quantitative approach would have allowed me to focus more on the numerical analysis and measurement of structured data (Bell, 2014; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Elliot (2005, p. 118) argues that "quantitative analysis can be understood to obscure the individual because it aims to provide a summary description of the characteristics of a group or aggregation of people rather than focusing on the unique qualities of each case in the sample".

TYPES OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESERCH

Research Design	Primary Use
Quantitative	• Intervention/non-intervention research • Explaining whether an intervention influences outcome for one group as opposed to another • Associating/relating variables in a predictable pattern for one group of individuals • Describing trends for a population of people • (Experimental, Correlational, Survey Research)
Qualitative	• Exploring common experiences of individuals to develop a theory • Exploring the shared culture of a group of people • Exploring individual stories to describe people's lives • (Grounded Theory, Ethnographic, Narrative Research)
Mixed methods	• Combining qualitative and quantitative methods to understand a problem • (Mixed method and Action Research)

Table 3.4: *Types of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Designs and Their Primary Uses (adapted from Creswell and Creswell, 2017 p. 20).*

l favoured the richness of the in-depth data over quantity or broadness since I wished to gain insight into teachers' perspectives with regard to language use, while exploring their backgrounds, and their experiences of learning and teaching underpinning their philosophy of education (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). In other words, I was interested in the "whys", "hows" and the meaning behind them, as opposed to the "whos", "wheres", "how manys" and "what kinds" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). According to Goodson (1981, p. 69), "in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is."

Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 79), metaphorically compare qualitative research to fabric, describing it as "comprising minute threads, many colours, different textures, and various blends of material". The nature of my study, which focuses on teachers' identities and life stories, hence required a qualitative, people-focused approach to enable me to understand my participants' meanings and to view the world from their perspective. According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), asking participants to talk about their lives, "has the potential to enable 'ordinary' individuals to tell their story, to give their version, to 'name their silent lives'" (p. 99).

3.4 Research Approach

Given the possibility of various research methods, I took several factors into consideration as I chose one approach over another. Creswell and Creswell (2017) argue that the research problem, personal experience, and the audience should all be considered when deciding on a particular approach or approaches. My research question (problem) focused on an in-depth exploration of teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. My personal experience as an educator myself provided me with an awareness of what questions I should be asking through which I could glean as much insight as possible, whilst the wider audience for my research

would be practitioners, therefore my research warranted a clear and straightforward approach. I explored the methods normally utilised in qualitative research and selected the strategies which I felt fit best with the nature of my study.

3.4.1 Case study research

Case study research involves the study of one aspect of a problem which requires in depth study often over a long period of time (Hood, 2009; Bell, 2014). It necessitates "evidence to be collected systematically, the relationship between variables studied, and the investigation methodically planned" (Bell, 2014, p. 12). Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 545) highlight the fact that this approach encourages the participants and researcher to collaborate closely, whilst permitting the participants to "tell their stories". This, in turn enables the researcher to understand research subjects better. Creswell and Creswell (2017, p. 51) define case studies as "a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" where researchers collect data through a variety of sources. According to Baxter and Jack, (2008, p. 544), "this ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood". Similarly, Yin (2002, 2012), Hood (2009), and Yazan (2015) state that the use of a variety of sources and the triangulation of data to confirm validity within case study research, is one distinguishing characteristic, and that this enables the researcher to understand the phenomenon within real-life natural settings. Yin (2012, p.10) mentions the following sources, some, or all of which may be used in combination in order to explore a phenomenon within case study research:

- Direct observations
- Interviews
- Archival records
- Documents

- Participant-observation
- Physical artefacts

My research focuses on the life and personal experiences of a small number of participants. This would have made case study a suitable research strategy. However, I was neither exploring one particular aspect of a problem, nor evaluating a programme or intervention, but rather investigating a number of issues and topics which would help me understand my participants' perspectives, bilingual identities, and perceived teaching strategies. Moreover, I was not prepared to embark on a longitudinal study of sorts, and most importantly, my study did not warrant the use of multiple sources to collect data since I believed that I would garner all the necessary information required in order to answer my research questions through conducting in-depth interviews.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviewing is a data collection method where an interviewer prepares a list of questions focusing specifically on topics to be explored, whilst also facilitating open responses by the participants (Brown and Danaher, 2019). There are often inferences to be made from these open responses (Tavory, 2020), which may not have been anticipated during the initial planning period (Brown and Danaher, 2019). Brown and Danaher (2019, p. 77) posit that,

> semi-structured interviews are positioned between on the one hand wholly structured interviews, where the interviewer does not deviate from the prepared interview schedule, and where the questions are usually more closed in character, and on the other hand unstructured interviews that are more freely flowing and emergent conversations that respond to general topics rather than to specific questions.

Semi-structured interviewing involves a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee which is "is guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions,

probes and comments" (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019, p. 1). This method facilitates the collection of open-ended data which in turn delves into participants' "thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic", which may also verge on the personal and sensitive (ibid.)I believed that a semi-structured interview schedule which would be analysed thematically, was the most appropriate instrument for collecting my data. Qualitative interviews focusing on people's experiences are useful in eliciting stories which are defined in accordance to what the participant deems relevant, whilst topical interviewing expands on a topic or theme which is the main aim of the research focus. Semi-structured interviewing enables the participant to "structure the narration … according his/her relevance settings", whilst allowing the researcher to "introduce questions that are especially relevant for the research focus" (Scheibelhofer, 2008 p.404). Obtaining quality data requires conducting interviews which do not focus on "a transactional question-answer approach, but rather should be unfolding, iterative interactions between the interviewer and interviewee" (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019, p. 1).

Once I started conducting the semi-structured interviews, the participants were in fact keen to talk about their personal experiences, and I allowed the participants to elaborate and expand on these. Whilst some questions led the participants to delve into their own personal and professional experiences, others were topic led, therefore answers were more succinct and based on previous knowledge. This interviewing method was therefore selected as a means to acquire a full understanding of the topic in the context of Malta's bilingual and multilingual reality.

Interviewing is considered to be an ideal data collection method when researchers seek to probe deeply beneath what seems apparent, and view things from their participants' perspectives. Richards (2009, p. 183) sustains that interviewing is "not simply a matter of using questions and answers to elicit information that we go on to analyse, but a data collection method that offers different ways of exploring people's experience and views". In this respect Tavory

(2020, p. 450) asks "whether interviews should be primarily understood as an active interpretive construction that takes place in the bounded interview-situation, or whether interviews should be understood as a window into other contexts of action".

There are essentially three types of interviews, namely: the **structured interview**, the **unstructured interview**, and the **semi-structured interview**.

1. The structured interview is the most rigid of the three types as it adheres relatively strictly to an interview protocol, with little room for flexibility. It is ideal to use when the researcher seeks comparability and specific information from their participants. and when precision is favoured over depth and richness of data.

2. Conversely, the unstructured interview is a data collection tool which allows both interviewer and interviewee a considerable amount of freedom. Questions are not pre-determined, hence the conversation may often go off a tangent. Nonetheless this type of interview often produces very rich and insightful data, however, comparability is very difficult to achieve.

3. The semi-structured interview, as the name implies, lies somewhere in between. There is an element of flexibility in this type of interview as it uses an interview protocol, but there is also room for additional probing in order to elicit more information from the participant. Richards (2009, p. 186) describes the semi-structured interview as one "where the interviewer has a clear picture of the topics that need to be covered … but is prepared to allow the interview to develop in unexpected directions where these open up important new areas".

After taking all three types of interviews into consideration, I decided to adopt the middle-road to collect my data. In the words of Richards (2009), semi-structured interviewing offers "the best of both worlds".

Semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain insight into teachers' life stories but, at the same time, also kept the conversation on track, as opposed to unstructured interviewing. One main advantage of semi-structured interviewing is consistency, and it is in fact the most commonly used format in language teaching research (Barkhuizen et al., 2014).

I took the following points into consideration as recommended by Mackey and Gass (2011) when choosing interviews as my research instrument.

- The length of the interview will vary depending on the required data,

- In order to yield the required information, questions must be structured in a way which would arouse the participants' interests,

- Individual differences amongst participants such as age and cultural background may affect data,

- Participants' input may vary considerably in narrative interviews, since their responses are also a means of stating their viewpoints and expressing their identity.

This semi-structured one-to-one interview comprises of a set of 32 questions (see Appendix E: Interview Questions) which are mainly concerned with the teachers' own identities and lives, together with their views on English language pedagogies within bilingual educational settings. One advantage of a qualitative interview approach is that it provides the researcher with an opportunity to delve into the lives of the interviewees to gain insight into what motivates their views and practices.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) sustain that educators' particular philosophies of education and professional identities are based on the "many influences, experiences and relationships within a teacher's life" (p. 21). Additionally, the conditions and environments they may find themselves working in also impact their classroom practices.

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The flexibility of this interviewing technique allows focused, two-way communication, where meaning can be derived from both verbal and non-verbal cues. In this respect, Goodson and Sikes (2001) strongly believe in the value of body language, gestures and tone of voice as "intent and meaning are conveyed as much as how things are said as through the actual words that are used" (p. 33).

Bell (2014, p. 179) also supports this view by stating that a competent interviewer is in a position to "follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings" through analysing a variety of non-verbal cues. Conversely, written responses such as those elicited through questionnaires have to be taken "at face value" and cannot be explored further.

Louw, Watson Todd and Jimakorn (2011) argue that since teachers' attitudes are personal in nature and not possible to determine through direct observation, selecting appropriate data collection strategies may prove to be challenging for researchers. Using semi-structured interviews is one way of facilitating the process for teachers willing to share personal and professional beliefs which may impact their classroom practice (Borg, 2006). The rapport between the researcher and participant is important in order to motivate people to talk about their lives (Caine and Estefan, 2011). When researcher and participants come from the same field, the interviewer may share their own experiences with the interviewee as an "in group member", hence forming a relationship based on understanding which may in turn produce more in depth data (Rojas Lizana, 2018, p. 159).

Louw et al. (2011) suggest that "the interviewer needs to respond thoughtfully to the interviewee's responses and encourage further exploration of the themes as they arise" (p. 71), in order to successfully elicit powerful data. They conclude that this may be achieved through the process of "active listening" which "aims to deepen the interviewer's understanding of the speakers' concerns and interests by creating empathy and making the speaker feel well listened

to" (p. 71).   Louw et al. (2011) refer to a set of functions which may encourage participants to effectively extend the conversation, and which enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's responses.

- **Opening** – inviting a lengthy initial response at the start of the interview to set the scene for further exploration.

- **Probing** - using open-ended questions to expand participant responses and generate opportunities for further evaluation.

- **Paraphrasing** – rewording the participant's response in order to expand, correct and reflect on the message.

- **Evaluating –** gauging the meaning behind the participant's response and encouraging them to approach it from a different angle.

- **Clarifying** - Verifying the accuracy of interviewer's interpretation through posing closed questions in relation to the participant's response to a specific question.

- **Repeating** – reiterating key words or phrases from the participant's response for further expansion, explanation, or clarification.

Additionally, other issues seemingly unrelated to the subject matter may crop up during the interview process. This off-topic data should also be given due consideration as it may "potentially provide richer insights into belief systems" (Adamson, 2004 p. 114). Researchers must be sensitive to the fact that participants may very well be "'answering' questions other than those we are asking them, and making sense of the social world in ways we had not thought of" (Mason, 2002 p. 231). Rojaz-Lizana (2017) also advocates the sharing of personal experiences by the researcher as to "support, orientate, prompt more information and create

rapport … this contribution triggers a verbal reaction on the part of the participant that enriches the data" (pp. 168 – 169).

The guidelines, prompts, and main themes in the questions (see Appendix E: Interview Questions) kept the conversation on track, preventing it from diverting into other themes which were not particularly relevant to the scope of the interview. These also permitted me to pursue any emerging topical trajectories, employing the strategies recommended for active listening as much as possible. I also periodically reminded my participants that as an educator, I was an "in group member" and hence often found myself "in similar situations and positions" (Rojas-Lizana, 2017, p. 169), providing empathic responses to my participants' answers when necessary (Davis and Dwyer, 2017). Adopting a reflexive approach when conducting research, means that "the role of the interviewer, relevant aspects of his or her identity, and the details of the interaction between researched and researcher" are considered an integral part of the research evidence (Elliot, 2005, p. 20).

The interviews were audio recorded using a voice recorder application available on the android device/phone. Field notes were taken throughout the interview to facilitate transcription. The recordings were immediately transferred on to my laptop which was safely stored at my private residence and erased after submission of this thesis. Pseudonyms were used at all times during both notetaking and transcription.

The transcribed data was manually analysed using thematic analysis. Although I am aware of the existence of software for qualitative data analysis such as NVivo, I am somewhat "old school" in my methods and believed that manual manipulation of data would enable me to get a better feel of my respondents' input which Russel Bernard and Ryan (2003) describe as the best possible way to intuitively identifying themes.

3.5 The Participants

Data was collected through an in-depth semi-structured interviewing process from nine primary school teachers who each had over ten years of experience in the field. Four teachers were chosen from state schools, three from church schools and two from a private independent school. These volumes are a reflection of the amount of schools in Malta in each category (please refer to figures 3.2 and 3.3 in section 3.11 of this chapter). I chose state, church and private independent schools since this enabled me to collate teachers' perspectives depending on the school context, which is considerably distinct in Malta (Camilleri Grima, 2013a). Teachers selected also had different language and schooling backgrounds, which enabled me to comparatively explore patterns linked to family context and educational experiences. Additionally, I selected participants who had experience with different year groups, in both the early and junior years, to explore whether and how teaching methods and perspectives may or may not vary depending on year group taught. Participants comprised of eight females and one male, which mirrors the gender imbalance among primary school teachers. The number of female teachers far surpasses that of males in primary education in the EU (Eurostat, 2017). Ages varied between thirties to fifties, and participants were born and resided in different parts of Malta, which was also influential in their preferred spoken language. Although my participants' family backgrounds and school contexts were relatively diverse, my participants were nonetheless homogenous in their experiences and direct involvement in the topic of research (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

A growing body of research suggests that teachers' effectiveness increases the more years they spend in their career, and that this growth can be observed in their second and third decade of teaching (Podolski, Kini and Darling-Hammond, 2019). In the words of Tsui (2005, p. 176), more years in the field equates to expertise due to a "sophisticated knowledge base" and to

the development of a rich and integrated knowledge of various aspects related to teaching and learning, including the students … the curriculum of their own subject as well as other curricula, the school context, and so on. It provides a sound basis for them to take responsibility for their own teaching, to exercise autonomy and flexibility in their pedagogical decisions. Expert teachers have also developed a repertoire of pedagogical routines which they can call on to deal with a variety of situations (ibid).

I believed that novice teachers or those with only a few years teaching experience under their belt may not have yet garnered all the experience necessary which would enable them to shed more light on the issues I set out to explore. In order to set a "cut off point", I focused on my own experience both as a teacher and teacher educator, and felt that I had personally reached maturity as an educator somewhere around my 8th year of teaching. I was also looking into the experience of colleagues in the field, and NQTs whom I had mentored, and believed that although one cannot generalise, many of them had acquired the necessary experience required to offer valuable insights into the teaching profession a few years into their career. These were the reasons behind my decision to select teachers with a significant number of years of teaching experience.

As a primary school educator myself, I was mainly interested in researching issues related to primary school education. I believed that the study would have taken a different course had it been conducted with secondary school educators, both because of the different realities and requirements of older students, and also because of the different nature of subject teaching in secondary schooling as opposed to class teaching in primary. Moreover, I wanted to narrow down my focus as much as possible, in order to enable me to explore the topic in depth. For these reasons, I decided to limit my participants to primary school teachers.

The number of non-Maltese teachers in primary schools is on the rise, due to transnational marriages, demographic changes on the island (discussed in section 2.4.1 – Demographic Changes in Malta), and teacher shortages (Sansone, 2019). Although I was aware that non-Maltese teachers would have offered interesting insights into my study, I believed that selecting Maltese born participants was important since my participants' Maltese family background, bilingual identity and the Maltese context in general were important elements of my study. Therefore, my participant selection consisted of teachers who were born, raised and educated in Malta. For similar reasons, I also decided to enrol teachers who taught in state, church, and private independent but not international schools. This is because I felt that it was important to have teachers in my study who taught Maltese and possibly non-Maltese children, and who taught both our official languages as subjects simultaneously, also using both Maltese and English as languages of instruction (Camilleri Grima, 2013a, 2013b). This is not always the case within an international school environment.

I also felt that selecting participants with a mixture of language preference/dominance, or those who used both Maltese and English interchangeably, would add depth to my study, since this would enable me to delve deeper into the Maltese bilingual scenario and language use. Being acquainted with my participants through my educational networks enabled me to purposely select teachers with a mixture of different language backgrounds.

Wengraf (2001), states that researchers would already have a clear idea of what would constitute a suitable participant for their inquiry (Please refer to section 3.14 – Limitations). However, apart from the "general specification of type", the researcher needs to ideally enrol participants to whom they would have easy access, and who would be willing to talk candidly and genuinely. Additionally, the participants would be required to have ample experience of the researched subject, together with articulate skills to be able to "express that experience in words" (ibid., p. 95). My cohort was relatively homogeneous since my participants were all

bilingual Maltese primary school teachers, each with over ten years teaching experience. They however had diverse language and schooling backgrounds, and taught in different schools. In this respect, my participant selection was purposive, therefore in line with qualitative research which rarely involves random participants, and which enables the researcher to select information rich participants to provide in depth data to answer the research questions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2016; Van Rijnsoever, 2017). Serra, Psarra and O'Brien (2018, p. 59) sustain that qualitative research entails "laborious inquiry processes", which are not easily undertaken with larger populations. Therefore, purposive sampling is appropriate for conducting qualitative research with small, information-rich participants because it seeks "the well-informed selection of very specific cases, capable of maximizing the chances of observing phenomena of interest" (ibid.).

All my participants were known to me through my educational networks, however I picked acquaintances that fit the criteria, rather than close friends, since I felt that this selection would mitigate possible bias and the possibility of having participants who might be overly keen to please the researcher (Dörnyei, 2003).

Bradshaw (2001) stresses that research participants "need to be protected, and many standard contract documents are available to present to would-be participants informing them of their rights and requiring their consent before they can be involved in research". The principle of informed consent was thus applied throughout the course of the study. The teachers were invited to participate in person, via text message, phone calls or Facebook messenger. I briefly described the nature of my study, the commitment and time involved in participating and they were then left free to participate on a voluntary basis. Prior to the commencement of my study, I contacted thirteen teachers. The majority accepted to participate almost immediately. Three teachers however said they would contact me in due course to set up a date for the interview, but only one eventually called back to set up a meeting, however she kept on cancelling our

scheduled appointments at the last minute, so this interview never actually materialised. Two other participants said that they were very busy with other commitments and preferred not to participate. Initially I had chosen eight participants for my study (3 from church schools, 3 from state schools and 2 from a private independent school), however, throughout the course of my research, I was introduced to a state school teacher whom I thought would make a valid contribution to my study, due to her language background and teaching experience. I therefore thought it would be beneficial to include one more participant in my study with the approval of my dissertation supervisor and the University of Sheffield Ethics board, so the final number of participants rose to 9 (see Appendix A: Ethical approval).

Malta is a small island, therefore the interview process was facilitated by this as I only had to walk or drive short distances to meet my participants. Interviews were held at times and venues which were convenient for my participants. Since this study did not entail any classroom observation sessions, the location selection held no particular relevance to my research, and thus these were chosen merely for pragmatic reasons. The majority of interviews were held after school hours in the afternoon, whilst one was held on a Saturday morning. A variety of coffee shops and public gardens were chosen for this purpose. One interview was held in my car at the university car park. Two participants invited me to their home, whilst one participant came over to my apartment. I interviewed the private school teachers at the school itself for purely matters of convenience as previously mentioned. However, it was worth noting that the school administrators of the private independent school were very welcoming and highly interested in my study. They went out of their way to accommodate me and my tight schedule and for this I am particularly grateful. It is also worth noting that during my time in the waiting area, and as I encountered children and educators going about their school day, I could hear the prevalence of the English language at all times, thus corroborating the results linked to private

independent schools in Chapter 4 of this thesis, and research linked to language use in Maltese schools (Vella, 2019).

In order to get a better picture of the participating teachers, the table below offers a brief overview of each. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Participants' genders and ages are unchanged as this adds perspective to the data.

PARTICIPANTS' TABLE

Participant	Age	Education	Teaching Experience	Year Group	L1
Diana	37	Bachelor's degree Master's degree	Church school for 13 years	Early years (years 1 & 2)	Maltese
Elaine	48	Bachelor's degree Master's degree	Church school for 13 years	Junior years (years 4 & 5) Recently promoted into an administrative role	No preference
Jonathan	36	Bachelor's degree	State school for 12 years	Junior years (year 6)	Maltese
Laura	43	Bachelor's degree	Various state schools for 11 years	Early years (year 2)	English
Liliana	59	Bachelor's degree	Private school for 24 years	Early years (years 1 & 2) Year 3 for the past 10 years	English
Mandy	40	Bachelor's degree Master's degree	Church school for 14 years	Early years teacher (years 1 & 2) Recently moved to subject teaching (English) in junior school (year 6)	English
Maria	40	Bachelor's degree Master's degree	Private school for 16 years	Junior school (year 6)	No preference
Cynthia	33	Bachelor's degree	Various state schools for 10 years She has taught complementary classes and Science Presently on a sabbatical	Primary and middle school	No preference
Ingrid	42	Bachelor's degree Currently reading for a Master's degree	Taught TEFL for 4 years before completing her degree as a mature student State school for the past 10 years	Junior years (year 4)	Maltese

Table 3.5: Participants' table.

The participants' social context together with their bilingual identities were taken into consideration throughout the course of the study. I therefore employed a socio-cognitive approach in the form of semi-structured interview, since I wanted an in-depth understanding of

my participants' views, attitudes and experiences of language use and teaching as detailed in section 3.6 of this chapter.

Language use is essentially linked to an individual's identity (Lanza, 2004; Wei, 2007; Bialystok, 2011). Although most of my participants seemed to personally favour one language (L1) over another (L2) as a means to communicate (see table above), which was often a result of their upbringing (Camilleri, 1996), they were nonetheless all relatively fluent in both languages to different extents, which was often attributed to schooling and socialising. The fact that they are primary school teachers by profession also necessitated this since proficiency in both official languages is mandatory in order to satisfy the University's general entry requirements for a teaching degree. The locality where they originally hailed from was sometimes also a contributing factor towards their language of choice, however, the majority of them had changed locality within Malta since childhood. Codeswitching is prevalent within bilingual communities (Baker, 2011), and all my participants alternated between both languages to various degrees, depending on different social requirements and contexts (Brincat, 2004; Camilleri Grima, 2013b). Their attitudes and beliefs towards language stem from their own life experiences and all form part of their personal and professional identity (Borg, 2003; Milton, 2016). This will be discussed in further detail in section 4.3 of Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results.

3.6 Interview Structure

I believe that semi-structured interviewing was the best choice of research instrument since it enabled me to gain in depth insight into teachers' life stories but at the same time also kept the conversation on track, in order not to steer too much off a tangent. One main advantage of semi-structured interviewing is consistency, and this is one reason why language teaching researchers favour this format (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). According to Mackey and Gass (2011, p. 149), interviews are suitable to collect the following types of data about language

learners. I believe that the same premise can also be applied to research with language educators.

- **Factual questions** – age, gender, socioeconomic status, and language background

- **Behavioural questions** – lifestyle, habits, and actions

- **Attitudinal questions** – attitudes, beliefs, opinions, interest, and values

I hence believe that the semi-structured interview was an ideal method of data collection since it enabled me to elicit factual, behavioural, and attitudinal data from my participants. I also feel that this enabled my participants to freely talk about any issues which they felt were personally significant (Cohen et al., 2007). I structured my interview including factual, behavioural and attitudinal questions following a list of topics I felt were salient to my research project such as; the teachers' language and educational background, their language experience in class, their school language environment and policy, their students' language background, their own pedagogy, their ideas about English language teaching within bilingual and multilingual environments, any challenges they are encountering, and if/how they are overcoming them.

I listed these topics in point form, and subsequently developed my interview questions following these key points, keeping in mind that these were to be used as fluid guidelines rather than a rigid schedule, since I aimed at having an informal open and casual conversation with peers. I also planned to limit my own conversational input, apart from asking questions, prompting, and redirecting them back on track when necessary. This would give my participants freedom in their interaction, whilst allowing them to guide the course of the interview up to a certain extent, in turn providing them with an excellent opportunity to voice their viewpoints on the subject (Wellington, 2000; Brinkmann, 2018). I thought that this would be beneficial since it would provide me with a window into their experiences and points of view, whilst also facilitating rapport building between researcher and participant. I planned on

gently guiding them back to the topic only when I felt that they were straying excessively. In the words of Brinkmann (2018, p. 1002),

> compared to more structured interviews, semi-structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee, and the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a pre-set interview guide. And compared to more unstructured interviews, the interviewer has a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project.

The interview comprised 32 questions which provided me with information on my participants' language and educational backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and knowledge of English teaching within bilingual and multilingual primary classrooms. The interview was divided into the following sections: **Personal data, Language Profile, Language Learning Experience, Teaching Experience, Personal Input (Suggestions for better practice).** As stated in section 1.6 of Chapter 1: Introduction, of this study, all the above may affect teachers' beliefs and attitudes and therefore their personal teaching identity (Borg, 2003). Hereunder is a list of the objectives underpinning the questions in each particular section.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SECTIONS	AIMS
1. **Personal Data**	• To collect background information about participants *(age, town/village or residence, schooling background, home background).* • To determine whether these variables would impinge on their attitudes, beliefs, and pedagogy.
2. **Language Profile**	• To collect information about their language biography *(Language spoken at home and school, family's attitude*

	towards L1 and L2, preferences on which language to use and when, and their own proficiency in L1 and L2). • To determine whether these variables would affect their personal and professional language use and pedagogy.
3. **Language Learning Experience**	• To collect information about their own experiences related to language learning (language use and learning in primary, secondary, post-secondary, and tertiary education. • To determine whether their experiences (positive or negative) affected their language use, teaching styles, attitudes and beliefs towards teaching and learning.
4. **Teaching Experience**	• To collect information about their language use and pedagogical preferences together with their experiences and attitudes/beliefs related to their students' language use in class *(students' and teachers' use and proficiency of L1 and L2, codeswitching, translanguaging, multilingual students).* • To collect information about any possible challenges encountered and how/if they are overcoming them.
5. **Personal Input**	• To collect suggestions for improved professional practice.

Table 3.6: Interview Schedule.

The aims of each section were directly related to my research questions (Crotty, 1998), which I linked the answers back to as follows:

- Sections 2 and 3 were intended to answer research question 1 (*Have Maltese primary school teachers' own personal and professional experiences related to bilingual identity and language use shaped their pedagogy in any way?*)

- Sections 4 and 5 were intended to answer research question 2 (*What are the participants' current perceived practices and perceptions of using codeswitching and translanguaging strategies in bilingual ELT classrooms? What benefits, if any, are associated with their use?*)

- Sections 1 and 3 were intended to answer both research questions.

- Sections 4 and 5 were intended to answer research question 3 (*What recommendations can be made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners in view of these findings?*)

3.7 The Pilot Study

A pilot study is an essential part of a research project since it assesses the main aspects of the project, hence identifying and minimising any potential flaws (Murray, 2009; Mackey and Gass, 2011). I tested the tools used to collect data from my participants for my enquiry by conducting a pilot study on one teacher who did not form part of the study. This teacher was a close friend of mine, hence felt comfortable when giving me critical feedback. She felt that the questions were easy to understand, and I only had to repeat or elaborate further on a question once or twice. I subsequently slightly reworded these questions to make them more "participant friendly". I timed the interview, and following the recommendation of my participant, I decided to split up each interview in two parts, since the interview process proved to be a lengthy one.

3.8 Data Collection

Below I list the timeframe required together with the data collection instruments and methods involved in this project. The data collection for this study took place over a period of approximately one year. The interviewing process commenced in June 2018, whilst participant validation of data, and feedback was finalised in July 2019. I did not work in a linear, sequential manner since I was conducting second interviews with some participants concurrently with other participants' first interviews and/or data validation/feedback sessions. This was due to the lengthy process of interviewing each participant and thus trying as much as possible to accommodate their schedules, whilst juggling my own. Hiatus sessions in between interviews due to my own and my participants' busy schedules were beneficial as they

permitted much needed time for reflection on both parts. I was fortunate enough not to encounter any significant difficulties during the process of data collection and I am indebted to my participants for their input and commitment throughout. I only needed to reschedule two meetings owing to ill health once on my participants' and once on my own part. One interview had to be relocated to a next-door coffee shop halfway through, due to the amount of noise in our initially planned meeting place.

Throughout my data collection phase, I was aware of the disadvantages of interviewing, one of which is the possibility of participants not being fully honest in their responses and instead answering in ways they feel are "correct" or which may please the interviewer (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). I tried to overcome this issue by being aware of this and seeking ways in which to report my data as honestly, faithfully, and accurately as possible. Furthermore, I made sure to make my participants fully aware of the confidential nature of the interview and constantly encouraged them to be as freely honest and open as possible. Nonetheless, notwithstanding my awareness and efforts at limiting these issues, during one of my early interviews, my participant started asking me questions about my research study and specifically about translanguaging, since she was not too familiar with this terminology. I answered her as honestly as possible, and throughout the course of the conversation I mentioned that recent research is showing that this strategy may be beneficial if used judiciously. I might have inadvertently shaped her ideas by providing her with extraneous details prior to the interview, thus possibly creating participant bias, since I suspect that this led to her possibly answering some of my questions (specifically those related to mixing languages during some parts of lessons) in ways that she thought might have pleased me. She stated that she kept an open mind and was not fully against this when used cautiously. However, I know my participant to be usually in favour of full immersion, so perhaps her answer was based on the fact that she was over enthusiastic to please me in ways.

Participant or response bias may in fact occur when the interviewee answers interview questions in ways they think may please the researcher (Bradshaw, 2001; Dörnyei, 2003). One factor that may shape participant's responses is social desirability bias, as notwithstanding their willingness to participate in the project, they "may experience considerable apprehension about the researcher's evaluation of them" (Collins, Shattell and Thomas, 2005, p. 190). Tavory (2020, p. 451) describes this as participants wanting to "put their best foot forward" during interviews. One way of limiting the occurrence of this is by "not exhibit[ing] strong reactions and maintain[ing] a neutral demeanour, as participants will not want to say things that they feel the researcher may disagree with" (Doody and Noonan, 2013, p. 32). I kept this in mind during my other interviews, using simple, unbiased language and only providing my participants with details about my research necessary for the task.

Interviews and discussions are used because they can supply the researcher with rich and useful data, and this enabled me to dig deeper, clarify points and observe my participants' use of body language and tone of voice which may also speak volumes, in a way that questionnaires can never do (Bell, 2014). I feel that teachers' life stories and perspectives do not require validation in the same way other statistical research may do. In other words, through my study, I was not seeking right or wrong answers but rather opinions, feelings and perspectives which may differ substantially amongst different participants. As is typical of studies conducted from a constructivist perspective, I believe that using interviews and open discussions with my participants allowed me to explore my research investigation in a deep and meaningful manner. I am confident that the collected data is a trustworthy source of information, enabling me to gain a better understanding of teachers' voices, which in turn opened an interesting window on their perceived classroom practice. This will be discussed further in section 3.12 of this chapter.

I interviewed each participant twice in the space of 1 – 4 months. Elliot (2005) advocates splitting up interviews over 2 to 3 sessions if the researcher believes a single session would require more than two hours to yield appropriate data. Each interview lasted roughly between 45 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes, not taking chit chat and coffee breaks into account. Only one participant asked to be interviewed over the course of one day (with a short break in between the two sets of questions), due to a very busy schedule. I conceded to her request and followed up with a feedback session over the phone soon after transcription. Admittedly, I would have preferred to conduct the interview in two separate sessions, however, on a positive note, I feel the lack of a lengthy break in between interviews may have enabled the conversation to flow more freely, and views to be deeply explored. Nonetheless, this may also be attributed to personality traits, and I do not believe that the quality of the data was in any way different from that of my other participants.

The actual length of each session was largely determined by the participants' own disposition and by making sure that they had been given ample time to articulate everything they wished to relate. Furthermore, I, as interviewer made sure that all the questions relevant to my study were asked and answered, as is recommended for thematic analysis research (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The first part of the interview focused on my participants' personal life histories, whilst the following interview focused on their professional lives (Elliot, 2005). This was done for a variety of reasons. Primarily, splitting up the lengthy interview ensured in-depth answers, without the perils of rushing through them due to time constraints. Moreover, this hiatus gave the participants time to mull over the topic and perhaps the opportunity to discuss anything related to English language teaching that they would have experienced since the last interview. I also took an initial data analysis with me to the second round of interviews, asking for participants' response and views, thus validating my study further by including member-

checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Murray, 2009; Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell and Walter, 2016; Madill and Sullivan, 2018). This enabled me to ensure that my interpretation of the participants' views was truthful and accurate. The participants were asked to read the transcripts of their interviews and provide me with oral feedback prior to commencing the second interview. The participants were also given the opportunity to meet up on a further third occasion as to repeat the exercise with the transcripts of their second interview. This process hence allowed the participants to validate their own data. They were also given the opportunity to correct or add to any parts of the interview transcripts which were inaudible or ambiguous.   This will be discussed further in sections 3.11 and 3.13 of this chapter. In order to get a better picture of the interview process, the table below offers a brief overview of each.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

Participant	Meetings (month, year and approximate duration)	Location
Elaine	July 2018 – 1 hour 15 mins	Coffee Shop
	August 2018 – 1 hour 30 mins	University Car Park
	October 2018 – 30 mins	Coffee shop
Jonathan	December 2018 – 45 mins	Coffee shop
	March 2019 – 1 hour	Coffee shop
	April 2019 – 20 mins	Coffee shop
Laura	September 2018 – 1hour 20 mins	Coffee shop
	October 2018 – 1 hour	Public garden
	January 2019 – 15 mins	Public garden
Liliana	February 2019 – 45 mins	School
	February 2019 – 45 mins	School
	June 2019	Follow up phone call
Mandy	August 2018 – 1 hour 30 mins	Researchers' private residence
	October 2018 – 1 hour	Participants' private residence
	January 2019 – 30 mins	Coffee shop
Maria	February 2019 – 45 mins	School
	February 2019 – 45 mins	School
	June 2019	Follow up phone call
Cynthia	May 2019 – 1 hour 45 mins	Coffee shop
	July 2019	Follow up phone call
Ingrid	March 2019 – 45 mins	Coffee shop
	April 2019 1 hour	Coffee shop
	July 2019 – 40 mins	Public garden
Diane	September 2018 – 1 hour	Participants' private residence
	September 2018 – 1 hour	Participants' private residence
	January 2019	Follow up phone call

Table 3.7: Interview Process.

3.9 Transcription and Translation

I decided to transcribe the full interviews verbatim since I felt that translating, selecting, or paraphrasing any parts of the data may lead to unintentional injection of bias (Poland, 1995; Silverman, 2017). Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 26) sustain that "verbatim transcripts frequently give a feeling of rawness with non-standard grammatical utterances, repetition or informal

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phrases as they naturally occur in spoken interaction". Rojas-Lizana (2017, p. 159) mentions the use of "colloquialisms, in-group nomenclature", translanguaging, and in-group terminology within interviews, stating that "these all reflect the respondents' positive dispositions to retell and discuss their experiences with someone who would understand them, therefore helping to produce data that allow a deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied and of the discourses produced".

In addition to my audio recorded interviews, I also made field notes describing the "emotional context" and non-verbal communication in an endeavour to capture "the full flavour of the interview as a lived experience" (Poland, 1995 p. 292).

In this respect Brinkmann (2018, p. 1017) sustains that, "the interviewer generally upholds a monopoly of interpretation over the interviewee's statements. The research interviewer, as the 'big interpreter', maintains an exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant." Mauthner and Doucet (2003, p. 419) state that researchers need to "locate themselves socially, emotionally and intellectually … to retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between the respondent's narrative and [the researchers'] interpretation".

Transcribing interviews therefore necessitates an amount of academic rigor which is established by the level of trustworthiness inherent in the interviews being transcribed (Poland, 1995). In this respect, Poland (p.293) mentions "representation, authenticity, audience, positionality and reflexivity" as possible issues impinging on the quality of qualitative research. He states that we should focus on both technique and the main purpose of our interview in terms of how accurately and faithfully transcriptions succeed in giving a "voice" to our participants. Thus, I strived not to make any changes to my recordings, which was not an easy task, mainly because the majority of my respondents were constantly codeswitching and using non-standard language throughout the conversation, which is a common trait amongst bi- or

multilingual interviewees (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Halai (2007, p. 353) sustains that "researchers working with bilingual data will face unforeseen hurdles in their path". I was aware of the fact that language use during interviews may be culturally embedded, and hence meaning may often be lost in translation (Halai, 2007). I therefore chose to transcribe the recordings faithfully, thus retaining Maltese meanings and nuances, and subsequently translated Maltese utterances into English in brackets, generally avoiding literal translations. Words in Maltese which defied translation were replaced with substitutes which came as close to the actual meaning as possible. This was only done for the benefit of my target audience's understanding of verbatim quotes, rather than for data analysis. In this way, Maltese speaking readers would be able to read verbatim parts of data in the vernacular, thus interpreting them through their own understanding of Maltese language and culture, whilst my non-Maltese speaking audience would also be given the opportunity to access parts of the data through translations which I strived to interpret as accurately as possible. My own data analysis, on the other hand, would specifically focus on the actual language the participants would have communicated in, thus giving an added dimension to the faithful interpretation of data. This could be achieved thanks to my balanced proficiency in both languages. My fieldnotes recording non-verbal communication also enabled a better understanding of certain undertones and nuances, especially since Maltese people tend to use prominent hand gestures to emphasise certain points, which is a typical Mediterranean characteristic (Kita, 2009).

Transcribing in this manner made the process an even more time consuming and arduous task since the transcription of a one-hour interview generally took several hours to complete. However, this laborious task served its purpose because it enabled me to familiarise myself more with the data and themes that were naturally emerging at this initial stage, prior to the actual data analysis period.

3.10 Analysis and Coding of Data

Qualitative research focuses on theorising about data derived from exploring and interpreting the lived experiences of a group of selected participants. Through interviewing participants, the researcher is able to determine how they make meaning of their experiences, and how these experiences have shaped their personal and professional identities. Examining and analysing data is done through the lens of theoretical frameworks to enable the researcher to be aware to "nuances of meanings" communicated, and the different contexts which may define these meanings (Josselson, 2011). In this respect, Josselson asserts that, "the process of analysis is one of piecing together data, making the invisible apparent, deciding what is significant and insignificant, and linking seemingly unrelated facets of experience together" (p. 227).

I decided that thematic analysis was the methodology most suitable for my research since it enabled me to identify key themes and derive meaning from a large amount of data collected from multiple participants. Russel Bernard and Ryan (2003, p. 87) refer to themes as "abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs", which "come in all shapes and sizes" and which can be derived from both collected and empirical data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that through thematic analysis, the researcher is in a position to identify, examine and record patterns in data related to a specific research question. The aim of the study is to identify common themes within my participants' rich accounts of experiences related to teacher identity and language teaching. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 77) state that thematic analysis "offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data".

This study aimed to recruit a small number of participants through purposive sampling, which is considered appropriate in qualitative research (Yin, 2016). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are no clear guidelines related to sample size for thematic analysis and therefore

should be guided by the requirements of the study itself (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016; DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019; Guest, Namey and Chen, 2020). Thematic or data saturation is usually a standard determining factor for sample size estimation, as this occurs when the researcher believes there are no additional themes to be gathered from interviewing more participants (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019; Guest, Namey and Chen, 2020). I believe that nine participants meeting the inclusion criteria of the study enabled me to gain a better understanding of their experiences and permitted me to conduct deeper analysis, which would not be possible had I decided to embark on a larger scale study (please refer to section 3.14 - Limitations for a deeper insight into sample size and thematic saturation).

I employed a theoretical, deductive or 'top down' way to identify themes or patterns within data. This was led by my own theoretical and analytic interest in the topic, thus facilitating the provision of a detailed analysis of salient aspects of my data. My thematic analysis was conducted at the latent level, investigating the core concepts, beliefs and ideologies underpinning the semantic content of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Theme identification is a fundamental part of qualitative research however it may prove to be an arduous task for researchers to validate the methods they utilise to discover themes (Russel Bernard and Ryan, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) claim that there are no hard and fast rules in identifying themes and that this relies mainly on researcher judgement. Russel Bernard and Ryan (2003) state that themes are usually derived from reviewing literature, from the characteristics of the studied phenomena, from pre-existing professional definitions and from the researchers' own beliefs, theoretical positioning, and personal experience with the subject matter. Russel Bernard and Ryan make the following recommendations to identify themes within their data.

IDENTIFYING THEMES WITHIN TEXTS

Method	Description
Word repetition within interviews	Looking out for repeated words or phrases since these are most likely to be what the participants consider to be the most salient points.
Indigenous categories	Identifying vocabulary which is specialised and characteristic of a particular group.
Key-words-in-context (KWIC)	Identifying key words and then systematically searching the corpus of text to find all instances of the word or phrase. This is particularly useful at the early stages of theme identification.
Compare and contrast	Comparing and contrasting texts in order to find how themes are either similar or different from each other.
Social science queries	Querying the text as a social scientist thus searching for specific kinds of topics – any of which are likely to generate major social and cultural themes.
Metaphors and analogies	Searching through text for metaphors, similes, and analogies since people often represent their thoughts, behaviours, and experiences with analogies.
Transitions	Looking for transitions within texts. In oral speech, pauses, change in tone, or particular phrases may indicate thematic transitions.
Connectors	Looking for connectors within texts. Researchers can discover themes by searching on such groups of word and looking to see what kinds of things the words connect.
Unmarked texts	Examining any text that is not already associated with a theme.
Pawing	Pawing through texts and marking them up with different coloured highlighter pens.
Cutting and sorting	Cutting and sorting by reading through the text, identifying, and cutting out salient quotes and pasting the material on small index cards.

Table 3.8: Identifying themes within texts (adapted from Russel Bernard and Ryan, 2003).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) state that a theme does not always have to depend on quantifiable measures, but rather on "whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question", whilst Russel Bernard and Ryan (2003) recommend combining

multiple techniques in a sequential manner. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) provide an outline guide through six phases of analysis as summarised in the table below.

SIX PHASES OF ANALYSIS

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 3.9: Phases of thematic analysis (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006).

As detailed in the preceding section, the nine semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, to facilitate the analysis and to mitigate the possibility of me as researcher injecting bias (Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2016). I transcribed my data soon after each interview to ensure that it was still all fresh in my mind, whilst referring to my field notes to gain a more profound view of what was being transmitted. For the same purpose, I also completed a post interview reflection shortly after the interview itself (Galletta, 2013; Cope, 2014). Keeping all the above recommendations in mind, I subsequently began "pawing" through the data to identify the highly noticeable themes, and those which relate in some way to my research questions, also making comparisons between paragraphs and across informants in the process. Word repetitions were also highlighted at this early stage of analysis followed

by a more focused KWIC (key words in context) analysis. I subsequently went through the process of marking texts representing major themes and finally searching areas that were not already marked for additional themes or subthemes. These were subsequently grouped together with similar codes into emerging thematic categories, successively generating names for each. Each theme was subsequently organised into a matrix to generate theme maps. I then conducted the final analysis to report my findings, going full circle as I linked these back to my research questions and literature review.
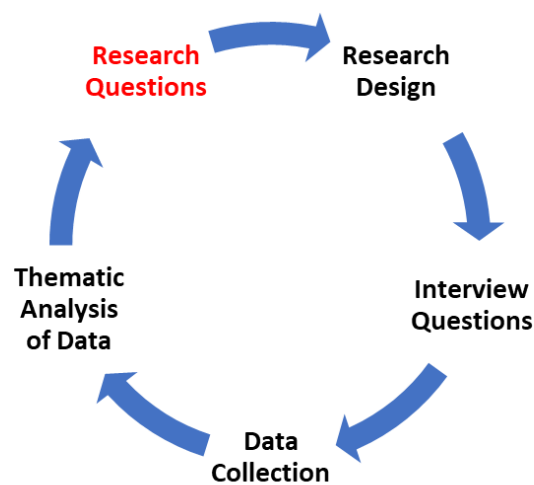
Figure 3. 1: Cyclical research process of the study

The same process was done after each subsequent second interview, where similar themes were grouped together, and emerging themes were highlighted accordingly. Some themes started to emerge almost immediately. These included the following:

- Language use at home
- Family's attitudes towards language
- Language use with peers and friends
- Language use during leisure time
- Language use at school (their own education)
- Language proficiency

- Confidence in language use

- Bilingual identity

- Teacher identity

- Language use at school (their workplace)

- Teaching English

- Lived experiences

- Social context

- Attitudes, values, and perceptions related to L1 and L2

- Their own teaching methods and pedagogy on language use

- Suggestions for improved practice

- Challenges faced in today's schools

- Multilingual classrooms

As I started my research, a more recent phenomenon came to light. The latter two categories emerged very strongly throughout the majority of interviews. Multilingual classrooms are on the rise on the island, and therefore Maltese children are now being exposed to an array of different languages, besides English and Maltese. Concerns about the rapidly rising number of migrant children in Maltese classrooms were voiced by all the educators teaching in state and private schools. This reality is presently of less concern to educators in church schools, since children are enrolled in these schools through a ballot system applied for by Maltese parents who wish to provide their children with a catholic education. On the other hand, by law, the education of asylum-seeking migrant children is provided by state schools. Children of migrant workers are usually enrolled in fee-paying private schools since these students' families often hold a higher socio-economic position (Panzavecchia and Little, 2020). These were in ways unexpected findings which reflect the way that Malta's demographics are rapidly

changing. The focus that I had initially embarked on, at the initial stages of this doctoral journey seem to be shifting from bilingual to multilingual classrooms as recent worldwide migration trends together with a global rise in human mobility are contributing to unprecedented challenges in the field of education (Leikin, Schwartz and Tobin, 2012). Malta's shifting educational system related to changing migration trends and the presence of additional languages in the classroom was perhaps not so much of an issue during the initial planning stages of my research. However, as I started interviewing teachers in state and private independent schools, I realised that this was definitely one area which needed to be addressed. I therefore felt that this was important to take note of, and to include these observations in my study. These findings are extremely relevant as they indicate a paradigm shift in education, with implications for English language teaching as it may require a move from teaching English as a second, or first language, to teaching English as an Additional Language. This will be discussed further in section 5.2.3 of Chapter 5: Conclusion.

As a result of these additional findings that emerged from the research itself, I decided that the existing research base required a closer look and hence I included an additional section 2.4 in Chapter 2: The Literature Review, focusing on this recent phenomenon.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The application of ethical principles is fundamental to any research project. In the words of Ellis (2007, p. 26), "as researchers, we long to do ethical research that makes a difference. To come close to these goals, we constantly have to consider which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling".

Cohen et al. (2007) state that a researcher hence needs to find a happy medium between their own unbiased and honest professional duty, whilst safeguarding their participants from any potential harm which the research may possibly inflict. Kaiser (2009, p. 1631) also holds that

since qualitative research usually focuses on "rich description" of participants, deductive disclosure (where participants may be identified) is of paramount concern. Hence, qualitative researchers often find themselves in an ethical dilemma, having to choose "between conveying detailed, accurate accounts of the social world and protecting the identities of the individuals who participated in their research". Bryman (2016) hence sustains that researchers need to be aware that ethical principles need to be adhered to at all times during the research process. I believe that throughout the course of my research project, this was facilitated through the practical approaches discussed hereunder.

The principle of informed consent was applied throughout the course of the study. Therefore, prior to conducting the interviews I communicated with my participants through an information letter (see Appendix C: Information sheet) to clearly explain the nature and aims of my study and what their involvement would entail. I explained that participation in the project was completely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without the need to give a reason for their withdrawal. Informed consent was obtained using the participant consent form (see Appendix D: Consent form) which they were asked to sign. The form required the participants to acknowledge full comprehension of the content provided. Confidentiality of data and anonymity were also clearly explained in this form (Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2016). The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was strictly adhered to when conducting this study. No participants chose to withdraw from this project.

Considering the small size of our island, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of my participants was one of my greatest concerns. Data collected was held strictly in accordance with the University of Sheffield data security policies. In Malta, at primary level there are 56 state, 23 church and 11 private independent schools. In the academic year 2013/14 at Primary level there were 2335 teachers in state schools, 848 in church schools and 299 in private independent schools (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2016), (See figures 3.2 and 3.3 below).

Therefore, although Malta is indeed a small island, when taking these numbers into consideration, it is nonetheless highly improbable that the participating teachers would be identified in any way. Additionally, apart from assigning pseudonyms to my participants, I further safeguarded their anonymity by making sure that any identifiable information (such as location of school, number of primary classes/children within the school and other distinctive information or identifying characteristics which might have emerged during the course of the interview) was not included in my study. The anonymity of the collected data, including the names of the schools concerned was made clear to all my participants. I made sure that they understood that they would not be identifiable in any reports or publications. I also assured my participants that my research would be conducted conscientiously to protect its integrity, with the main aim being to shed more light on the Maltese educational system.
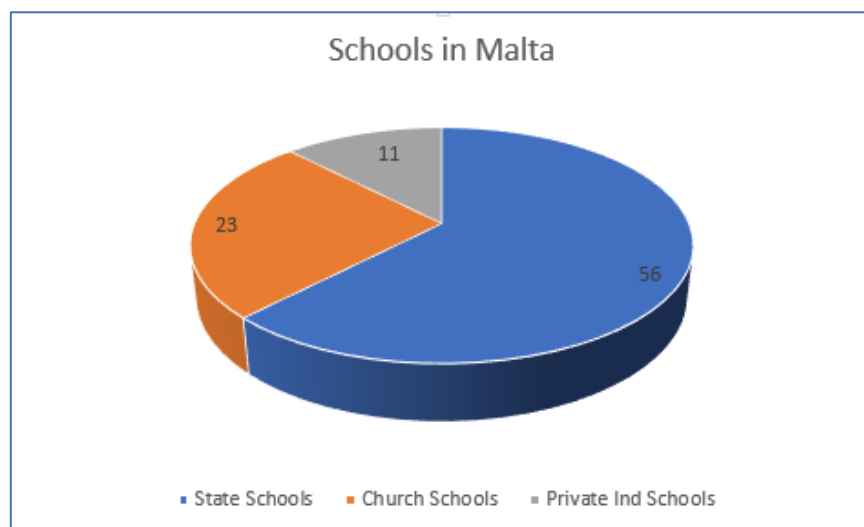
Figure 3. 2: Schools in Malta (data supplied by the National Office of Statistics, Malta, 2015).
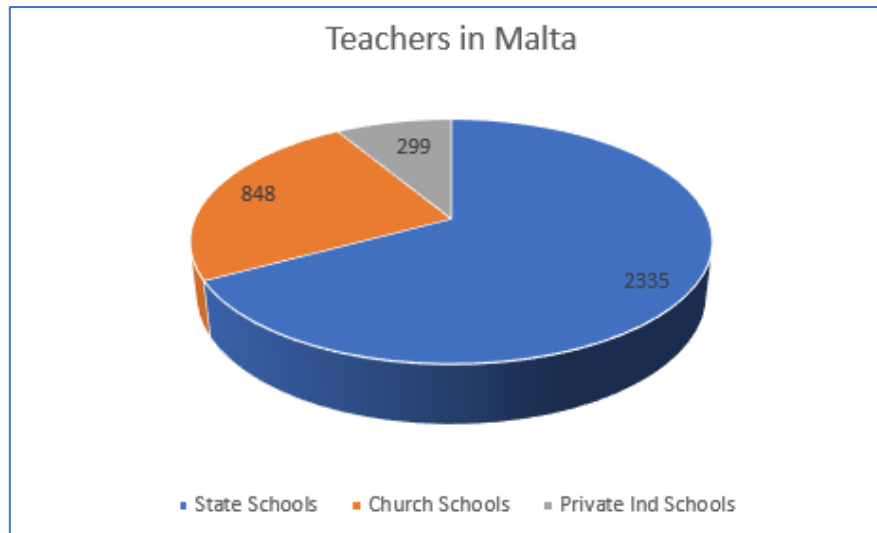
Figure 3. 3: Teachers in Malta (data supplied by the National Office of Statistics, Malta, 2015).

This guarantee of confidentiality also facilitated the rapport between researcher and participant, as an element of trust ensued. All hard copies of data collected were securely stored under lock and key in my private residence. This included consent forms and field notes. The electronic data (audio recordings and transcriptions) were saved on my personal laptop which is password protected to ensure confidentiality. When not in use, the laptop was stored in a secure location at all times. Data analysis was conducted in my private residence by myself being the sole researcher in charge of this project. Audio recordings and personal information would be destroyed after submission of this thesis, whilst consent forms would be securely stored for a period of three years following the publication of the thesis (Cohen et al., 2007).

I informed my participants that my questions would focus on both their personal and professional biographies, therefore this might necessitate discussing some personal issues which has the potential to trigger emotional distress or negative moods. There is no fixed description of what may constitute sensitive research, however this usually includes research about topics which may be deeply personal and emotionally difficult (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen and Liamputtong, 2007, 2009). I did not believe that the nature of my study could be

defined as such, since to my knowledge, it does not focus on any painful or distressing topics. However, I explained that if for some reason, any of the interview questions elicit feelings of discomfort or unease, my participants were free to refrain from answering or withdraw from the interview altogether. I also encouraged them to express themselves freely, even if their views might have been negative, and that I would make sure to protect their identities in every possible way. I also made my participants aware of the fact that they would be involved in a member checking exercise after both interviews, therefore they would also be given the opportunity to confirm that they feel comfortable with what I would eventually be reporting.

Moreover, I also asked my participants for feedback on their representations, during and after the second interview. Locke and Velamuri (2009) sustain that discussing initial drafts of writing with the research participants (member-checking) is advocated for ethical reasons. Locke and Velamuri state that although confidentiality is assured through the use of pseudonyms, some individuals may still be identifiable through the positions they occupy, or through the narratives of their experiences. Respondent validation enables the participants to verify their confidentiality, to guarantee and safeguard the anonymity of their represented persona.

Yin (2016) sustains that triangulation can be achieved in studies which are mainly concerned with individual participants' views of the world, through interviewing the participant on at least two different occasions, to make sure that the researchers' representation of those views was indeed correct. Yin (2016, p. 114), however warns that when including member-checking in the design of qualitative research studies, the researcher needs to be aware of the fact that participants' feedback "may impose a degree of delicacy on the researchers' writing", and therefore the researcher needs to ensure that this process would not influence the study's findings in any way. Locke and Velamuri (2009) state that this process may in effect lead to "flattened, nonspontaneous, and sanitized accounts of human action in organizations" (p. 495).

Locke and Velamuri also state that member-checking might negatively influence data collection, since there is a risk of participants deciding to withdraw from a study after reviewing their representations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that the researcher is not bound to take heed of all the criticisms put forth, but they are obliged to hear them and evaluate their significance.

In spite of the potential problems which may arise from obtaining feedback from participants, member checking is nonetheless advocated as a valuable technique to assure the trustworthiness of a study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), to improve the quality of the research, and to help researchers "be responsible and accountable to (their) research communities" (Locke and Velamuri, 2009 p. 507). In the words of Birt et al., (2016),

> if studies are undertaken to understand experiences and behaviours and to potentially change practice, then surely participants should still be able to see their experiences within the final results. Without this level of reliability, how can results be transferable to the wider community and how can findings be viewed as evidence to change practice?

While member-checking is deemed to be a methodological strength, there are also specific ethical considerations and risks involved with both member checking and altering data in order to protect participants. Bradshaw (2001, p. 203) sustains that although member checks could indeed be "a key to establishing the accuracy and credibility of many types of qualitative research", there are also numerous difficulties associated with this practice, and that these are perhaps not always sufficiently acknowledged in the pursuit of "establish[ing] the rigour of qualitative research".

Bradshaw states that unequal power relations and conflicting interpretations are some of the problems that researchers may encounter during member-checking. Bradshaw claims that all individuals involved in a research project,

> possess power to influence outcomes as they are produced, but this power is rarely evenly distributed between actors. Research may be negotiated, but relations are also shaped by the dynamics of power, and ultimately some actors may have a greater ability to influence an outcome than others (p. 204).

Bradshaw further stresses that researchers and participants need to reach mutual understandings, negotiations, and compromise, whilst "an absolutist ethic of avoiding any harm to research participants must be applied" (pp.204 – 205).

Kaiser (2009, p. 1632) holds that one of the perils of data cleaning is that changing certain details in view of confidentiality may "alter or destroy the original meaning of the data". Bradshaw (2001, p. 207), supports this view with reference to his own research where he states that by being overt "I empowered my research participants to such a degree that I ended up being silenced myself".

There is also the risk of participants withdrawing from the study as a result of member checking (Locke and Velamuri, 2009). I nonetheless believed that my primary priority was to protect my participants at all times, therefore held that if I was faced with any of the afore-mentioned situations, I would mitigate this problem by selecting new research subjects if necessary. Thankfully, this this did not prove necessary at any point during my research. Moreover, I was lucky enough not to encounter any significant issues during the member-checking exercise, other than those discussed in section 3.13 of this chapter. My participants all seemed happy enough with my interpretation of data and there were very few and trivial amendments/additions done to the original transcripts.

In addition to ethical considerations directly concerning my participants, approval was also sought from the Ethics Review Panel within the Ethics Committee, University of Sheffield (see Appendix A: Ethical approval). Approval was obtained from the Diocese of Malta and Ministry of Education Ethics review system, together with the principal of the private independent school (see Appendix B: Authorisation letters).

3.12 Data Validation and Participant Feedback

Naturalistic inquiry is a qualitative approach, used particularly in educational research and social sciences, where events and phenomena are connected, and their understanding is drawn from the inextricable interrelationships among them. Naturalistic inquiry has long been criticised for not being sufficiently rigorous (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, 1986). Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002, p.15) claim that, "by refusing to acknowledge the centrality of reliability and validity in qualitative methods, qualitative methodologists have inadvertently fostered the default notion that qualitative research must therefore be unreliable and invalid, lacking in rigor, and unscientific." This is central to the positivist stance which holds that "science could produce objective knowledge" and which views the researcher as "an independent observer, rigorously gathering data and reporting objectively on this data", without any room for subjectivity which was believed to produce "a distorted, invalid picture of reality" (Rooney, 2005, p. 4).

Crotty (1998) challenges the positivist stance which holds that the main aim of research is to merely reveal objective truth, claiming that truth and meanings are created by the human mind as we engage with the realities in the world around us, hence truth or meaning are not simply waiting to be discovered, but are rather created on a personal, individual level, and therefore can never be completely objective. The past few decades have witnessed shifts in ontological and epistemological frameworks, thus questioning the possibility of complete objectivity in research (Rooney, 2005). Neo-positivism challenges the notion of complete objectivism, since

"achieving validity in the positivist sense is impossible" (ibid. p. 5), hence being open to different perspectives on what constitutes validity and reliability. In this respect, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) hold that positivist terms should be replaced by the concepts of "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" which may relate closer to the shifts in the philosophical foundations of social research, and which argue against the notion of total objectivity, whilst endeavouring to conduct research through minimising researcher biases instead.

According to Cypress (2017), rigour and reliability are two salient features of all research, and due to the risks of subjectivity in qualitative studies, such research is expected to be conducted with extreme thoroughness. This can be achieved through the careful application of research practices, analysis and conclusions which are consistent, transparent, and attentive to potential subjectivity and limitations. Cypress additionally states that the concept of rigour is even more challenging when conducting research involving narratives and people, rather than that comprising numbers and statistics. It is therefore crucial that researchers are able to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their studies not only to their external audiences, but also to themselves (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that reliability and validity of a research study are in fact largely based on its trustworthiness which includes establishing:

- **Credibility** – certainty in the authenticity of the results

- **Transferability** – establishing that the findings could be applied to other contexts

- **Dependability** – establishing that the findings are consistent and may in some cases be repeated

- **Confirmability** – establishing that the findings of the study belong to the participants and not tainted by researcher's bias, motivation, or interests

Ensuring both methodological and ethical soundness was a main consideration of mine to ensure that the results of this study were both reliable and credible. Reliability and validity were two factors which I was concerned about whilst designing my study. I was aware of the fact that I needed to address the four criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) throughout the course of my doctoral journey.

The design of the interview schedule took the potential audience of this thesis into consideration, namely teachers, stakeholders and policymakers. I believe that the data emerging from the interviews would enable the potential audience to relate to, and possibly identify with my participants' experiences, thus increasing my study's *credibility*. *Credibility* was also achieved through a precise and honest portrayal of my participants' experiences, as narrated throughout the course of the lengthy interviews (Cope, 2014). I believe that building a trustworthy rapport with my participants (Murray, 2009), and allowing a hiatus for reflection in between interviews were crucial elements towards eliciting insightful and authentic data.

Triangulation was achieved by crosschecking the data and my interpretation of it within and across the participants, together with utilising member checking as an additional resource (Madill and Sullivan, 2018). My study does not seek to make broad claims or replicability, but rather, through informed judgement, strives for validity and *transferability* within the connections made between features of my study and my readers' own classroom experiences. In order to enable my audience to make such transferability associations and judgements, I understand the importance of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of my methods and findings. The concept of "thick description" was popularised by Geertz (1973) as a way of understanding cultural context and the underlying patterns in ethnography, which give information deeper meaning. *Transferability* was also attained through using purposive sampling, where participants were selected according to predefined criteria.

During and following the interview process, I endeavoured to enhance descriptive validity and hence strengthen my findings in a number of ways. Throughout the course of the interview, I periodically asked my participants to repeat or clarify answers whenever I felt uncertain about any particular point. This enabled me to confirm that my understanding was correct, and gave my participants the opportunity to modify their responses as they deemed fit. Subsequently, the interview recordings were accurately transcribed, and any gaps or misinterpretations were once again cross-checked with the participants themselves to enable me to achieve a true picture of my participants' experiences and viewpoints, and to allow for possible future scrutiny (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Locke and Velamuri, 2009). *Dependability* was hence achieved through reviewing my transcribed material with the participants from which it was solicited, to validate my findings. Any variations, omissions or new insights put forward by participants were duly acknowledged and considered. This then enabled me to analyse my data by extracting the themes and meanings within the transcriptions. The analysis of the data was meticulously carried out, to illuminate themes as they emerged, ultimately yielding results which are true and accurate.

Confirmability was attained through being fully aware of my own positionality within the study, whilst portraying my participants' "voices" and unfolding their accounts in a clear, reliable, and honest manner, whilst also including rich, verbatim quotes related to each theme (Cope, 2014). This enabled me to validate the study further by giving my participants a "voice", where my audience could actually be privy to what the respondents expressed, without any possible concerns related to my misinterpretation. I was constantly aware of my own positionality including biases, assumptions, and beliefs which I might bring into my research, whilst acknowledging the fact that complete neutrality is an unrealistic aim. Achieving reliability is an arduous task when the researcher is the sole instrument of the study, conducting both the data collection and the data analysis, nonetheless, I believe that throughout this

journey, I have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge required for research at doctoral level, under the professional and expert direction of my supervisors, which is crucial in optimising researcher performance (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Hence, I believe that in this respect, reliability was also achieved through professional guidance, making academically informed choices, and through recognising and making explicit my own personal and teacher identity, whilst being constantly on guard to ensure that my personal opinion would not taint the study in any way.

I validated my data through meticulous data collection and transcription, together with respondent validation. Engaging in critical self-reflection about what I might be subconsciously bringing into my study, enabled me to mitigate challenges related to researcher bias and subjectivity. Researchers are certain to draw from their historical, cultural and social backgrounds throughout the research process. I approached this research with a background of a bilingual person born, raised and educated in Malta, my own personal role as a mother of two adult children, my several years of teaching experience with different year groups in primary schooling, my experiences as teacher educator and mentor, and my current position in senior management in a primary school. I believe that therefore the main influences in my research include my personal bilingual biography and identity, motherhood, and my vast experiences in primary schooling, together with my involvement in initial teacher education. As explained earlier, choosing a qualitative research methodology for this study, where I would be deriving data through my participants' own voices and points of view, was driven from an inherent professional desire to address the fact that teachers' voices and their views on education are often not given enough importance when designing education programmes and policies. This point of departure was a salient element of my research study, which I was conducting as a full member of the school and educational community.

A neopositivist and antipositivist stance holds that since complete objectivity is unattainable, the researcher's biases may negatively impact validity and trustworthiness. This is of particular importance when conducting research as a member of the profession being investigated. Rooney (2005) holds that conducting research as an "insider", where the researcher is experienced and knowledgeable in the field and forms an essential part of the professional community being investigated may be particularly problematic. Although I was fully cognisant of the fact that maintaining complete objectivity would indeed be a Herculean task, I took the following questions posed by Rooney (2005, p. 6) into consideration and I did not believe that I could answer any of them in the affirmative, thus strengthening the validity and reliability of my study further.

• *Will the researcher's relationships with subjects have a negative impact on the subjects' behaviour such that they behave in a way that they would not normally?*

My participants were known to me through my educational networks, however, I was not particularly close to any of them on a personal level, hence our relationship was not one which I believed could impact my participants' behaviour in such a way to significantly impair the results of my study.

• *Will the researcher's tacit knowledge lead them to misinterpret data or make false assumptions?*

I believe that my tacit knowledge would on the contrary enhance the analysis of my data, since I myself was looking for answers, rather than wishing to prove a hypotheses, hence starting off my research sitting very much on the proverbial fence. This allowed me to design my interview schedule in such a way to include questions deriving from my experience, previous knowledge and the new knowledge I was gaining throughout the course of my journey. Since my research

derived from an investigative desire, my aim was to ask questions and listen to my participants' views, rather than to make false assumptions or misinterpret data.

• Will the researcher's insider knowledge lead them to make assumptions and miss potentially important information?

I believe that through the accurate analysis of my data and through validating it with the participants themselves, whilst also giving them a voice through the inclusion of rich, verbatim quotes throughout this study, I was depicting a clear picture to my audience, without the perils of making assumptions and missing important information.

• Will the researcher's politics, loyalties, or hidden agendas lead to misrepresentations? Will the researcher's moral/political/cultural standpoints lead them to subconsciously distort data?

I do not believe to hold any standpoints which may hinder the results of my studies or any hidden agendas related to my research. I am merely endeavouring to shed some light on current issues related to bilingualism and multilingualism, many of which teachers are voicing themselves. I am also endeavouring to address gaps in local research on the subject, and hopefully sow the seeds for further research in the area.

Rooney (2005) claims that conducting research as a member of the professional community being investigated also has many advantages, one of which is that this enables the researcher to obtain and understand information in ways an "outsider" could not. I believe that this was an important part of my study, since I felt that I could immediately empathise, relate to, or simply comprehend my participants' responses in ways that perhaps a researcher who is a non-member of the teaching profession could not. This knowledge also allowed me to probe further when the necessity arose, in order to give more depth to my research. Additionally, Rooney states that the probabilities are that participants would feel more at ease in the company of an

"insider", hence more inclined to talk openly and freely, which I also believed was the case since I felt that the researcher-participant rapport was an excellent one throughout the course of my study, and that all my participants were very willing to graciously and freely share their experiences with me. Finally, Rooney states that "from an anti-positivist perspective, inside research has the potential to increase validity due to the added richness, honesty, fidelity and authenticity of the information acquired" (p. 7).

One important aim of my study is to create guidelines and recommendations for educators who are experiencing similar challenges in their teaching career. Validity may therefore also be achieved through my audience as they resonate with my participants' experiences. Member checking also enhanced the validity of my study, as my portrayal of the participants' "stories" was verified by my participants themselves in order to improve credibility. Being constantly aware of the limitations of my study, whilst making my audience aware of such limitations also ensured the credibility of my research.

Notwithstanding my endeavours to ensure that my research was conducted rigorously, I was also careful to maintain the human element and not to strip my study of its emotion and feelings in my pursuit of scientific rigour. I felt that capturing the emotional content of my participants' experiences was an essential element of my study, since I believe that dehumanising teachers in favour of standardised practices robs them of their "voices" … the very voices which I am ultimately trying to propagate.

3.13 Reporting Outcomes to Participants

As highlighted earlier, I planned to obtain data validation and feedback through member checking from my participants. The first round of member checking proved to be plain sailing, since I was meeting all my participants, (except for one as highlighted in section 3.8 of this chapter) on another separate occasion for a second interview anyway. However, the second

round of data validation proved to be more problematic. Four of my participants decided not to take up my invitation to meet up for a feedback session and stated that they trusted me with my interpretation of data. When hard-pressed, they asked me to email them my transcriptions instead. I felt uncomfortable doing this because of ethical reasons. I had committed myself to keeping my transcriptions safe at all times, and thus felt that sending them to my participants via email or snail mail may violate this commitment. I believed that in this scenario, it is important to balance between the ethics of ensuring my participants have a say, and the ethics of respecting their wishes if they do not wish to do so (see Bradshaw, 2001). We therefore agreed to reach a compromise, and I read out parts of the transcriptions, whilst giving my own interpreted meanings over the phone. I met up with the other participants for the final validation of data but felt that some were quite reluctant to go through a lengthy process and our meetings ended up being more of an informal coffee and "run through the data" session in essence. Caine and Estefan (2011, p. 967) point out that in their experience, participants may typically not always be as invested in and as eager about research as the researchers, and may not be after "an in-depth research relationship … nor … interested in mulling things over and over". Participants may feel they are simply bound to "say [their] piece … job done". I made sure to respect my participants' wishes in either case, as I endeavoured to meet them half-way as described above. On a positive note, I still felt that there were positive elements to this, since I believed that the rapport I had established with my participants resulted in their complete trust in my work and interpretation of data. Caine and Estefan sustain that as researchers, "our relational responsibilities are influenced by a multiplicity of identities; we are not only researchers but also are companions and, at times, friends" (p. 967). Furthermore, I believe that some participants' reluctance also stemmed from the fact that my planning three meetings over the course of a scholastic year was rather ambitious, considering how busy teachers are during term time.

3.14 Limitations

One limitation of this type of qualitative study is that the researcher needs to restrict the number of interviews as they may prove to be very time-consuming and expensive to conduct and analyse (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). The number of participants required for a qualitative study often depends on "the purpose of the study, what kind of study is planned and what questions the study is trying to answer" (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019, p. 4). Fusch and Ness (2015, p. 1413) sustain that "more is not necessarily better than less and vice versa". Fugard and Potts (2015) highlight inconsistencies in current guidelines for establishing appropriate sample sizes for thematic analysis, as these vary from around 2 to over 400, thus making it difficult to determine "how to choose a value from the space in between" (p. 669).

Thematic saturation refers to the point reached by the researcher where no new thematic information is collected from the interviewees. This point is usually "the conceptual yardstick" used to determine sample size (Guest, Namey and Chen, 2020, p. 1). Fusch and Ness (2015, p. 1409) sustain that there is no "one-size-fits-all" method to obtain data saturation due to the uniqueness of each study design. However, most researchers agree on the point where there is no emergence of "new data … new themes … new coding", as basic points of reference (ibid). Van Rijnsoever (2017, p. 2) claims that that the rules or guidelines for determining sample size in qualitative research are "often implicit" and that the point of theoretical saturation generally lies at "the discretion of the researcher, who uses her or his own judgement and experience". Similarly, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) state that "saturation is reliant on researcher qualities and has no boundaries" (p. 77).

Fusch and Ness (2015) posit that saturation is more likely to be reached rapidly in a small study, and hence the researcher should have an idea of what determines when and how saturation would be reached. Guest et al. (2006, p. 75) claim that in order to achieve data saturation, a similar set of interview questions is required for each participant, otherwise this

would be a "moving target as new responses are given to newly introduced questions". Data saturation would therefore not be achievable in unstructured or highly exploratory interview methods. I asked all my participants identical questions through a semi-structured interview technique, hence, although there was room for further probing and personal open responses within the interviews, the point of departure was identical for all interviewees.

In general, qualitative researchers aiming for theoretical saturation rely on purposive sampling, hence including information rich participants in order to gather data most likely to answer the research questions in the study (Van Rijnsoever, 2017). Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, (2016) claim that the "information power" of the participants may be comparable to statistical power in quantitative research, and the sample size should hence be based on the "the aim, homogeneity of the sample, theory, interview quality and analytic strategy" (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019, p. 4). My participants were in fact selected through purposive sampling according to predetermined criteria which I believed would illuminate my study better. This ensured a certain degree of participant homogeneity, and according to Guest et al. (2006, p. 76), "the more similar participants are in their experiences with respect to the research domain, the sooner we would expect to reach saturation". In my study, my participants were relatively homogeneous since they were all bilingual Maltese primary school teachers, each with over ten years teaching experience (please refer to section 3.5 -The Participants), whilst all facing similar challenges present in today's classrooms. These similarities seemed to be sufficient to produce a fairly exhaustive data set within nine interviews. I realised that thematic saturation was in fact practically reached after analysing around seven interviews. This was because at this point, I believed that the data collected would offer a deep insight into the topic of study and thus enable me to answer the study's research questions. Moreover, I believed that I could link the emerging convergent or divergent data to that previously gathered from my other participants, and could safely assert that no new themes pertinent to my study were in effect

arising. Fusch and Ness (2015, p. 1409) sustain that "if one has reached the point of no new data, one has also most likely reached the point of no new themes; therefore, one has reached data saturation". I therefore believe that nine purposely selected participants were sufficient for my research since no additional themes were likely to emerge had I included more teachers in my study.

Qualitative research requires small sample sizes since it focuses on quality, rather than quantity of data to ensure insightful analysis (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Larkin and Thompson, 2012). Yin (2016, p. 95) claims that within qualitative research, the sample is not intended to be a representation of a larger population but is expected to "maximise information" and therefore generalisability is not relevant. According to Yin, the uniqueness of each participant themselves, impedes generalising to other situations.

I appreciate that the results of my study cannot be generalised to entire populations; however, I am not seeking to make generalisations or replicability but to gain insights and a deeper understanding of teachers' voices. The small sample size thus enabled me to yield rich and detailed data for analysis through conducting comprehensive interviews of my participants. My participants' "Information power" (Malterud et al., 2016) is one other reason behind the small sample size in my research, since I believe that through purposive sampling, my participants provided me with informative data with regard to teachers' identities, perceptions and practices in relation to language use. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 202) sustain that the aim of naturalistic sampling is to "maximize information, not facilitate generalisation."

Another limitation may well be the dangers of bias during data collection and analysis (O'Hara, Wainwright, Carter, Kay and Dewis, 2011). Barkhuizen et al. (2014) warn of the possibility of "cherry-picking" as researchers may fall into the trap of "selecting data that supports the researcher's argument, while ignoring data that would problematise or contradict it" (p. 89).

As previously mentioned, in my position as researcher, I had to be fully cognisant of my own bias and the influence that I might be injecting into the study. I strived to remain objective, always seeking to report the situation "as is" without any predetermined ideas or assumptions. In this respect Goodson and Sikes (2001) sustain that a researcher needs to be aware of both their own and their participants' biases. It is unrealistic to expect that any aspect of research can truly be void of any biases since "whether or not a researcher is explicit in accounting for his or her ability to work reflexively, his or her voice is indelibly inscribed within the research process" (Roulston, 2001, p. 281). In this respect, Goodson and Sikes (2001) recommend that researchers honestly acknowledge such biases, making their readers aware of such possible occurrences. Bell (2014) also mentions the possibility of selective reporting and the resulting dangers of bias and misrepresentation. Whilst I, as a researcher, conducted this study and interpreted my subjects' stories through the eyes of my own personal teacher identity, I was aware of the fact that my participants were also bringing along their preconceived ideas and biases into my research. Bell (2014, p. 187) advocates being "wise and vigilant, critical of our interpretation of the data and regularly questioning our practice" in order to mitigate this limitation. Larkin and Thompson (2012, p. 104) sustain that it is important that the researcher's role is "neutral and facilitative" as to encourage participants to relate their stories, however, "there is a recognition that one cannot be truly neutral, and that the interview situation comes with certain expectations". Mauthner and Doucet (2003, p. 418) warn about the importance of reflexivity in data analysis since it is "the researcher who makes choices about how to interpret these voices and which transcript extracts to present as evidence". My main aim was to capture rich, detailed, and reflective data and to explore meanings whilst being honest with both participants and readers about my presence and the motives underpinning myresearch. Lincoln and Guba (1985) hold that information obtained from both separate and accumulated interviews should be subjected to triangulation and participant feedback. Common traits and

data may also be verified with different respondents. Shenton (2004) advocates triangulation via data sources, where individual perspectives and experiences can be verified against others, thus producing an in-depth picture of the participants' attitudes and experiences based on the information collated from a number of contributors.

I understand that the conclusions drawn from my study are only interrelated to my participants, and not aimed at establishing cause and effect between variables. My participants' unique life and professional histories may however be used as a valid and significant resource to recommend further studies and to make suggestions for future implications. My research may also be empowering for those reading on how individuals sharing their own same characteristics, backgrounds, experiences, and views, are dealing with similar situations. Thus this study would hopefully be beneficial to other teachers who might read it and realise that they are not alone in their views and in dealing with certain situations within bilingual and multilingual settings, and this would in turn enable them to draw on these teachers' experiences to improve their practice in some ways (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

The findings may create awareness on the implicit and unspoken views which teachers may hold, and which in turn motivate their language pedagogies to legitimise these very teaching methods within bilingual and multilingual English language classrooms. I believe that the results of my study might be selectively applied to make recommendations to educational environments such as primary school English language classrooms, policy making institutions and initial teacher programmes to improve practice.

3.15 Chapter Conclusion

Murray (2009) states that "a research project has its birth months or even years before in the mind of the researcher. It starts with an intuition, a curious thought, or possibly a critical look at an assumption" (p. 49). In the words of Mackey and Gass (2011, p. 1), "the passage from

generating an idea for a research question to publishing a report is rarely tidy or obvious; it is a long and arduous undertaking". The aim of this chapter was hence to offer a research outline of this study, and the journey I embarked on, with all its trials, tribulations, and rewards.

This chapter demonstrated why a qualitative research design was chosen over a quantitative or mixed methods approach. My own positionality as researcher, my philosophical assumptions, participant selection and information, ethical considerations, data collection and validation methods, transcription techniques together with the time frame involved for data collection were also presented. This chapter focused on how interview questions were chosen and how they relate to the research questions being asked. It also included a discussion about how thematic analysis aided in extracting themes from the answers, which were ultimately linked back to the research questions, and which also allowed the formulation of guidelines and recommendations for future use. I also included reflections on my own research journey which include the rewards and hurdles encountered along the way.

Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will examine the participants' responses derived from the interview questions and present the results of the study. As elaborately discussed in Chapter 3, I used Thematic Analysis to examine my conducted interviews. This allowed me to identify patterns, themes, and relationships (Braun and Clarke, 2006), that presented me with an "insight that goes beyond only numbers" (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018, p. 807). These, in turn, provided me with the answers to my research questions (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove, 2016), which shall be reviewed further in my Conclusions chapter. Analysing teachers' language biographies together with their views and perceived practices related to language use, yielded a very rich picture of individual experiences, together with a snapshot of the educational situation in Malta, which enabled me to further explore the connections between language backgrounds and language teaching. As a result of rigorous Thematic analysis, four main themes emerged as follows:

- Bilingual identity

- Teacher cognition: knowledge and beliefs related to language use

- Multilingual classrooms

- Recommendations for policy and practice

These themes were then further broken down into subthemes as can be viewed in the Theme map below.
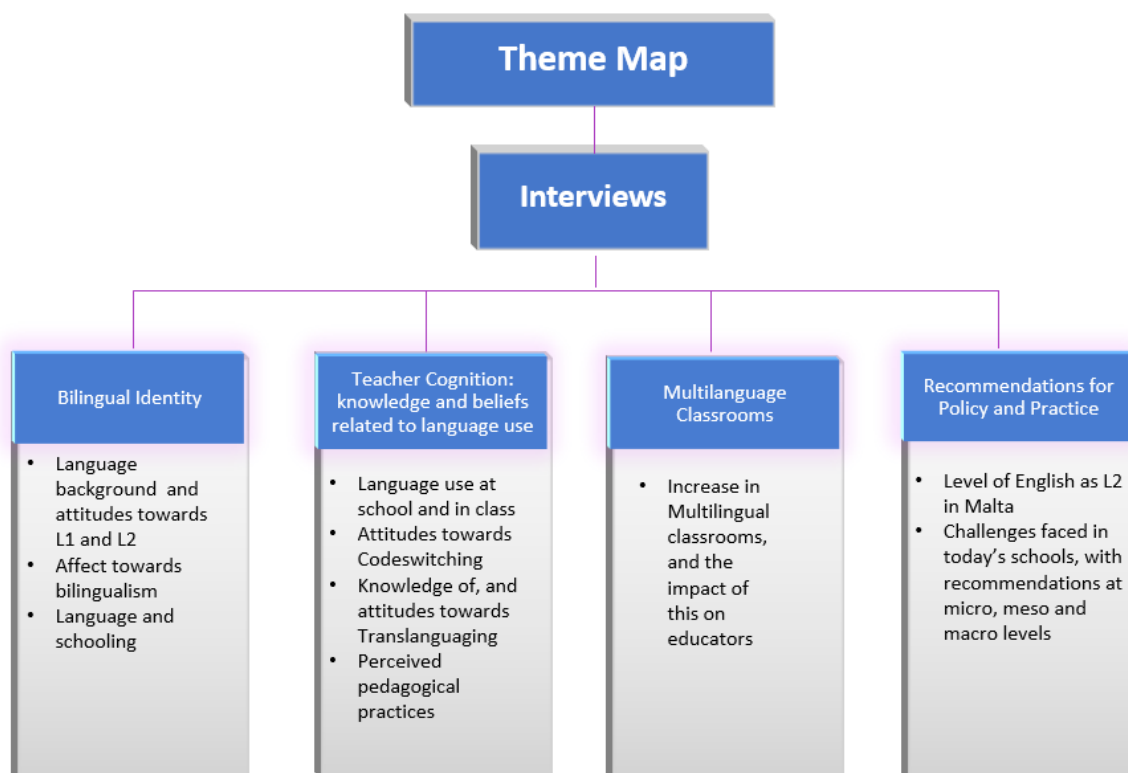
Figure 4. 1: Themes and Subthemes.

The personal and professional lived experiences of nine primary school teachers are explored to gain further insights on each emerging theme. The analysis demonstrates how each theme relates to the existing body of research, and its importance to the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). All themes and sub-themes are presented and discussed through quotations from the transcripts (parts of the data related to Multilingual Classrooms have already been published in Panzavecchia and Little [2020]).

 I chose to adopt a theme by theme approach, where the data for each corresponding theme are presented through an evaluation and discussion, together with extensive transcriptions of my participants' discourse. Cope, 2014 (p. 3) states that "providing rich quotes from the participants that depict each emerging theme" is in effect one way of ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. Corden and Sainsbury (2006, p.11) sustain that researchers may present spoken words and discourse "as a matter of enquiry; as evidence; as explanation; as illustration;

to deepen understanding; to give participants a voice, and to enhance readability". Subsequently, the researcher's analysis "attempts to unpick the meaning, within the theme of the research" (p. 11). I chose to include verbatim quotations because I believe that this gives my participants an empowering voice, whilst enabling readers to fully understand my interviewees' own expressed views and feelings on school policies and practices directly concerning them. I trust that merging my participants' personal accounts with my own narrative "personifies the emerging themes" (Cope, 2014, p. 90), and facilitates clear links between the data, interpretation and conclusions, hence assuring the confirmability of my study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cope, 2014).

This section aims to investigate and gain fuller insight into how teachers' bilingual identities may affect their pedagogical practices, whether or not they believe they are drawing on their first language in any way during English lessons, and to explore their views on the use of multilingual pedagogies. Additionally, recommendations are made for current and future practices.

4.2 Themes

Vaismoradi et al. (2016) define a theme as an "attribute, descriptor, element, and concept" which ultimately enables the researcher to answer the research question/s. They posit that a theme generates codes containing commonalities which merge ideas related to the topic of inquiry, and may be described as "a thread of underlying meaning implicitly discovered at the interpretative level and elements of subjective understandings of participants" (p. 101).

Teacher's beliefs, values and classroom behaviours are all inevitably a product of the previous life experiences which have shaped and influenced educators in various ways (Hobbs, 2012; Gu and Benson, 2015). The emerging themes and sub-themes are presented as an essential part of my study which explores the link between teachers' confidence, proficiency and preference

in each language and their language use in class (Twiselton, 2006). It also focuses on teachers' past personal and educational experiences, including personal and professional biographies, and pedagogical beliefs (Richards, 2009). Moreover, it investigates whether teachers who derive from Maltese-speaking families are more likely to use Maltese and codeswitching strategies during the English lesson than those teachers who have English-speaking backgrounds, and if teachers' own educational background also impacts language choice (Camilleri, 1996). Finally, it explores current challenges experienced by educators, and offers recommendations for policy and practice.

4.3 Theme 1: Bilingual Identity

This theme encapsulates each of the participants' language background linked to their birth/hometown, upbringing, and family's attitude towards L1 and L2. It also captures the participants' views on bilingualism, and their perceived proficiency and preferences related to our two national languages.

4.3.1 Subtheme: Language background and attitudes towards L1 and L2.

All nine participants hail from different parts of the island, and all but two had moved to other localities in adulthood. All but one of the interviewees stated that they feel relatively confident in both languages, whilst one admitted to speaking in English most of the time, and that in spite of her receptive and expressive proficiency in both languages, she still considers her Maltese as relatively weak. When asked about the language they favoured to speak in, I had an equal blend of preferences as three participants feel that they use both languages equally without any predilection for either, three participants favour Maltese, whilst the remaining three participants opt for English as their language of choice.

Nearly all my participants stated that they prefer to read in English rather than in Maltese. Diana was the only teacher who read equally in both languages but feels that this is probably

because she loves books in general. All but one of my participants mostly use the English language when emailing, texting, or writing in general. One participant prefers to text in Maltese but acknowledged that he does not use the proper Maltese fonts or spelling when doing so, and instead uses standard fonts and phonetic spelling.

Six out of my nine participants hail from mainly Maltese-speaking families, whilst one feels that her family uses both languages equally and interchangeably, and the remaining two educators were brought up in mainly English-speaking families. The two who had an English-speaking family background hail from the Sliema and St. Julians area, which has a high population of English speakers. Interestingly, one participant who was brought up in a Maltese-speaking environment, favours the English language as L1. The rest of the participants tend to either adhere to their family's choice of L1 or use both languages equally and interchangeably.

Family attitudes towards language use emerged strongly during the interviews. All my participants feel that their family's affect towards Maltese and English impacted their own perceptions and language choices either positively or negatively. They all believe that these very attitudes helped shape their communicative skills, language preference and views about language use. All participants attribute their academic success to their parents in one way or another, even when their own levels of proficiency were linked to their parents' negative or positive attitudes towards L1 and L2. They all mentioned the fact that their parents strived to give them a good education, even when they were not highly educated themselves. The majority of the participants also mentioned being brought up in literacy rich environments, even when the parents were not educated or literate themselves.

Maria feels that she partly owes her proficiency in English to her family who is Maltese-speaking but strived nonetheless to provide her with opportunities to learn the language properly.

Extract 1. Maria – Family's role in language learning

My family always pushed me to learn English … they sent me to a school where they used English mainly to make sure I could pick it up properly.

Similarly, although Mandy's family is essentially Maltese-speaking, they spoke to her in English as much as possible.

Extract 2. Mandy- Language use at home

My parents spoke to me in English when I was young. Although they were coming from a Maltese-speaking family themselves, they felt I would do well if spoken to in English. My parents read in English most of the time and watched TV programmes in English, Maltese, and Italian. I remember using Maltese with my grandparents as well though … maybe that's why I'm so fluent in both languages … and Italian too.

Cynthia's situation is similar since her parents, who are Maltese-speaking, used somewhat unconventional methods to ensure that she learnt the language. She describes being thrown into the deep end as she was fully immersed in a language she was not very familiar with, as follows:

Extract 3. Cynthia – Sink or swim

So I was always brought up speaking Maltese, but I remember when I was four years old, I was sent to an English-speaking school and I had to learn English to survive basically. I had to either sink or swim (laughs). Almost knowing no English or very basic English. I had no English background from home, so it was very difficult. I mean I am going to try when I have my own children to speak some English to them as well as Maltese before they are put into a school so they wouldn't be as lost as I was. Especially since everyone else was English-speaking and didn't even know Maltese.

Tista timmaġina? (Can you imagine?) *But I had to adapt to the situation and I learned English from my friends.*

Cynthia also mentions another initiative her parents took in order to help her learn the language:

Extract 4. Cynthia – English-speaking day

And then my parents made an emphasis to speak more English at home so that I would improve ... so we picked one day during the week and it was like our English day and we would speak English on that day. I didn't enjoy it then. I was against it because I felt I needed to speak English at school, then I go home I have to speak English as well? It was annoying. But now I'm glad I did.

Both Diana and Elaine also stated that although they hail from a Maltese-speaking family, their parents were very supportive of their education and went to great lengths to make sure that they were educated at good schools. They viewed both English and Maltese as equally important languages. Similar to Cynthia's experience, Elaine's family also enrolled her in an English-speaking private independent school, mainly to make sure that she learnt the language well.

Language use is often not simply a linguistic preference, but a choice which is loaded with underlying social, cultural, and power issues (Baker, 2011). The data emerging from my interviews defines Malta's socio-linguistic situation, which is largely dominated by a person's culture and background (Farrugia, 2016). Kuhl (2007) sustains that young children possess a natural ability to acquire two languages concurrently and effortlessly, however, Hoff (2006), and Hoff, Quinn and Giguere (2018) state that each language progresses independently, depending on the amount and quality of exposure to each language.   There are many factors which influence language preference within bilingual communities, amongst which are social context, language dominance, the linguistic competence of the speakers and emotional and affective factors (Pavlenko, 2004), together with family views on languages (Bartram, 2006).

The data collected pertaining to participants' language use and their attitudes towards L1 and L2 validates the links between families' and children's views on language (Bartram, 2006; Caruana et al., 2013; Vella, 2019). Bartram (2006) concludes that parents may transmit their own positive or negative attitudes and behaviour towards languages, including their ideas on language value and status. Parents may also be influential as a result of their own language proficiency and fluency. All these factors may sometimes affect children's self-perceptions and in turn, their language proficiency.

Laura's family speaks mainly in English and never gave much importance to Maltese. She feels that there was an unspoken abhorrence towards the language, and she partly attributes her weaker command of the Maltese language to this.

Extract 5. Laura – Language divide

My family hardly ever spoke in Maltese. Maybe to the vegetable man u hekk (etc.) *I think they disliked Maltese ... as in ... they regarded it as a lower language ... I don't know. I never gave it much thought at the time, but it was as if there was us* (the English-speaking people) *and them* (the Maltese-speaking people). *There was this ... like ... how can I put it ... a divide somehow. This did not help me.*

Liliana's family, on the other hand are English-speaking, however she feels that they did not view the Maltese language negatively. I was however intrigued when she made it a point to state this, using the phrase "they didn't mind". This I believe may have connotations in itself since it leads to the perception of Maltese generally being considered a less desirable language to communicate in, and that her parents were generously allowing her this concession. Liliana learnt Maltese mainly from the domestic help, (which was a typical feature of Maltese middle-class families at the time), the community, and the media.

Extract 6. Liliana – Language choice

English (language of choice). *My Maltese is good because when I was younger people spoke more Maltese, there was Maltese television, Maltese radio, Maltese everything so I was proficient. My family would speak Maltese to us sometimes but mostly English. They didn't mind if we spoke in Maltese. We spoke mainly in English at home but then we had the maids at the time who were there most of the time and we spoke to them in Maltese in my days, but as a family we spoke in English.*

Conversely, Jonathan's family experience regarding the English language was negative. He states that he used to struggle with the English language when he was younger, and he feels that this may be linked to his family's attitude towards language.

Extract 7. Jonathan – Family's views on language use

My family is Maltese-speaking. My dad speaks very little English. My mum manages. We always spoke Maltese at home. English-speaking people were considered "tal-pepe" (this is a culturally embedded expression which essentially means a minority in society who are considered to be snobs or pseudo high-class). *My dad used to say "kemm ghandhom krema"* (another culturally embedded expression which essentially means pretentious), *making fun of them. So I grew up thinking that English-speaking people were all snobs and usually belonged to a higher social circle than us … I thought they were … like … speċi ta …* (kind of) *out of my league. I could never be like that.*

Ingrid's parents spoke Maltese at home, but they also held positive attitudes towards both languages, considering them to be equally important, however she mentions the fact that they preferred to speak to her in English outside the home, which she feels was perhaps because they considered it to be more socially acceptable to do so.

Extract 8. Ingrid – Language use at home and outside the home

At home when I was a child, we spoke in Maltese, but I always liked the English language. My parents were both teachers, so they always had positive attitudes towards English. It was funny. They spoke to us in English when we were outside. It was as though it was considered more polite to do so.

Camilleri Grima (2013b) describes the Maltese linguistic situation as one which does not place either language as high or low function, but one which nonetheless values English for its importance within the educational and professional sectors. Moreover, although it is not openly acknowledged, there is still an underlying general perception that English is a language of high stature, which dates back to the time where Maltese was regarded to be the language spoken by the lower class members of society (Camilleri, 1996; Sciriha 2002; Francesconi, 2010; Milton, 2016; Panzavecchia and Little, 2020), and to the colonisation of the island (Frendo, 1988). Despite the fact that both languages are nowadays given equal importance on the island, there is still an implicit perception of English being a language of higher prestige and a language often linked to snobbery (Bonnici 2010).   Language attitudes in Malta often posit "English as being valuable for utilitarian purposes and related to prestige, [whilst] those who find difficulty in associating themselves in English are associated with lower socio-economic groups and with low levels of education" (Vella, 2019, p. 175). This local language divide is distinctly unique where a preference for the English language is generally elitist in nature, whilst that in favour of Maltese is partially nationalistic and rooted in language purism (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019).

The English language is generally positively viewed and accepted as part of Malta's postcolonial heritage, and, dissimilarly to some immigrant and indigenous minority or postcolonial multilingual groups, language preference locally does not entail any pro- or anti-imperialistic undertones (Camilleri Grima, 2013b).   However, Caruana (2007, p. 186) states

that the linguistic situation in Malta is nonetheless often tainted by prejudices and preconceived notions as English-speaking Maltese nationals are often,

> perceived as tal-pepe` 'snobs' or qżież 'show-offs'. On the other hand, in certain circumstances, these English speakers are also prejudiced towards those who find difficulty in expressing themselves in English or are unable to do so, as they automatically consider them to be uneducated or pertaining to a low socioeconomic group.

Caruana (2007) argues that although the divide between socio-economic classes seems to be dissipating, attitudes towards language use are still relatively linked to a family's socio-professional status, and language use within one's community. Language use in one's town or village is also a determining factor of family's language use and attitudes. In effect, it is interesting to note that although the participants hailed from various localities in Malta and had also relocated to various other towns and villages, the three participants who preferred to speak in English either were originally from, or had moved to Sliema or St. Julians, which are considered to be the localities with a high prevalence of people who favour English as L1 (Camilleri, 1996; National Statistics Office, Malta, 2012; Fenech, 2014).

This subtle language divide in Malta was apparent in the data collected as the labels Maltese-speaking and English-speaking came to the forefront, and such language choices were often believed to be a result of family attitudes, which in turn impacted my participants' language use and perceived proficiency.

The data collected for this study also demonstrates that speakers vary their speech for reasons related to language accommodation (Giles and Ogay, 2007). In this scenario, speakers change their communicative style in ways which are more accessible to, or appropriate amongst, the other participants in the conversation. Bilinguals may negotiate their identity in relation to

language use, often having to mediate the differences between the home and outside environments (Pavlenko 2006; Blackledge and Creese, 2010; Norton, 2013; Little, 2017).

All my participants mentioned using both Maltese and English interchangeably, depending on situation or company.   Both Maria and Cynthia mentioned the fact that their home language differed from that of school, hence this required them to negotiate language use in different environments.

Extract 9. Maria – Different languages at home and school

I grew up in a situation where at home we spoke Maltese and at school only in English, so you know I can't really choose. I was always switching … I can be fluent in both … I can think in both …

Extract 10. Cynthia – Language choice in different situations

I think it depends on the situation. I speak in Maltese more often but in the school environment English comes easier even in my subject. I speak English and Maltese at the same level. When I'm socialising or with my family in Maltese. At school usually English even because of the jargon used. Since I studied English at school it comes easier. When I was young I spoke Maltese at home and English at school.

Multilingual speakers may also choose to draw on one of their linguistic systems during their daily interactions as a way of constructing and negotiating their social identities (Bailey, 2008; Baquedano-López, P. and Kattan, S., 2008). Baker (2011, p. 133) refers to second language use as "a social event with particular others", "joining a social group", and "finding an accepted voice" (p. 133), thus highlighting the role language takes in constructing social identities through our interactions with significant others.   Participants stated that they tend to switch between languages depending on the company they are in, which substantiates Baker's (2011) argument stating that codeswitching may be a way for bilinguals to reduce social distance,

improve relationships, connect informally and intimately with friends or family members, and in order to be accepted within a peer group. Pavlenko (2004, p. 179) describes this as a way to indicate closeness, familiarity and "we-ness", where one language may covertly imply intimacy, whilst the other may signal distance, within groups and communities. Pavlenko carries on to state that multilingual speakers "have one more resource at their disposal, linguistic juxtaposition, whereby affect can be signalled through language choice, codeswitching, and language play" (ibid.). The role that deep emotions take on language choice within bilingual families was also mentioned by the participants, as feelings and emotions are other factors which play an important role when switching amongst two or more available languages (Dewaele, 2004; Pavlenko, 2004, 2005; Javier, 2007; Dewaele, 2010; Grosjean, 2010; Degner et al., 2012; Caldwell-Harris, 2014; Pavlenko, 2014).

Elaine mentioned the emotional aspect of language use, stating that she tends to use the English language when she is angered.

Extract 11. Elaine – Language use and emotions

I think and use English ... especially when I'm mad! I speak in Maltese at home ... here again ... now that I'm thinking about it ... I tend to make use of many English words and phrases.

Jonathan, Laura and Liliana all stated that they switch languages according to the people they are with, however, Laura still feels that communicating in Maltese is an effort for her, and she feels more comfortable expressing herself and her emotions in English, even when the people around her are Maltese-speaking. Both Diana and Ingrid mentioned naturally switching languages depending on the company around them.

Extract 12. Diana – Switching languages depending on company

Well, I communicate mostly in Maltese but then I think more in English, but then when I write I prefer to use the English language. I speak Maltese mainly because I am surrounded by people who speak Maltese ... whose first language is Maltese, because if I'm in school or with English-speaking friends I automatically change to English mode and speak in English all the time.

Ingrid also mentions the fact that she married a non-Maltese and therefore only speaks in English at home.

Extract 13. Ingrid – Changing language according to peers' preference

I think Maltese is my first language imma (but) *I speak in English all the time too. I think this is also because my husband is foreign though. Since I got married I use English a lot more than I used to, but I feel that I'm equally proficient in both English and Maltese. Very confident. I use Maltese with my parents and siblings. With my friends I change according to their preference. Again I tend to codeswitch.*

Ingrid's parents are teachers, so they strived to provide her with a good education and encouraged her to be proficient in both languages. She also attributes her proficiency in English to being brought up in a literacy rich environment.

Extract 14. Ingrid – Literacy rich environments

Our home was always full of books, and these were nearly always in English. We are all bookworms in our family.

Parental involvement in education and correspondingly, being brought up in a literacy rich environment were highlighted by my participants as key features of academic success and language proficiency.   The participants had all succeeded academically, since they are all qualified teachers, and many of them also went on to study at post-graduate level.   My

participants have diverse socio-economic family backgrounds, and only two participants hail from a family of graduates. This strengthens the belief that parental involvement is key towards students' educational attainment, regardless of family's social background and education (Ule, Živoder, and du Bois-Reymond, 2015).

Switching between languages, borrowing, and codeswitching were mentioned by my participants as being a natural part of their daily communication. All my participants believe that switching between languages is a spontaneous and instinctive trait of being bilingual. One participant mentioned the fact that she switches languages pragmatically, since she sometimes finds it more convenient to use a word in one language, rather than the other. This offers a clearer understanding of how bilinguals employ practical language strategies when they are unable to recall a word in one language from their lexical repertoire (Wei, 2007; Kreiner and Degani, 2015). One participant voiced her concerns about students not being able to differentiate between Maltese and English words. Although this practice was viewed negatively by the participant, the very fact that young children are often unable to distinguish amongst their two official languages validates Otheguy et al.'s (2015) concept of translanguaging, which describes the naturally occurring language practice of bilinguals as a cognitive process of accessing a hybrid of their entire linguistic repertoire, which goes beyond societally named languages, in order to communicate and express themselves.

Extract 15. Elaine – Language switch

I think that we … I mean the Maltese in general, tend to switch from one … from Maltese to English … or vice versa … all the time. Maybe because it's convenient … erm … sometimes the right words .. sometimes I can't think of the right word or phrase … I think most of us do it. We even borrow words from other languages, don't we? And they become accepted. Heqq (so) this could lead to some difficulties too, per eżempju (for example) some children cannot tell whether a word is in Maltese or in English.*

Extract 16. Cynthia – Mixing languages

But I tend to mix languages sometimes too ... some words are difficult to find in one language so you say them in the other ...

Extract 17. Mandy - Mixing languages is natural

I tend to speak in English and think in English most of the time, but I am also very fluent in Maltese and feel completely comfortable using the language. Sometimes I have to stop and think when I need to spell certain words ... but on the whole I'm ok. I use both languages depending on the situation or whom I'm with ... We tend to mix the two languages all the time in Malta hux (isn't it so?) *... it's natural.*

This data validates research stating that codeswitching (Toribio, 2004; Macaro, 2005; Wei, 2007; Baker, 2011; Paradis et al., 2011), and language borrowing (Myers-Scotton and Jake, 2007; MacSwan, 2017), are typical features of multilingual speakers. This is one typical characteristic of contemporary multilingualism, which often incorporates English as lingua franca, but questions the 'ownership' of the English language, as it becomes 'everybody's' language, thus becoming tainted in the process, moving further away from its pure, native form (Kayman, 2004; Wei, 2016; Cenoz, 2019). It further confirms that speakers choose to use different languages for different purposes (Ariza, 2018). Nonce borrowing and codeswitching usually occur when bilinguals substitute words in one language with others in the other language when they do not find adequate words to cover what they need to express (Grosjean, 2010; Kamwangamalu, 2010). Paradis and Genessee, (1996), and Brooks and Kempe, (2014) also state that language transfer occurs at a phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical and grammatical level in bilingual speakers. Wei (2016) mentions the protection of the identity and integrity of individual languages, together with the recognition and promotion of linguistic diversity and language contact, as key challenges of current multilingualism. In this respect, some of the participants in this study voiced their concern about the way the Maltese language

is being "bastardised". This validates Camilleri Grima's (2013b) research claiming that several English words and phrases have been borrowed and adapted morphologically and/or phonologically into the Maltese language. Furthermore, Camilleri's earlier (1995) work sustains that Maltese is also affected by English on a lexical level, and that some English words have been adapted to Maltese spelling rules and structure. Camilleri also makes reference to several literal translations of Maltese idioms and expressions, which in actual fact would not make sense to native English speakers. Both Maltese and English have elements of their languages that have been corrupted and contaminated by the other language, and Borg's (1980) "Mixed Maltese English" is the way a large number of Maltese nationals choose to communicate in, which might point towards the emergence of a hybrid language. Sciriha (2002) cautions that the improper use of Maltese and English, together with extensive use of codeswitching may lead to the creation of a newly formed reduced language, or a pidgin language of sorts. However, Francesconi (2010) sustains that socio-cultural, historical, and ethnographic factors are not conducive to the formation of a real pidgin in Malta. Camilleri Grima (2013b) also supports these views and states that bilingualism in Malta is not suggestive of any language shifts.

The results of my study, together with previous research on the subject, indicate that language is dynamic and therefore constantly evolving. Moreover, the possible emergence of a hybrid language substantiates the concept that translanguaging is indeed a naturally occuring practice in bilingual and multilingual communities (García, 2009; Otheguy et al., 2015, 2019).

4.3.2 Subtheme: Affect towards bilingualism

All my participants view bilingualism positively and stated that they are happy and proud to have been born in a bilingual country. Their attitudes towards bilingualism are positive as they all believe that speaking two or more languages is certainly beneficial on many levels. All nine educators believe that being bilingual is advantageous mainly for communicating with

speakers of different languages and for travelling purposes. The fact that bilingual children are privy to a wide range of academic and leisure opportunities was also mentioned, whilst one participant, in fact believes that being bilingual has also helped her advance in her education and career.

Extract 18. Elaine – The ability to switch instantly from one language to another

The ability to switch instantly from one language to the other and to communicate equally well in both languages … this is an advantage. As for disadvantages ... well, I can't think of any really ... except maybe for borrowing ... with ease ... words or phrases from the other language when you're stuck or when you need to find a more appropriate way of saying something. And I'm not even sure ... well, I don't think that is a disadvantage really is it? I think if children are bilingual, they have more opportunities than monolingual students. Opportunities for cognitive development, opportunities for the future, increase in leisure activities, opportunities to communicate with a wider range of people …

Ingrid states that being bilingual also provided benefits at an academic and professional level for her, whilst Jonathan sustains that speaking both languages is especially beneficial for young people, since being fluent in two or more languages gives them access to the multiple prospects available nowadays.

Extract 19. Ingrid – Educational and career advancements

I'm proud to speak in both languages. I think it has helped me even in my education and career choice. I'm presently reading for my Masters. My proficiency in the English language obviously helps a lot … it's an advantage. The more languages the merrier anzi (rather) *especially in today's world.*

Extract 20. Jonathan – Bilingualism opens doors to many opportunities

I think it's an advantage to be able to speak both languages. But especially nowadays. So many [advantages] *speaking in English I mean they* [young people] *can travel, they can study they can become whatever they want. So many opportunities nowadays!*

This data builds on existing research that highlights the benefits of being bilingual at a cognitive (Bialystok, 2001, 2011; Kroll et al., 2014), personal (Wei, 2007; Hogan-Brun, 2017), academic (Agirdag, 2014), and professional level (Duff, 2005; Wei, 2007; Francesconi, 2010; Camilleri Grima, 2013b; Angouri, 2014; Hogan-Brun, 2017).

My participants were all exposed to both languages as from a very early age, thus falling into the category of "crib bilinguals" (Kovács and Mehler, 2009; Baker, 2011), which is in effect the way most Maltese speakers may be classified, due to their unavoidable exposure to both languages from birth. However, they hold different views on what constitutes a bilingual person. Whilst some support the notion of relatively equal proficiency in both languages, others believe that there is usually one language in which a person has superior competence.

Five of my participants defined bilinguals as speakers who are able to communicate equally well in both languages.   Two participants also mentioned the fact that the Italian language is at times spoken as a third language in Malta (Ariza, Calleja and Gauci, 2019), however this practice is slowly diminishing. This data supports Caruana's (2007), and Caruana et al.'s (2013) research stating that the Italian language is practised in Malta as a result of the neighbouring countries' geographical proximity, their historical and commercial ties, together with Italian media exposure.   However, these studies also observe that proficiency in the language is stronger amongst the older generation, and that this practice has been waning amongst younger groups, as a result of the introduction of cable and local private television

channels in the late nineties, which have changed the nature of linguistic exposure through the media (Caruana, 2007; Caruana et al., 2013).

Extract 21. Maria – The more languages the better

By bilingualism I understand someone who is proficient in at least two languages in the same manner ... able to converse ... able to understand both to the same degree ... in the same level. I'm quite proud of this. I feel it's really good to be able to speak two languages or more. I like languages. I'm very proficient in Italian as well. So you know, I try to nurture that. If I find someone I can converse with in Italian even better so I can practise. You know that kind of attitude ... the more languages the better.

Extract 22. Diana – We eventually learn both without any extra effort

As a country we are bilingual. People speak in English as much as in Maltese. Before Italian was more common but now English is taking over. I think it is a plus for us. Mentally we are prepared to learn different languages. As soon as we are born, we are exposed to both English and Maltese and we eventually learn both without any extra effort. I think it is beneficial to speak both languages well.

Extract 23. Cynthia – Bilingualism is extremely useful

I think most Maltese citizens are bilingual. They can speak both languages pretty much at the same level. I think it's a help. You can interact with foreigners better too. I love to travel and travel a lot.   Sometimes in certain countries they are shocked that our first language is this strange language that they have never heard before, and yet we can speak in English and we do it quite well. It's extremely useful ... I believe that being fluent in English is a great asset.

Elaine also extended this idea to include the skill of being able to switch between languages with ease. On the other hand, the other participants feel that bilinguals do not necessarily

possess equal command of both languages. Laura also stated that as a result of being bilingual, perhaps full proficiency in either language cannot be properly attained, whilst Mandy believes that we need to work harder to preserve our heritage language, which could be at peril as a result of widespread multilingualism.

Extract 24. Ingrid – People's misconceptions about bilingualism

I think bilingualism means speaking two languages, but it depends ... some speak one language better than the other. Doesn't mean they are equally good in both. I think a lot of people think they are bilingual but really, I don't think that the majority of Maltese people are really fluent in both languages. Some people speak ... let's say English but not very comfortably. They get stuck. The same goes for English-speaking people trying to speak in Maltese. Plus we are always mixing languages ... it happens all the time.

Extract 25. Jonathan – Language preference and dominance

When people speak two languages ... perhaps not just speak but read, understand and communicate. I think that in general the majority of people are bilingual, however I think that people always have a preference for one language really.

Extract 26. Laura – Unbalanced bilingual speakers

The ability of people to speak both languages ... the majority of people in Malta speak both languages ... imma (but) *not necessarily to the same level ... Unfortunately, I think that as a result people don't have proper command of either language really.*

Concerns related to the protection of the Maltese language demonstrate pride in our heritage language, which may be in danger as a result of globalisation and increasing multilingual classrooms (Panzavecchia and Little, 2020). However, the participants also recognise the importance of English as lingua franca, and that Maltese people are fortunate to be exposed to

both languages as from a young age. These views mirror Malta's sociolinguistic situation of societal bilingualism without diglossia, where both languages are considered to be equally important (Camilleri Grima, 2013b; Ariza et al., 2019). They are also reflective of the features of contemporary multilingualism which incorporate the English language as a global language (Cenoz, 2019).

> Extract 27. Mandy – Losing the Maltese language which is an integral part of our identity

> *I am very proud of it. Bilingualism to me is having the ability to communicate in two languages but not necessarily with the same skill. I think that Malta is definitely a bilingual country, but we tend to mix the two languages all the time … it's natural. I think we are so lucky. I also love Maltese and think we should work hard to preserve it. It's a beautiful language and its history is amazing. I think we risk losing it and it is such an integral part of our identity. People in Malta speak so many different languages now … plus there's the media influence. I think I tend to pass on my values to the kids. I obviously pass on my love for English, but I also teach them that we should appreciate our language.*

These diverse views support research stating that bilingualism is multi-faceted, and hence different dimensions need to be taken into consideration when evaluating language proficiency (Wei, 2007; Vella, 2012; Luk and Bialystok, 2013). Balanced bilinguals may be equally proficient in both tongues, whilst unbalanced or dominant bilinguals are usually more competent in one language, however native-like proficiency in both is rare, and the majority of bilingual speakers fall somewhere in between both ends of the proficiency continuum (Wei, 2007; Baker, 2011). Some participants believe that as a result of the bilingual situation in Malta, some speakers may never grasp full proficiency of either language. This is however an outdated and negative view of bilingualism, which in the past supported the mistaken idea that

learning two languages would prove to be confusing, thus hindering language acquisition (Wei, 2007; Baker, 2011). As previously highlighted, current research promotes bilingualism, as it is now proven to be beneficial on many levels (Bialystok, 2001, 2011; Kroll and Bialystok, 2013), and it is understood that exposure to two languages will not result in language confusion or language loss (Lanza, 2004; Baker, 2011).

My participants' language use fits in with Liebkind's (1995) definitions of bilingualism. They all speak both languages as a result of origin, since they were exposed to both languages from birth, they are all proficient in both languages, and are able to switch between them depending on choice and demand. Additionally, they also all feel that being bilingual is in effect an important part of their identity. They all believe that it is only natural to be bilingual in Malta, which supports local literature sustaining that bilingualism is a quintessential feature of being Maltese, even because speaking two or more languages is an age-old and integral part of our culture, and of our history of foreign occupation (Fabri, 2010; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020). Furthermore, as a result of early exposure to both languages, it is quasi-impossible for a Maltese person to be monolingual (Caruana, 2007; Bonnici, 2010; Vella, 2012; Farrugia, 2016; Camilleri Grima, 2016; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019).

4.3.3 Subtheme: Language and schooling

Six of my participants attended church schools throughout their primary education. One participant attended a government school, whilst two attended private schools. Only one of my participants made a transition from primary church to secondary state school. All my participants state that their primary and secondary school's language policies, together with the views, skills, pedagogy, and proficiency of their former teachers were all influential in their own attitudes and proficiency in Maltese and English, albeit to varying extents.

Six of my participants attended English-speaking schools. The participants having Maltese-speaking or balanced bilingual backgrounds consider full immersion to be beneficial, since they feel that the environment enables children to become proficient in the language. The English-speaking educators, on the other hand, feel that lack of exposure to the Maltese language might have hindered their own proficiency in some way. Conversely, Maria, Cynthia and Elaine believe that their exposure to the English language facilitated their fluency, even though Cynthia had initially encountered some difficulties.

Extract 28. Maria – School effect on language proficiency

It was very good that amongst peers we still used Maltese most of the time ... it was a church school ... however, I ... the school sort of ... you know, learning English so well ... they had this love for English, especially in secondary school. I remember really liking the teacher, the way she approached the language, the texts she would make us read ... whatever ... so all that came from school. I mean Maltese was my first language then but because at school they gave so much importance to English ... you know there was a lot of focus. We had very good Maltese teachers too ... it was their first language, so it wasn't a case where Maltese was brushed aside at all.

Extract 29. Cynthia – Full immersion struggles

I was sent to a private school when I was four. I had no English background from home, so it was very difficult. Everyone was English-speaking, but I had to adapt and learn English from my friends. So it was as though I was actually a foreigner at school and I wasn't. But I managed and I am happy that I did now ...

Extract 30. Elaine – School's strategies on enforcing language use

At school we were always expected to speak in English ... the head clearly didn't like it if she happened to overhear us speaking in Maltese. Probably it was considered to

be the equivalent of a minor offence! But I enjoyed my English lessons and I did very well. I passed my O'Level when I was only in form 3. English remains to be my favourite subject up to this day ...

Mandy was also very happy attending an English-speaking school during her primary years, and in fact felt very unhappy when she switched schools, because she felt that English was not given the importance that it deserved.

Extract 31. Mandy – Pedagogy and language use

I went to a church school during my primary school years. There we spoke English all the time. I loved the language. I loved reading. Then I went to a state school for my secondary years. I hated it. I remember that I used to hate the way English was taught. I would mentally correct my teachers' pronunciation. I hated the way they taught English in Maltese most of the time. That was a time I just lost interest in school ...

Both Laura and Liliana derive from English-speaking backgrounds and attended English-speaking schools. They both feel that the lack of exposure to Maltese may have hindered their proficiency in the language.

Extract 32. Laura – Confidence in language use

I went to a church school where it was not allowed to speak in Maltese at all, plus my family are all English-speaking. I only speak Maltese to my in-laws. I must admit that I wish I were more fluent in Maltese. I am not equally proficient. I don't feel confident enough. It hasn't affected me in class ... public speaking yes.

Extract 33. Liliana – Strict language policies

When we were young at school, we had to speak in English or we were punished, so we were brought up in a school where we could only speak English. I went to a convent school. English was ... it was too long ago I hardly remember ... Maltese we started it

when we were eleven I think, so we started Maltese without the basics, without the grammar. They presumed we could speak it and it was straight away bang into translations. It was hard at first, but I eventually got used to it.

Conversely, both Jonathan and Diana were brought up in Maltese-speaking home environments, and also attended schools which gave the Maltese language more importance. They both feel that in this way, they had more exposure to the language. They also both feel that some teachers lacked proficiency in the language themselves, which obviously affected their teaching.

Extract 34. Jonathan – Different pedagogies

I went to a government school and we all spoke Maltese there. But I loved the English lesson because I had some good teachers. They were fun and I feel I learnt a lot from them, especially since I had very little exposure to English from home. I also had others who spoke Maltese throughout the lessons or translated. I used to feel this was wrong. I wish I had more exposure to English to be honest, especially since we always spoke in Maltese at home.

Extract 35. Diana – Quality and level of language exposure

I attended a church school that was Maltese-speaking at the time. I wasn't exposed to the English language. My peers were all Maltese-speaking. Then we had some students coming into senior school who were English-speaking. But we had issues with our teachers. For example, we had an English teacher at the time who was Gozitan (from Gozo, a tiny sister island of Malta), *so we had an English language lesson in a Gozitan accent and even when I started working ... I still remember the word 'roster' for example ... I used to say 'roaster' because this is what our teacher had taught us, and at home I didn't have much exposure to the English language either. We were all*

Maltese-speaking … my parents, my relatives … so looking back it is still a heartache for me that I wasn't brought up with more exposure to English especially at school.

Although Ingrid was the only student who attended an equally balanced bilingual school, without a specific language policy, she still feels that the teaching of English could have been better since it focused too much on the grammar aspect.

This data is indicative of the Maltese-English language divide in state and independent schools in Malta, with a more balanced language picture observed in church schools.   Vella's 2019 study on language use in different schools concluded that more than one-third of children attending state schools are thought to use mainly Maltese, closely followed by the equal use of Maltese and English.   The equal use of Maltese and English is predominant in students attending church schools, followed by mainly English use by more than a quarter of church school populations. On the other hand, language use in private independent schools is mainly English or English only. For the context of my study, one needs to take into consideration the fact that up till the late 1980's private education in Malta was provided mainly by the Catholic Church, and therefore church schools were fee-paying until then. In 1991 the Church-State agreement gave way to church schools becoming free for all, with optional voluntary donations made by parents. One also needs to keep in mind that the demographic changes on our island are fairly recent, therefore the participants in my study were not schooled during a time where multilingual populations in schools were prevalent.

All but one of my participants attended the public sixth form, whilst one attended a church sixth form. All my participants went on to study at the University of Malta.   Some of my participants mentioned the fact that their primary and secondary exposure to Maltese and English affected their post-secondary years, either positively or negatively. Mandy believed that her fluency in both languages enabled her to feel comfortable at her post-secondary school,

and to integrate better with peers, but also mentioned the fact that she felt that her new teacher's proficiency and passion for the English language re-ignited her zeal for studying. Although Cynthia's initial experience at primary school was quite traumatic, due to her lack of home exposure to English, she feels that she had reaped its benefits when she realised that her English was very good when compared to that of her peers. Interestingly, however, Cynthia also talks about her desire to move away from underlying elitist views on language choice, when she stated that she wanted a change from an English-speaking environment. This yearning actually drove her into making a conscious post-secondary school choice in order to be more exposed to the Maltese language, and to be surrounded by peers who also appreciated and valued the language.

Extract 36. Cynthia – School preference according to language

I went to the public sixth form by choice. I could have gone to other schools that were English-speaking but I didn't because I was a bit tired of that atmosphere. I wanted ... I like my country and I appreciate my culture and my language and I wanted to use it and be part of that more than being surrounded by students who didn't know Maltese or refused to speak it.

Diana feels that her post-secondary schooling was essentially a continuation of her primary and secondary schooling, with regard to language use. Although she felt comfortable speaking in Maltese, she yearned to improve her level of English and she could finally realise this upon entering university. Elaine, on the other hand, felt uncomfortable within an essentially Maltese-speaking sixth form environment, where she was initially teased because of her preference for the English language. This encouraged her to make more of an effort to improve her Maltese also as a way to integrate with her peers.

This data focusing on language and schooling reiterates how early language experiences may impinge on eventual language choices, language fluency and attitude towards language use (Vella, 2019). Additionally, through my emerging data, I could observe how language use is also a means of constructing social identities through language acquisition and socialisation (Lanza, 2004; Bailey, 2008; Baker, 2011; Bialystok, 2011), how language may act as a tool to negotiate identity, and how culturally embedded purist or elitist views about language choice are also significant (Caruana, 2007; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019; Vella, 2019). Moreover, it further substantiates that both family environment and school language policies may affect language fluency and identity development (Camilleri, 1996; Aspachs-Bracons et al., 2008; Barnard and Burns, 2012; Reeves, 2018; Karimi and Mofidi, 2019; Vella, 2019).

4.4 Theme 2: Teacher Cognition: Knowledge and Beliefs Related to Language Use.

Educators' family backgrounds, together with their learning experiences at school, post-secondary, and tertiary level, as well as continuous professional development and self-directed learning, are all influential on teachers' identities. Additionally, significant others such as family members, work colleagues and students all play a role in shaping such identities. This theme investigates issues related to the use of language, linked to my participants' own background, views, identity, and social context. It focuses on educators' own language preference and proficiency, and how this impacts language use and pedagogy in the classroom.

4.4.1 Subtheme: Language use at school and in class.

Issues related to the use of language within bilingual and multilingual educational contexts are closely linked to educators' personal beliefs, attitudes, identities, learning experiences and social backgrounds (Borg, 2003; Reeves, 2008; Milton, 2016; Karimi and Mofidi, 2019). The data presented pertaining to participants' knowledge and beliefs related to language use, support research stating that teachers' family backgrounds together with their learning

experiences at school, higher and tertiary education, professional development, self-taught learning and professional experiences are all influential in their language behaviours (Varghese, 2008; Barnard and Burns, 2012). Therefore, educators' personal histories, knowledge and views (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Ajayi, 2011), together with their perceived confidence and proficiency in the language (Twiselton, 2006) all shape their personal and professional identities, and may hence impact pedagogical choices, and the mediation between educational policies and practice (Watson, 2015). Teacher identity is in effect often the driving force behind the level of educators' motivation and effectiveness (Day et al., 2006). However, it is also interesting to note that my participants' views were often shaped and reshaped as a result of different personal, educational, and professional experiences throughout the course of their lives. This corroborates research stating that as a result of a variety of experiences, a teachers' identity is in a constant state of flux (Morgan, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2009; Richmond et al., 2011; Reeves, 2018).

My participants also admitted that codeswitching comes naturally to them, and that they instinctively employ this strategy to meet their communicative needs, thus substantiating Van der Walt, Mabule and De Beer's (2001) concept of codeswitching as a tool through which speakers utilise language dynamically, and in ways which serve their requirements. Aspachs-Bracons et al. (2008) state that codeswitching "is not a sign of language delay or corruption, quite the opposite. It is a sign of the dynamic nature of language and the way in which people make language serve their needs" (p. 173).

All my participants believe that being bilingual has helped their teaching, since they could communicate with, and teach their students in both languages. Both Elaine and Mandy stated that their school has a bilingual language policy, whilst Ingrid believes that bilingualism is also favoured at her school, although English seems to be taking precedence due to the increasing number of non-Maltese speaking children in class.

Extract 37. Mandy – Full immersion

We have a bilingual policy at school. Both languages are used although there is a tendency to use Maltese more somehow. Maybe cos the majority of teachers and children are Maltese- speaking. I speak in English all the time in class. I have a few English-speaking children, but the majority are Maltese- speaking. I only tend to use Maltese during my English lesson if I am completely stuck and need to make myself understood. The children are fine with this and communicate with me in English most times. They even talk to each other in English during my lessons.

Extract 38. Ingrid – Using both languages depending on the context

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It used to be mainly Maltese at our school except for the English lesson, we codeswitch a lot too, but now however, we seem to be having a larger number of English-speaking or foreign children in class so we tend to address them in English. The policy seems to be changing. "Qisu" (it's as though) English is becoming as important, if not more. In a way it worries me because I feel we may be losing our language ... our identity. I feel comfortable using both languages in class. I think one strength is that I love both languages. I think we need to be more flexible depending on the context, the children and the lesson aim. I think that the lesson aim should always ultimately be the target language but there are different paths which children can follow in order to actually reach the aim. If using Maltese or any other language helps them understand better, then I think it's ok.

Two other teachers feel that there are no strict rules about language use, and that teachers usually adapt depending on subject being taught.

Extract 39. Jonathan – Making sure that children are exposed to both languages

At school it's mainly Maltese, but we use both languages really. It depends on the lesson or context. We don't have a policy as such. I try to stick to one language during language lessons, but this is becoming more and more difficult with all the foreigners in class.

Extract 40. Cynthia – A policy of subjects

I don't feel we really have a language policy as such ... more a policy of subjects ... "tipo" (for example) *when I taught Science, certain technical terms have to be in English even because of the exam. I would say that 99% of the students speak Maltese at home usually. The foreigners mainly speak in their own language but in class they speak in English. So, I need to speak both languages constantly to make myself understood.*

Maria, Diana, Laura, and Liliana teach at schools which predominantly favour the use of English over Maltese, for diverse reasons. Whilst Maria and Liliana teach in the private school sector, where the majority of children are English-speaking or non-Maltese, Diana and Laura teach at church schools and believe the English language is being promoted precisely for the opposite reason, being that the majority of children attending derive from Maltese-speaking households, and therefore exposure to the English language is imperative.

Extract 41. Diana – English as a primary language

At school, the primary language is English, it is a school policy. Because of the ballot system, we have more children who are Maltese-speaking from the south of Malta. We have children who don't understand English ... they need exposure but although we try our best to speak in English, even simple instructions, rules etc. things we present to

them are usually in English except for the Maltese and Religion lessons. However, we

do tend to codeswitch. I try to incorporate both languages as much as possible.

Extract 42. Laura – Transmitting a love for English

My love for English helps tremendously because I love the language so much, that I

know I encourage the children to feel the same and I can see the difference at the end

of the year in their command of English and their wish to improve. In class it's mainly

English-speaking except for Maltese or Social studies and Religion at times. So I do

use both languages. Language policy is meant to be both languages, but I think we try

to give English a bit more importance in general.

Extract 43. Liliana – English instruction for all subjects except for Maltese

Primary instruction at school is in English for all the subjects except Maltese.

Language policy is English. Native Maltese I would say we have 5 on 25 students. The

rest are all English- speaking. Except for the Maltese lesson and some instructions, I

hardly use Maltese in class. I prefer to use English, but I find it easier to teach Maltese

since I speak it …and I do use it … some of my colleagues find it hard.

Although language policies and use vary depending on each particular school, it is interesting to note that the teachers in the private school state that English is the predominant language, mainly because the majority of children enrolled either derive from English-speaking households, or are otherwise migrant learners. All my participants choose to utilise both languages in class, at different levels, in a variety of ways, and for several different reasons, irrespective of the predominant language personally favoured by themselves and by the school.

My participants strongly believe that being bilingual helps them on a professional level, since they can communicate with their students in both languages. They all stated that using both Maltese and English is instinctive, and that they make sure that their students are exposed to

both languages as much as possible. However, several interviewees spoke about how they are dominant in one language over another, and how they had their own particular preferences over which language to use. Such personal preferences are often linked to personal and professional experiences and impinge on language use in class, the construction of identity within linguistic interactional contexts and a "hierarchical valorisation of different languages" (Rosiers, 2020, p. 11).

Some of my participants also mentioned the level of discomfort they experienced with their proficiency in L2 during their early years of teaching, owing to a lack of exposure at home or/and at school. These findings are consistent with those discussed earlier in relation to educators' backgrounds, thus strengthening the belief that both family and educational language backgrounds may influence language dominance, proficiency, and use.

Extract 44. Jonathan – Confidence and proficiency

When I first started teaching, I was not as confident in the English language. I felt more comfortable teaching Maltese, and was always afraid of making mistakes or of teaching the pronunciation wrongly. It affected me. But as time passed, I felt I improved a lot. I am confident teaching both and I make sure that the children are exposed to both languages. In today's world they need to be fluent in both.

Extract 45. Diana – Improving English skills

I personally had to improve my English skills when I started teaching at an English-speaking school. I was brought up in a Maltese-speaking environment so sometimes I used to say a word and realise that it was not right, it wasn't the way to pronounce it … you always find a person who has a nasty attitude. It bothers me … these people usually have difficulty speaking the other language really.

My participants feel that they need to safeguard both languages, which further strengthens the fact that Malta's sociolinguistic situation is that of bilingualism without diglossia, where both languages are used in most domains and considered equally important (Camilleri Grima, 2013b; Ariza et al., 2019, Panzavecchia and Little, 2019).

Extract 46. Maria – Safeguarding both languages

The way we safeguard Maltese we should safeguard English. During the lesson per se I agree with separating languages as much as possible. But then I think in between lessons, in an informal situation, giving instructions, on the playground for example we need to use both languages. Even if we codeswitch it's ok.

The educators also pointed out that sometimes they have to switch between languages because of the increasing number of non-Maltese students in class, which requires them to resort to a variety of pedagogical strategies to support students who may not be fluent in either of our two official languages. These findings support García's (2009) concept of transglossia, where many languages are present in a functional interrelationship within a globalised community. Additionally, the challenges mentioned by the teachers related to the increasing number of migrant students in class, support the growing body of research pertaining to how demographic changes in Malta are impacting our classrooms (Camilleri Grima, 2013a; Farrugia, 2017; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020; Bonello, 2020). (I shall be discussing this further on in Section 4.5 of this chapter – Multilingual Classrooms).

Official School Language policies in Malta are still somewhat of a grey area, since the National Curriculum Framework (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) has no specific guidelines regarding language/s of instruction, merely recommending that the individual requirements of each school should determine the development of its own language policy. My participants' responses highlight the fact that the majority of private schools predominantly use

and favour the English language (Camilleri Grima, 2013a; Farrugia, 2013a; Milton, 2016; Bonello, 2020) as a result of the intake, which largely comprises English-speaking Maltese and migrant students. This language preference may also be elitist in nature, since families who opt to enrol their children in private schools, usually enjoy high socio-economic status, which in Malta often (but not always), results in families choosing English over Maltese as L1 (Camilleri, 1995; Milton, 2016; Mifsud and Vella, 2018b; Vella, 2019; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019). These findings are hence consistent with research supporting the fact that a number of Maltese people opt to speak in the English language due to the positive connotations attributed to it (Camilleri, 1996; Caruana, 2007; Francesconi, 2010; Mifsud and Vella, 2018b; Vella, 2019). Additionally, Camilleri (1996) sustains that teachers who themselves receive their education at private independent schools tend to predominantly use the English language in class. This is corroborated by Vella (2019, p. 188) who highlights the dominance of English in private schools, and Maltese in state schools, with "church schools being a sort of middle-ground", where students generally opt to use the English language. These practices are in effect reflected in my participants' language choices.

4.4.2 Subtheme: Attitudes towards codeswitching

All my participants agree that codeswitching is an innate and common characteristic of Maltese-speakers. Although all but one teacher admitted that they use codeswitching practices in class, albeit to different extents, the majority had their reservations about this way of communication, and although they are aware that it is common practice for both teachers and students, they stressed that they try to discourage it as much as possible, and only use it judiciously when the necessity arises.

The data related to codeswitching demonstrate that similar to many other bilingual countries, language mixing is common practice within Maltese classrooms, and Maltese teachers

naturally utilise these strategies with Maltese-born bilingual students who are encountering difficulties in either English or Maltese.

Extract 47. Maria – Sometimes codeswitching has to happen

I don't encourage it but sometimes it has to happen. Like, for example when I'm speaking in Maltese and they're not understanding at all. It has to happen in some cases. I think it depends on your aim. If it happens here it's from Maltese to English and back …sometimes it means that they're trying to use Maltese even if it's just during codeswitching.

Extract 48. Mandy - Sending the wrong message

I do codeswitch sometimes I guess, we all do. Even words like "mela" (so*) and "hux"* (isn't it so?*) … it is in our culture I guess. I don't think there's anything so wrong with codeswitching really as long as it does not happen during lessons. It can be confusing and send the wrong message I think. But it's ok to codeswitch when giving instructions sometimes or when some children really don't get it. I think it's more appropriate in the early years though.*

The issue that some children do not realise whether a word is in Maltese or in English arose once again which further strengthens beliefs that "rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts" (Vogel and García, 2017).

Extract 49. Cynthia - Constantly codeswitching

I am constantly codeswitching! I don't enjoy doing it. I would prefer to first say everything in English then say everything again in Maltese or vice-versa, depending on

the majority of the students I would have in class. I don't like to say a sentence mixed

up ... but honestly I do codeswitch because otherwise half the class would sleep or drift

off before I translate for them. Also, you have to codeswitch even though I feel it is

confusing ... some students wouldn't know if the word is in English or Maltese, even

Maltese students, which is shocking for me.

My participating educators acknowledge that code-mixing is a naturally occurring and innate practice amongst bilingual speakers (see Van der Walt, Mabule and De Beer, 2001; Wei, 2007; MacSwan, 2017), a practice which can be observed within local schools. Camilleri Grima (2013b) sustains that even when Maltese speakers use either one of the two languages in what is perceived to be a monolingual code, one can still observe influences from the other language at lexical, syntactic, or phonological levels.

Extract 50. Jonathan – Codeswitching comes naturally

Sometimes it comes naturally. I think I also have to remind them and myself not to.
They tend to go into Maltese mode during discussions and brainstorming. It comes
naturally but it can mess the language up. "Taħwida sħiħa" (a whole mix-up). But
see? It comes naturally. I think it should not be encouraged during language lessons
but maybe not so much during Maths. I try mainly with full immersion usually with a
lot of resources. Then I only codeswitch or translate when absolutely necessary.

Extract 51. Diana – Codeswitching and translating

We do tend to codeswitch, we try as much as possible to use visuals so if I am talking
in English they understand but if you still have children who look at you blankly, we do
codeswitch and we do translate. We try not to, to be honest, we try to use more actions
or present it to them visually but if you still have children who cannot understand then

we tend to codeswitch or translate. During an English lesson, I don't feel it is appropriate to codeswitch at any time.

Extract 52. Laura – Some benefits in codeswitching

As a rule, we were sort of brought up to think it's not correct. It might have some benefits I guess, as long as it doesn't mix the children up. I'm not quite sure. It can't be taken too far. I know I do it sometimes but as much as possible I avoid it.

Conversely, Elaine and Ingrid stated that although their perceived practice may be linked to what was passed on to them during their teacher training, they may be changing their ideas about the use of codeswitching in class, as a result of their many years of experience in the classroom. This openness to evaluate different methods is in line with research stating that teachers' beliefs and identities may shift as a result of their personal, educational and professional experiences (Morgan, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2009; Richmond et al., 2011; Reeves, 2018).

Extract 53. Elaine – Better understanding – less frustration

I think codeswitching gives the speaker ... whether it is the teacher or the student ... the opportunity to transfer information ... whatever that may be. For example, to reinforce an explanation, to give a better description, to emphasise a point, to correct a behaviour in a clearer manner, and which can therefore be better understood by the person on the receiving end. I feel that it can be effective to emphasise a point. I tend to codeswitch because it helps me reach my students more. Before ... I mean when I was at uni, and during my first years of teaching it was understood ... myself included "jiġifieri" (that is) that total immersion in a language was the best way to learn it. Even I used to feel very strongly about this. But I'm not so sure now. You see, based on my experience, I

have come to believe that it is okay to use one language to teach another. I think it's easier, for both student and teacher. Better understanding ... less frustration!

Extract 54. Ingrid – The changing situation

I'm not really sure about this. When I was at uni we were taught about how important it is to stick to one language. I remember we were taught to have the "English-speaking doll" and the "Maltese-speaking doll" present in class according to the language being taught. These dolls did not understand the other language "allura" (so) *this meant that the children could not speak in the other language. So, I strongly believed in this and that's how I used to teach. Now I think the situation is changing. We need to adapt. I think switching between languages is not harmful really if it helps the children understand better.*

The eldest of all my participants was the only one who was totally against codeswitching in general and stated that she makes sure to hardly ever engage in such practices.

Extract 55. Liliana – Language mixing confuses children

It mixes up the children ... mixing English with Maltese and vice-versa ... according to me ... they also mix Maltese spelling with English. We tend to do it a lot as teachers it is innate. It mixes them up though. I'm against it and I really try not to codeswitch. I also have a lot of foreigners in class so I cannot do it really, they won't understand, although I do translate sometimes. I don't think codeswitching is ever appropriate. Only if we're doing Maltese traditions for example ... we're talking about something that is specifically Maltese. There it's ok there has to be codeswitching ... you have to give the Maltese version of the words. However, in general English is English and Maltese is Maltese. Don't mix languages!

Overall, my findings are in accordance with Camilleri Grima's (2013a) and Ariza et al.'s (2019) research, which states that within Maltese schools, codeswitching is a naturally occurring phenomenon, based on the bilingual competence of both teachers and learners, and that bilingual teachers frequently resolve pedagogical difficulties through language mixing, a strategy which they often employ instinctively. This is in line with the ideas of Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) and McMillan and Rivers (2011) who consider codeswitching to be valuable within second language (L2) classroom interactions, since it may help mitigate cognitive, communicative, and social challenges. Camilleri (1996) sustains that teachers deriving from Maltese-speaking backgrounds may employ more Maltese and codeswitching strategies during an English lesson, rather than their English-speaking counterparts. Additionally, teachers in state and church schools are more likely to utilise codeswitching strategies, than their counterparts teaching in private schools (Azzopardi, 2009; Bonello, 2020). These findings also corroborate Lyster's (2019) claims that cross-linguistic practices, appear to be less advantageous within bilingual contexts where English is considered to be L1. In Malta, as previously discussed in Chapter 1: Introduction of this research study, Maltese is L1 for the majority of families on the island, however, there are also several families who opt to use English as L2, and this is especially the case for children attending private independent schools. My findings, however, show that notwithstanding their reservations, nearly all my participants believe that they engage in some sort of cross-linguistic practice in class, depending on the requirements at the time.

4.4.3 Subtheme: Knowledge of and attitudes towards translanguaging

The majority of the participants were not quite familiar with the concept of translanguaging. Whilst a few had never heard of it, the others had come across the term, but admitted that they were not really conversant with the subject. When I briefly explained the concept to my participants, some admitted that it was a naturally occurring practice in class but were

somewhat sceptical about how this would work in practice. Some of the participants compared it to codeswitching, whilst others felt that it would work better with speakers of other languages, rather than bilinguals speaking Maltese and English. The question of whether translanguaging would probably work better with older or younger children was also considered. Some of my participants stated that they feel they needed more training in how to implement these innovative new pedagogies. The majority of educators wanted to keep an open mind on the topic and research it further.

The fact that most of my participants were not fully conversant with the concept of translanguaging at the time of the interviews, whilst some were completely unfamiliar with the terminology is perhaps indicative of a lack of training and self-directed professional development in this area. In fact, the educators voiced their legitimate concerns about not having enough knowledge or training to be able to appropriately utilise these hybrid language practices as pedagogical tools. When I briefly described the idea of translanguaging and how this can be used in practice, some of my participants compared it to codeswitching.

Extract 56. Mandy – Similar to codeswitching

I have read up on translanguaging … isn't it like codeswitching in a way? I think bilingual people do tend to pick and choose bits and pieces of both languages to communicate. I think we all do it … sort of … it's not really something that can be taught … it comes naturally.

Extract 57. Jonathan – Giving the green light to codeswitching and mixing languages

I have read up on translanguaging, although I need to research it further. I feel as though we've kind of giving the green light to codeswitching and mixing languages here … am I right? It depends on the situation. I'm not sure but I do know that it does happen in class by both students and teachers.

This is consistent with Poza's (2017) views who sustains that whilst the growing body of research on this concept focuses on the acknowledgement and acceptance of fluid multilingual language practices, "elsewhere translanguaging appears as a repackaging of codeswitching, or as one of several scaffolds for facilitating the scholastic achievement of linguistic minority students" (p. 103). Whilst codeswitching and translanguaging are similar in that they both refer to a multilingual speakers' "shuttling between languages in a natural manner"(Park, 2013, p. 50), codeswitching refers to mixing languages as two autonomous language systems, whilst translanguaging considers the language practice of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire, and deems that the separation and labelling of different languages is societally constructed (see García and Wei, 2014; García and Kleyn, 2016; Cenoz, 2017; García et al., 2019).

The idea that bilingual and multilingual speakers switch between languages instinctively as it facilitates communication, was voiced by most of my participants, whilst some teachers stated that sometimes the children do not really know whether they are speaking in Maltese or English. These views are in fact a reflection of the spontaneous translanguaging practices happening in class, and are similar to those they hold about codeswitching, since they admit that it is a natural and frequent occurrence in class, are able to recognise its potential benefits, and yet are unsure of how, and whether it is in fact prudent to implement it as pedagogy.

Extract 58. Elaine – A reflection of the constant interplay between Maltese and English

I don't know much about it. Although, I imagine it refers to the use of different languages in the classroom. Not in a language class, I imagine. I don't know … I have to look into it and learn more before I can formulate an opinion. I think that from the little I've heard about it in the world that we are living in, translanguaging is the term closest to what we face daily in our classrooms. Teachers are not really trained to do it, it simply happens naturally, possibly as a reflection of the constant interplay between Maltese and English that happens on a daily basis here in Malta. Sometimes children

do not even know in which language they're speaking … it's just a natural way for them to make themselves understood.

Extract 59. Jonathan – Where do you draw the line?

I'm not sure but I do know that it does happen in class by both students and teachers. I guess in this day and age having so many different languages in class perhaps it has become more necessary. I think many teachers and students are doing this naturally too. But I'm not sure exactly how teachers should implement it officially within a lesson … I mean where do you draw the line?

Extract 60. Maria – Would it work better with multilingual students?

I'd be curious to read more about translanguaging. Through my experience, I can't see how a child who brainstorms in let's say English can get the final product in Maltese. If they're real bilinguals would they need to brainstorm in another language really? Perhaps it would work better with students who speak different languages? I would be interested to read more about it and see how it would work in practice.

Extract 61. Ingrid – Keeping an open mind

I have come across it recently whilst reading some policy I forgot which one "issa" (now) *as part of my Masters' research. I think it refers to language mixing "hux"?* (isn't it so?) *I haven't given it much thought really but things are changing … we need to keep an open mind.*

Wei (2011), García and Wei (2014), Gort and Sembiante (2015), and Beres (2015) sustain that translanguaging is a normal and instinctive conversational practice amongst bilingual families and communities. Similarly, my participants admitted that this is a spontaneously occurring practice and provided examples of when and how both students and teachers are employing translanguaging strategies on a regular basis. Translanguaging is in effect a celebration of the

diverse and unique ways in which bilinguals communicate, and which views bilingualism as an invaluable community resource (MacSwan, 2017). My interviewees acknowledge that translanguaging could be beneficial when utilised during the brainstorming and discussion sections of a lesson, and they also feel that it could help students who are not comfortable with expressing themselves in class as a result of a lack of proficiency in one of the languages. This, they pointed out, is especially the case with migrant children.

Extract 62. Cynthia – Understanding concepts through the use of different languages

When it comes to brainstorming, I do that ... I like to start off with whatever topic. Anything that comes to the students' mind I'll take it on board and they are allowed to express themselves in any way they want. In my opinion, as long as you're understanding the concept, it doesn't matter what language you're using, in fact I don't agree with the fact that some exams are only set in one language. And even if they brainstorm and give me words in Maltese, I end up eventually translating them but to understand a concept I don't see a problem with mixing languages.

Extract 63. Diana – This concept is already being practised

Hmmm ... thinking about this concept ... it's probably already done. In year two during creative writing in Maltese I start off by presenting them with a mini white board and they jot down their ideas and they can wipe it clean and start off again. During Maltese I allow them to write words in English to generate ideas ... even if I have a foreign child ... I give them time to brainstorm and jot down ideas in their language. So even though as instruction I am all for full immersion, then in some situations it can be beneficial because you're unblocking them. You have some students who do not participate in the brainstorming session, then you realise that it is because they need more confidence in the language so it blocks them. Then as a teacher I would still struggle when it comes to the actual writing, however. How can you move from writing in one language to

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writing in another? For the time being, if they write running and they need to write

"jiġri" (he runs), I write "jiġri" myself so they copy it.

Extract 64. Laura – This way they are being immersed in the language

I try not to encourage it, but admittedly, it does happen. Children tend to mix languages. I let them do so if it helps them to express themselves but then I translate what they would have just said in Maltese into English for example. This way they are being immersed in the language. You have to appreciate that some of these children only hear the English language at school. So I think it's ok to let them use their first language, as long as they are then redirected to the target language. I think we all do it really, even to make the children feel comfortable and to make it easier for them especially when we are starting a new topic.

These views match those of previous studies which highlight how translanguaging may be an effective pedagogical strategy to use during the discussion, brainstorming and drafting stage of a task, whilst the final presentation should ideally be in the target language (see Canagarajah, 2011b; García et al., 2017), and that translanguaging enables children who feel more inhibited in class to participate further since they are given the freedom to utilise all their language resources (see Baker, 2011; Park, 2013; Durán and Henderson, 2018).

One participant voiced her concern about the challenges related to language mixing when assessing children in the target language.

Extract 65. Cynthia – Assessment

I also don't think this could work when they are going to be assessed when they have to write or speak in the target language … they need to use the language as they are supposed to use it.

Otheguy et al. (2015) sustain that educators need to make a distinction between assessing children's skills in language, to assessing their skills in a language. In this respect, translanguaging as a learning tool differentiates between the language of the curriculum in which students are examined and assessed, and the entire language repertoire which students utilise in order to learn and communicate (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019). García and Otheguy (2020), sustain that when teachers utilise translanguaging strategies in class, they need to focus on assessing their students' language abilities holistically, that is, "their ability to infer, to tell and write a narrative or argumentative text, to find text based-evidence, and to use the features of their unitary semiotic repertoire in all the myriad other ways required by school tasks" (p. 26).

Consistent with their beliefs about codeswitching, a large part of my participants feels uncomfortable with the idea of translanguaging, because they believe that language mixing is essentially a wrong practice (see Dooly, 2007). Words and phrases such as "guilty", "it should not be encouraged" and "it's not right" were prominent in the data, indicating a negative stance related to language mixing.

Extract 66. Cynthia – Feelings of guilt

I don't think it matters what language you use. I think it's beneficial when you're trying to understand a concept because if you are trying to understand it in a foreign language or a language you're not comfortable using, you cannot understand it, so to really understand something fundamentally I would use their preferred language … however I still tend to feel guilty when I have to do this deep down.

Extract 67. Mandy – Trial and error

I think it happens more in early years classes. When I used to teach grade one, the children used to combine languages all the time. At first they used to use the language

they felt most comfortable with, then gradually start distinguishing between the two. I think that's ok. It makes them feel comfortable and helps them express themselves .. like some children find it hard to participate so this helps them. I think in older classes however, language mixing should not be encouraged. I know it will still happen naturally, but I think it should not be encouraged on the whole. I think bilingual children will tend to think in their mother language. Maltese-speaking children, for example would think in Maltese, then quickly translate what they are thinking in English. I think it would only be beneficial if you're really stuck and trying to explain a concept which is difficult to get through. Otherwise, I think I'm traditional in this. I think it does more harm than good. But we need to learn more about these methods. We are still in the process of learning through trial and error, rather than solid research and empirical evidence.

Liliana, the eldest of my participants had never heard about the concept of translanguaging. When she was briefed about it, she conceded that this is a naturally occurring practice, and reiterated Maria's views about it possibly working better with migrant learners. However, she was the only teacher who voiced particularly strong views against translanguaging and mixing languages. This was in line with her views about codeswitching, as portrayed earlier in this chapter.

Extract 68. Liliana – Teaching a language in another language

I have never heard of translanguaging. I'm not in favour of mixing languages. My grandson is two years old. He goes to playschool. They speak to him in Maltese. My son speaks to him in Maltese, his mother in English. I can already see how mixed up he is in his language ... you know like "ħareġ il-man" (the man went out) *... so he's not really speaking in English or Maltese. I don't know if this has anything to do with it. It's the product of being exposed to two languages. Foreigners are different. When*

they go home their parents are going to speak to them in their mother tongue. In Malta it is different. Everyone is going to understand them. I don't know if this is why it happens. For them it doesn't make a difference which language they use because everyone understands them. It makes more sense with the foreigners in class though. I'm against it ... you cannot teach a language in another language. I don't think tha t using Maltese during English lessons is ever appropriate. You cannot teach English in Maltese. It mixes them up. When all students are Maltese-speaking I'm sure it happens in some schools. They switch constantly or translate from English to Maltese. This is like when we teach Maltese. If there's a difficulty in Maltese I would translate but I'm not going to do it all the time, I encourage them to think in Maltese. They have to relate Maltese to the Maltese language class. I still immerse them ... If students speak Maltese during English, I don't stop them, but I redirect them to speak in English.

As previous research and literature point out, there is a need for teachers to reduce their feelings of discomfort and guilt related to cross-linguistic practices, in order to effectively utilise translanguaging as a pedagogical resource (Creese and Blackledge, 2010). Additionally, more research in the area (Lewis et al., 2013; Cenoz, 2017; Vaish, 2019), and the further development of pedagogical strategies to enable teachers to implement these practices within schools (Canagarajah, 2011b; Lewis et al., 2013), and within bilingual and multilingual communities speaking a variety of diverse languages (Vaish, 2019), are also necessary.

The interviewees also hold different views about the age groups most suitable to utilise flexible language practices with. Diana and Laura, both Early Years' teachers, had similar views about how translanguaging naturally occurs within their classrooms, but held divergent views about which age group this concept would probably work best with.

Extract 69. Diana – Easier to implement within the Early Years

In the early years it might be easier because you only have a few words rather than chunks and whole trains of thought!

Extract 70. Laura – Easier to implement with older students

I'm not sure how successful translanguaging would be in the lower years, really. I think I can see it working better with the older years where they would already have a good grasp of the language.

In this respect, the growing body of research related to translanguaging indicates that all students benefit from fluid language practices, however whilst translanguaging has been extensively researched with older bilingual and multilingual students, highlighting the advantages of utilising this approach in the later years of primary schooling and beyond (see Williams, 2002; Canagarajah, 2011b; Wei, 2011; Lewis et al., 2013; Daniel and Pacheco, 2016; Cenoz, 2017), it has been less researched within early childhood education (Kirsch, 2020). García and Wei (2014) and Jones and Lewis (2014) believe that this approach is particularly suitable to be used in early years settings due to the flexibility and security associated with it, and a growing number of studies are highlighting the benefits of translanguaging with very young children (see García et al., 2011; Durán and Palmer, 2014; Garrity, Aquino-Sterling and Day, 2015; Lenis, 2015; Velasco and Fialais, 2016; Alamillo et al., 2016; Kirsch, 2017; Mifsud and Vella, 2018b; Kirsch, 2020).

4.4.4 Subtheme: Perceived pedagogical practices

All my participants state that they give equal importance to, and utilise both languages in class, although one participant uses Maltese less frequently than her peers. However, only four out of nine educators specifically admitted to speaking both Maltese and English, even during language lessons. The other five stated that they favoured full immersion practices, however

throughout the interview, it became more apparent, that in spite of their efforts, they often still had to resort to language mixing in the form of codeswitching, translanguaging, translation or repetition, either because the children's proficiency in one of the languages was weak, or due to the increasing number of non-Maltese students in class. All my educators mentioned the use of visuals, games, and hands-on resources, including digital resources, together with peer-tutoring as part of the language pedagogy. Some of my participants acknowledged that the way they were taught languages at school themselves had influenced their own pedagogical choices.

According to Van der Walt, Mabule and De Beer (2001), all teachers implicitly mix languages for specific reasons. All my participants stated that they endeavoured to give equal importance to both Maltese and English, although this is not always an easy task. My participants also feel that they had to judiciously utilise bilingual pedagogical strategies in order to get through to some of their students during language lessons.

Extract 71.   Maria – Giving space to both languages

I try to as much as possible dedicate a space for both languages … so it's not just the Maltese lessons. It's true we have foreigners and so we have to be careful to make sure they're understanding but even every day instructions, let's say I want somebody to close the door … I try to get the child to use Maltese too. I don't just stick to Maltese during the Maltese lesson, I do that to try to give importance to Maltese because English they're hearing all the time at school here, so in our case Maltese is the one that needs a bit of a push cos a lot of them find it hard. I do codeswitch admittedly. I do it on purpose to give Maltese a bit of a push … so you know if a child needs some revision, I try to explain in Maltese to give them a push. But I try to use a lot of non-verbal as well with power points … I try not to translate immediately though, because if they know that an explanation will soon follow, they will automatically just wait for

the English explanation and ignore the Maltese ... just not bother. So I do it very carefully.

Extract 72. Elaine – Opportunities to practise

When they use Maltese to ask a question, or to check their understanding, I'm ok with it. Nonetheless, I usually rephrase it in English. If you think about it, students, I mean those who come from Maltese-speaking backgrounds, might not feel confident talking in English, especially in front of the whole class. So, if I allow them to use Maltese, then rephrase, I give them the opportunity to say the sentence, or ask the question .. correctly .. I mean, using correct English. I encourage the use of English as much as poissible, because in my opinion, they will never gain enough confidence if they do not have enough opportunities to practise ... to make mistakes ... and to learn from those mistakes.

My participants all admit to using codeswitching strategies in class for a variety of reasons, and to various extents.   The majority mentioned employing codeswitching or translation strategies to reinforce a point, when giving instructions, when their students do not understand a concept or direction, to emphasise a point, and for classroom management purposes. These findings are consistent with Baker's (2011) overlapping purposes of codeswitching which include Emphasis, Reinforcement, Clarification, and Changing attitudes or relationship (refer to **Table 2.4: Baker's (2011) 13 purposes for codeswitching** in Chapter 2: The Literature Review, section 2.3.1).   Additionally, Macaro (2005) also states that the main reasons for L1 use during L2 instruction include building good rapports with students, when clarifying or repeating complex explanations or instructions, for classroom management, and due to time constraints, amongst others.

Extract 73. Maria – Language mixing as a pedagogical choice

At the age I teach, I try to discourage brainstorming in English when the target language is Maltese, because it is useless thinking up loads of beautiful ideas in English but you can't express them in Maltese. They try to literally translate ... the quality of the work in that case is usually rubbish ... it's very, very poor. I tell them it's better if you work with what you know ... even if it's a simple story. I tell them it's better if it's very poor ... but at least they would have done it themselves. However, it depends. Sometimes, I know it is very difficult for them. They get discouraged and switch off ... so I need to be flexible. I use supplementary material as much as possible. But like sentence writing I expose them to expressions and put them in a context. I help them. We translate sometimes ... we have to.

Extract 74. Cynthia – Language mixing as necessity

Sometimes the situation is that way. For example, I come from a background where our Maltese lessons were in English ... and it used to really annoy me because if I'm trying to learn Maltese, why are you speaking to me in English? But the reality was that nobody understood Maltese so she had to do it and the same goes for the other way round ... I mean if you cannot understand what I'm saying how can I teach you? I think it's necessary sometimes. If it is not necessary you shouldn't do it but sometimes it has to be done.

Extract 75. Elaine – Codeswitching is necessary

We speak Maltese at school, but languages are taught in the particular language, however we do use some codeswitching. For example, when particular children need a second or third explanation. If for example it is evident that they are not understanding. We have a number of English-speaking children, in which case I ... we address them in English. In this case, sometimes we need to codeswitch from Maltese

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to English during Maltese lessons … "jiġifieri" (that is) "anki" (even) Religion and Social studies.

Extract 76. Ingrid – Allowing children the freedom to express themselves in any language

I'm ok with them using Maltese to understand better, like for clarification. "Pero" (however), I usually repeat in English or even translate their question. I think that this way the children do not feel inhibited … as in, they're free to express themselves. Many children do not participate in class not because they do not know the answer to a question, but because they do not feel comfortable speaking in English. It blocks them. They feel awkward and afraid of making mistakes. "Allura" (so), I'd rather let them be free in expressing themselves, "ħalli" (even if) I rephrase or translate.

Although some participants expressed their conviction of mainly full immersion methods, they all nonetheless admitted to inevitably resorting to an element of language mixing at times.

Extract 77. Mandy – Full immersion to mitigate lack of exposure

I speak in English all the time in class. I have a few English-speaking children, but the majority are Maltese-speaking. I only tend to use Maltese during my English lessons if I am completely, completely stuck and need to make myself understood. But this doesn't happen often. The children are fine with my methods and they communicate with me in English most times. They even talk to each other in English during my lessons. I believe in full immersion especially for children who are not really exposed to the English language at home. At least they get it at school.

Extract 78. Jonathan – The final product in the target language

I try full immersion usually with a lot of resources. Then I only codeswitch or translate when absolutely necessary. I try to stick to one language during lessons however, but

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this is becoming more and more difficult because we are getting more foreign children in class. I think when you're trying to explain something, and they just don't understand. I don't think it's right really but sometimes it like has to be done. When they are really not understanding, when you cannot find the right resource to help them. I think it's ok if you switch languages, as long as you switch back as soon as they do understand. Classroom management discipline is important to be understood well.

Extract 79. Laura – Young children are easier to mould

I use so many methods in one lesson .... a variety. But I try to stick to speaking in one language as much as possible, with the use of many resources. I try not to codeswitch unless absolutely necessary. I mean, you have to see if a child is actually understanding. I think a bit of help could help a child relax, release her thoughts maybe. The age that I teach, they come back after summer and they start off by speaking in Maltese, so I do tend to repeat just in the beginning but after about two weeks, I phase this out and by the end of the year they're fine. Even children who are coming from Maltese-speaking families, where there's no exposure to the English language, they are fluent and comfortable enough to use it even during playtime. I think when they're younger they're easier to mould.

My participants' personal views on language mixing are however not entirely reflected in their perceived pedagogical practices. This disparity between teachers' views and perceived practices may be potentially damaging, since students' academic success is often linked to alignments between teachers' own beliefs and pedagogies (Pettit, 2011). All my participants stressed that they made sure to give equal importance to both languages in class, however, the large part of these educators is of the idea that codeswitching and translanguaging practices should occur in class selectively, and only when all other options would have been exhausted. Some participants stated that it may be more acceptable to codeswitch during Maths (see

Farrugia, 2013; Farrugia, 2017) or Science (see Borg and Gatt, 2017; Mifsud and Farrugia, 2017; Bonello, 2020).

> Extract 80. Diana – Language mixing is more acceptable during Maths or Science lessons.

> *We try to stick to English as much as possible. If it's an English language lesson, I personally prefer to use English only and I don't really accept that a teacher speaks in Maltese during an English lesson. If it is a Maths or Science lesson, just for the sake of children understanding I do accept it to a certain extent, but if it is an English lesson, I think that it is important that it is kept specifically in English, but I admit it is not always easy. Now obviously if you're doing group work, it is natural that children speak to each other in Maltese. Then it is the role of the teacher or LSE to rephrase or re-direct the children to speak in English. Personally, I don't accept it much because of my history and I think that this was something that didn't help me at all in acquiring proper English. Then, as I said before, if you have children who are absolutely not understanding you ... then maybe ok. But I prefer to do that one-to-one, rather than a whole class approach. I keep on explaining in English and provide visuals or acting it out but then if the child still doesn't understand, I approach him on a one-to-one basis.*

On the other hand, although they still felt the need to justify themselves, these same participants spoke about the mixing of languages by both teachers and students as day-to-day practice in class. Although the majority of my interviewees favours full immersion on principle, they admitted to resorting to language mixing due to Maltese students not having full proficiency of one of the two languages, or because of the increasing number of non-Maltese students in class.   In light of this argument, García and Wei (2014) sustain that teachers utilise translanguaging in their classrooms for several reasons, amongst which is adapting instruction to diverse students in multilingual classrooms, and to strengthen language practices. Baker

(2011) also points out that translanguaging can be beneficial to develop more profound processing and oral communication in both languages.

Extract 81. Jonathan – Using Maltese during the English lesson will be detrimental

I think using Maltese during the English lesson will be detrimental. This happened to me when I was young. I was not exposed to English properly in some years of schooling. But using it during certain parts of the lesson, such as brainstorming and discussion for example, or for comprehension purposes, or when starting a new topic or the introduction to the lesson .... Well then I guess maybe it's ok ... as long as the final product is in English.

Extract 82. Liliana – Language and social circles

I don't think I could ever teach a language in another language. It's just not right. There are instances yes, when I need to translate perhaps. But I try as much as possible to restrict this. I try to use visuals instead. Then if a child is really lost ... then maybe yes.

These basic findings are consistent with Macaro's (2005), Chen and Rubinstein-Avila's (2018), and Gorter and Arocena's (2020) views stating that codeswitching in educational settings is often considered to be controversial due to a variety of reasons, amongst which is the idea that it may reduce the amount of exposure in the target language (Cummins, 2019). Macaro (2005) argues that codeswitching may be viewed negatively due to a lack of teacher autonomy, since methodologies are often imposed on educators by national agencies (Teacher agency will be further discussed in section 4.6 of this chapter: Recommendations for Policy and Practice). There is also a general assumption that switching to an alternate language is the result of a lack of proficiency in the language being spoken (Reyes, 2004), and that it is often considered to be a violation of languages (García et al., 2017). These findings are consistent with their beliefs

about codeswitching and translanguaging as discussed in the previous two sections of this chapter. As a result of the negative connotations related to codeswitching, educators often develop a guilty complex when using L1 as a pedagogical tool for L2 language learning (Simon, 2001; Macaro, 2005), and that these feelings often contribute to "missed opportunities", since intentional codeswitching strategies are not appropriately harnessed (Arocena, 2017, p.252). My participants' views about language mixing may also be a legacy of past education programmes and policies. As a result of purposive sampling, my participants all have over ten years' experience in the classroom, and were therefore trained in accordance to the guidelines and recommendations made at the time in the Malta Ministry for Education and Employment's Malta National Minimum Curriculum (1999), which advocated the strict separation of both languages in education. The majority of my interviewees in fact concede that they were always rigorously instructed not to mix languages in class, a concept which may have influenced their pedagogies.

Extract 83. Diana – The need for more information and training

I think we need to be informed more about this. There is so much research about language learning you never know what is wrong and what is right! It makes the teacher feel more comfortable using both languages within a lesson in reality, but sometimes it is what we are taught. We were taught that if we used another language it was a huge mistake, we would confuse the children. That's what we were taught. That is the general perception I think. As a teacher, I do allow it sometimes but I do question it. I feel guilty. I ask myself is it ok? I think we need to be told that it is ok. Even for the new teachers doing the course at university. We need to tell them that it is ok to use both languages sometimes to a certain extent. In practice if you think about it, it is what we really do. We do codeswitch, although we do encourage the use of one language, it is instinctive to use both sometimes.

Jonathan and Laura are also in agreement, as they believe that although language mixing is an instinctive practice in Maltese classrooms, they do not feel qualified enough to strategically incorporate it into their own teaching methods.

Extract 84. Jonathan – Professional training for experienced educators

I think we should be informed more about the benefits of these practices perhaps through our COPE sessions at school. We mix languages naturally, I guess but we are not sure if it's ok to do this as part of the lesson and how to do it. We were never taught about this at university "anzi" (on the contrary) *we were always told never to mix languages. I think it helps them sometimes because "tipo"* (for example), *children are sometimes stuck ok? They blank out "jew jeħlu"* (or they get stuck) *... blocked so they don't speak, or they don't try. It's like they ... in a way ... they refuse to try because the final aim is proficiency. You see what I mean? This way I guess they are more free to express themselves in class ... but I don't know how it would work in reality. It goes against what I used to believe in. I think times are changing "hux"* (isn't it so?) *especially since there are so many foreigners in class. We need to be trained for a different education.*

Extract 85. Laura – Children with different language backgrounds

I feel I do not know enough about these methods. I follow what I feel is right. I would like to learn more about these teaching methods before I can actually implement them in class. I think the fact that more children are coming to school with different language backgrounds might require some changes really, but I'm not quite sure what is allowed and what isn't ... what works and what doesn't. There are so many different opinions on this.

These views are in stark contrast with more positive views on cross-linguistic strategies to meet the demands of Malta's recent demographic changes, such as the recommendations put forth in the National Literacy Strategy, which refers to codeswitching as "an essential element of a bilingual country", as it facilitates access to different languages and to a "wide and varied linguistic heritage" (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014 pp. 28 -29). Other local policies and documents have also recently been changing guidelines on the use of codeswitching as a learning tool (see The Malta Ministry for Education and Employment/Council of Europe's Language Education Policy Profile, 2015b; A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo, 2016). Codeswitching is in fact now considered to be a widely shared practice within bilingual and multilingual environments, and therefore embracing the concept of language mixing as a pedagogical tool may effectively be the way forward for language education in Malta. However, it appears that old habits die hard, and teachers who have been trained in this manner may perhaps need more professional development in this area, reflecting current research and the challenges faced in today's classrooms, to ease the discomfort they might experience when naturally utilising these multilingual language strategies. Further training in this area would be in conformity to the idea that educational and personal experiences often impinge on teachers' beliefs and sense of self, which are temporal and fluid, as opposed to static and unchangeable (Morgan, 2004; Reeves, 2018; Karimi and Mofidi, 2019). Hence, teachers need to be "explicitly taught ways to incorporate heteroglossic ideologies" into their pedagogy (Goodman and Tastanbek, 2020, p. 1), since an educators' stance on cross-linguistic methods may evolve as a result of professional development and classroom practice (Menken and Sanchez, 2019; Back, 2020; Gorter and Arocena, 2020).

A number of participants also mentioned using visuals, technological aids, books, games, and other resources as learning tools, whilst some others advocated peer tutoring as an excellent

resource within bilingual and multilingual environments. Research based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory shows that peers scaffold each other's learning through discursive mediation, and that educators should encourage these instructional and spontaneously occurring peer interaction strategies within bilingual and multilingual classrooms (Kibler, 2017; Martin-Beltrán et al., 2017). Within this scenario, pupils themselves are given a key role, providing a scaffold, as they use translanguaging practices to bridge the gap between the different languages in class (Duarte, 2020).

Extract 86. Diana – Peer tutoring as pedagogy

I use visuals mainly, even peers. Generally, I try to make sure that during group work I have both Maltese and English-speaking children in the same group so that they can help each other. Usually, if you have an English-speaking child next to a Maltese-speaking child, eventually you get the Maltese-speaking boy speaking English ... usually it is that way rather than the other way round, so peer interaction helps a lot. I think it is very important that you allow children to grow in a bilingual environment. As a teacher, my role is to have a balance in class in groups ... not just Maltese or English-speaking.

The various teaching strategies employed by the educators in this study demonstrate that in an effort to address their students' diverse language and academic requirements, they are willing to explore and employ multimodal practices, but require more resources and formal guidelines in order to so. De Costa et al. (2017), Anderson (2017), and García and Otheguy (2020) support this stance as they argue that communicative practices go beyond language itself, incorporating other modalities and semiotic resources. Additionally, the sharing of good practices amongst educators, who are all ultimately facing the same challenges, may very well prove to be one way forward in our shifting educational scenario (Bonello, 2020).

Research has shown that personal learning experiences often impact teachers' own pedagogies (Cox, 2014; Oleson and Hora, 2014; Milton and Panzavecchia, 2019b). In light of this argument, my findings show that the way in which my participants were themselves taught languages, influenced them substantially in one of two ways. They either wished to model the good practices which they observed and which enhanced their own language proficiency, or conversely, they were adamant not to repeat the same practices which they believe were a hindrance to their own language learning process. Hence, as a result of their previous learning experiences, whether positive or negative, most teachers appear to teach in ways in which they would prefer to be taught themselves (Cox, 2014).

4.5 Theme 3: Multilingual Classrooms

As a result of recent demographic changes in Malta, the number of migrant students in Maltese classrooms is increasing exponentially. This is impacting the Maltese educational system in many ways. Whilst multilingualism and multiculturalism may prove to be enriching elements of our classrooms, working with linguistic diversity often poses numerous challenges for both educators and students alike. This theme explores issues related to multilingual classrooms, the ways in which multilingualism is impacting education, and the challenges teachers are experiencing as they are trying to navigate unchartered waters, whilst striving to equitably support their diverse student populations.

When I had initially developed my interview schedule for this study, I had decided to include a question about speakers of other languages in class, however, this was just a side question, beyond the main scope of my study, as the increase in multilingual speakers in Maltese classrooms was still in its initial stages back then. At the time, I had not anticipated such a strong and significant input from my participants on this topic, and how salient these issues would be to my study. Due to these findings, I decided to revisit my literature review section

to include research on this very relevant topic, reflecting the realities of today's multilingual classrooms, and subsequently giving due voice to my participants about these important issues.

4.5.1 Subtheme: Increase in multilingual classrooms, and the impact of this on educators

The participants who teach at private and state schools all mentioned the rapid increase in multilingual speakers in class. Teachers in church schools also spoke about this reality, but they seem to be facing it to a lesser extent. The majority of children who are enrolled in private schools usually possess at least a basic understanding of English, as do the few migrant children who attend church schools. The large part of migrant students within state schools, on the other hand, are asylum seeking refugees who enter school with no knowledge of either of the two national languages.

Recent demographic changes in Malta have resulted in an increase in migrant students in Maltese classrooms. The population of non-Maltese students has nearly tripled over the span of five years, from 1,890 in 2012 to 5055 in 2018 (NSO, National Statistics Office, Malta, 2019), and there seems to be a consistent upward trend in these numbers. This is indicative of the current shift from bilingualism to multilingualism on the island, and this trend is also reflective of what is happening across Europe, particularly in higher-income countries (European Commission, 2019a). Although these numbers are relatively smaller than the nearly-20% of children speaking English as an additional language in England (Tinsley and Board, 2016), they are still significant in that they are indicative of a cultural and language shift as the number of migrant learners in Maltese classrooms who are struggling with either English or Maltese, or both languages, is constantly rising at unprecedented levels (Facciol et al., 2015; Ariza et al., 2019; Caruana et al., 2019; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019, 2020; Bonello, 2020), and the indications are that this situation is a permanent one, which requires acceptance and adaptations by schools and educators (Facciol et al., 2015). There are societal and educational opportunities linked to diversity (European Commission, 2017), and

multilingualism and multiculturalism are generally proving to be enriching elements within our classrooms, however, addressing the needs of students with diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds often poses several challenges for both educators and students alike.

This demographic shift has heightened the heterogeneity of Maltese classrooms, as they are becoming increasingly socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. These changes can be linked to Vertovec's (2007) concept of superdiversity who refers to the past decade's migration paradigm shifts associated with the demographic and social changes brought about by a rapid increase in population varieties, together with the pace of advancement in communication technology (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019). Superdiversity poses sociolinguistic consequences (Blommaert and Backus, 2013; Wei, 2016; Cenoz, 2019), hence since this heterogeneity has brought about a rise in multilingual classrooms, Maltese children are now being exposed to Maltese, English and several other different languages. This is enriching for our students, as educational environments supportive of multilingualism have shown to be beneficial on many levels. However, "this demographic shift is a rapid and unprecedented one", resulting in Maltese teachers not being adequately skilled and prepared to meet the challenges posed by increasingly multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Panzavecchia and Little, 2020, p.123). In this respect, the large part of my participants expressed their concerns about this ever-growing reality, and the many challenges it is posing on both educators and students alike.

All participating educators agreed that as a result of recent demographic changes, Malta is currently undergoing a major paradigm shift in education. The teachers who work in private and state schools spoke about the unprecedented and rapid increase in multilingual speakers in class, whilst teachers in church schools said that so far, they were not experiencing significant challenges in this regard. This could be due to the fact that children in Malta are enrolled in church schools through a ballot system, which parents specifically apply for partly because

they wish to educate their children within a Catholic institution.   Entry into these schools is difficult and coveted, since they are known to have very long waiting lists, and intake relies on the luck of the draw.

Diane, Laura, and Mandy, who are church schoolteachers, stated that so far there are few non-Maltese children enrolled at their school, therefore, they are facing these challenges to a lesser extent.   However, Diane sustains that church schoolteachers are still sometimes experiencing language challenges when faced with the small number of migrant students in their classrooms.

Extract 87. Diana – Teachers make use of all their language resources

We have a few foreign children too and the numbers are increasing but so far still not that many. Last year I had an Italian boy. He ... they, his family did not understand Maltese or English. I used to communicate with him and the family in Italian. With the child I used to use Italian just to make him feel at ease. For example, when he walked in I used to tell him "buon giorno, come stai oggi?" (good morning how are you today?) *but only so he feels at ease and he settles down in class ... or when he's not understanding anything. It's difficult when they come to school with not even a basic knowledge of a language. They get frustrated and it's difficult for everyone.*

Asylum-seeking migrant children are usually educated in public state schools, as required by law. On the other hand, a large percentage of children of non-Maltese business owners or workers stationed in Malta, generally derive from families falling under a higher socio-economic bracket and are hence enrolled into fee-paying private schools. The majority of children who are enrolled in private schools and a few of the migrant children who attend church schools usually have a basic understanding of English. A large number of migrant students within state schools, on the other hand, enter school with no knowledge of either of the two national languages. Many of these students are asylum seeking refugees, who often

join school mid-way through the year.   In the academic year 2017-2018, 65.09% of migrant students in Malta attended state schools, whilst 31.83% were enrolled in private independent schools, and a mere 3.08% of this cohort attended church schools. There are children deriving from all over the world in our Maltese schools. The majority of these children derive from Europe, whilst the number of children of African origin is at a close second, those coming from Asia come third, whilst smaller percentages derive from the other continents (National Statistics Office, Malta, 2020).   (Please refer to figures, tables, and map visualisations illustrating these trends in section 2.4.1 of Chapter 2: The Literature review).

The participants teaching in the private school sector feel that the majority of their migrant students have a good command of the English language, however most of them struggle with Maltese. Maria and Liliana, both teachers at a private independent school, mention the rising number of migrant students in class. The majority of these children are proficient in English, but less so in Maltese. Liliana, however, also mentions issues related to a few children who are not fluent in either of the two national languages.

Extract 88. Maria – Strategies to use with migrant English-speaking students

The number is on the increase. Technically half the class ... this year I have a lot of foreigners. I would say half the class have at least one parent who is foreign. To be honest, the foreign children I teach are 11 year olds, so they've been here for a number of years. Their English is usually pretty good but in Maltese well ... something ... even if very weak ... but something they understand. They do have basic knowledge ... basic numbers ... say 'find page whatever' ... in Maltese even though it is weak. They wait to see if you will repeat in English, but if you don't then they'll find it.   That's an advantage because if you have a 5 or 6 year old who has no clue, I imagine it is harder but you can simplify instructions, you use the board, you use pictures, you try to use actions. There are times when you have to change if the book gives you verbs for

example which are really difficult to conjugate I might change … instead of 'to whatever' … I use 'to drink, to write', where I can mime. Something which is more tangible for them. But it's not always easy. You have to think of all the other children in class. If you go too slowly they get bored. If you go too fast you lose the others …

Extract 89. Liliana – Strategies to use with migrant non- English-speaking students

We have a lot of foreigners in class. They don't understand Maltese … I do translate for them. This number is growing every year. They usually can speak English well. But sometimes you find some who don't. Like this year I have a girl from Denmark. She came here 1st October knowing not one word in English … zero! It wasn't easy! Imagine I had to communicate with somebody staring blankly at you.   So to help her, initially I used to use Google translate and write everything in her language for her. That helped a lot. Even her parents. During Maltese lessons I give her English worksheets which are of a much lower level than ours. I give her these worksheets to help her … to consolidate. She doesn't do Maltese.

The teachers in state schools, on the other hand, voiced their concerns about the growing number of students and their families, who are unable to speak in either English or Maltese. Jonathan, who also teaches in a state school, voiced his concerns about the growing number of migrant learners in class, and the challenges that this situation poses on educators. He speaks of children who are not fluent in either Maltese or English, and the ways through which he attempts to communicate with them, amongst which is a variety of resources and peer discursive mediation.

Extract 90. Jonathan – Using various resources

The numbers are growing every year. Some children even join half-way through the year. They have so many difficulties. Usually the Maltese children at school speak in

Maltese, even though it's a bilingual school. It is difficult for children who can only speak in their own language. We try to help them even though we are not really trained to do so. It's exhausting, because then you have to go slower and this at the expense of the other children in class. We tend to use a lot of visuals and resources and signing with these children. But it's very spontaneous. Some of these children really struggle. We use signs and pictures, visuals, Google translate. I think it's easier nowadays with the internet.

Ingrid, another state school educator, also mentioned the growing intake of migrant children and of the different nationalities who are attending her school.

Extract 91. Ingrid – Lack of skills in teaching migrant learners

We seem to be having a growing number of foreign children in class. The intake is changing. Every year we see a larger number of foreigners. We mainly have children from Africa, but we also have had children from Bulgaria, Serbia, Italy, and the UK. Sometimes a lot of these children are not even fluent in English. Sometimes they only speak in their language. Some can only string a few phrases together. It is not easy to teach these children. It's not easy to even get through to them. Even to try to communicate with the parents. I think sometimes they expect us to perform miracles. We are winging it. It's like trying to build a puzzle with missing pieces. I feel I don't have the tools to do it! I mean, yes they're offering language instruction to these children … but I don't think it's enough.

Within the Maltese context, the education system in fact poses an even greater challenge to migrant students, who are expected to engage with not one, but two official languages, thus introducing families to complex negotiations and considerations regarding English, Maltese, and the heritage language (Micallef Cann and Spiteri, 2014; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019,

2020). In this respect, Micallef Cann and Spiteri (2014) claim that it is important to work towards ensuring that "immigrant students in Malta are 'empowered' and not 'caught in power' by Malta's two official languages" (p. 24).

The majority of participating educators feel that migrant children socialise well with one another, and one participant in fact spoke about how children are able to communicate with each other, notwithstanding language barriers.

> Extract 92. Jonathan – Children's communication skills
>
> *I also ask the children themselves to help me. Children have this special gift of communication. They manage to communicate with each other in spite of language barriers. It is amazing!*

However, one educator feels that when there is a substantial number of same nationality students in class, these have a tendency to integrate mostly with peers who have their common cultural and linguistic background, creating a form of "speech communities" or "speech cultures" (Blommaert and Backus, 2013, p. 14). My participant states that the formation of these language cliques often results in children communicating mainly in their own language, thus resisting integration, and excluding others.   She sustains that notwithstanding her efforts to reach out to them, these groups are often "hard to infiltrate", thus making it additionally difficult to build a rapport with them, and to effectively educate them.

Cynthia, who works in a state school voiced her concerns about migrant learners who tend to form language groups, hence not integrating with the rest of the class. The creation of these language islands defeats the purpose of inclusion also because it excludes other students from joining in the group.

Extract 93. Cynthia – The creation of language islands

I think it's good to meet other people and learn about other cultures and their language. I believe in integration and different cultures living together. But sometimes children tend to gravitate towards other children of their own nationality, and they create a group which is hard to infiltrate ... a language clique "tipo" (kind of) ... therefore, in reality, integration does not always happen. They tend to use their own language among themselves, which is fine sometimes, but not always, because others cannot understand what they're saying. I am always eager to learn about my students' different cultures and languages, but sometimes I find resistance. When there are groups of the same nationality ... not just one or two students ... it's not easy because they kind of stick together. So, this is something we need to work around.

I ask students to use English in the classroom constantly ... because they keep using their own language. I understand it's natural for them. But if I don't know what you're saying ... how can I teach you? How can I see if what you're saying is appropriate? If you're not understanding me, how can you learn a subject?

Ticheloven et al. (2019) argue that one drawback of linguistic freedom within multilingual classrooms is that teachers themselves often feel isolated and experience a loss of class control when faced with a number of different languages. Vaish (2019) speaks of challenges linked to fluid and flexible language practices within multilingual environments, claiming that problems may arise due to both students' and educators' lack of familiarity with the "free flowing interaction[al]" nature of these very methods, and that they are hence better suited to a non-scripted classroom culture "where the overall goal is meaning making [where] both the teacher and the students participate in a more democratic sharing of talk time" (p. 288).

Participants are aware of and in favour of the initiatives in place to support a diverse student population. The introduction of Ethics as a subject as an alternative to Religion, which is traditionally understood to be the teaching of the state religion Catholicism, is one such initiative which was recently introduced to address an increase in culturally and linguistically diverse Maltese classrooms (International Organisation for Migration, 2016). The formation of the Migrant Learners' Unit, within the Ministry of Education and Employment, was also mentioned as one step in the right direction to include and support migrant students. This intervention unit was created in 2014 to support migrant and refugee learners through induction courses to all newcomer learners in Maltese schools who cannot communicate in Maltese and English. These classes are usually held on or within the proximity of the child's school with the intention of the children eventually entering mainstream schooling within approximately a year or possibly less. The Migrant Learners' Unit also provides language support to students who are already enrolled in mainstream schools through small group pull-out sessions (Caruana et al., 2019).

Cynthia advocates the use of English language learning programmes offered to these students, even if they are withdrawn from class or school.

Extract 94. Cynthia – Crash courses in the English language

What is sometimes done is that they give children a skeleton timetable initially and then for the rest of the lessons, they give them a crash course in English sometimes within the school or sometimes outside ... even if they come half way through the scholastic year. Like the teacher notices ... or the parents state that the child doesn't speak in English. They only go to a few lessons and the rest of the day would be a crash course. They learn quite quickly, they're young and they're focusing most of the day on English. Then they'll be able to understand better. I think this is a must and should be offered

regularly in schools ... but even for some Maltese students ... many Maltese students

actually, because unfortunately without English you cannot really do much.

However, whilst this initiative was praised, as it encourages the integration of these students on a communicative level, my participants also feel that being withdrawn from class somewhat defeats the purpose of inclusion, and that these children often struggle with content once they return to class, especially since within the primary years, learning is mainly sequential.

Jonathan mentioned the Migrant Learners' Unit, within the Ministry of Education and Employment which aims "to foster the inclusion of newly arrived students into the education system, whilst supporting their acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural competences" (Migrant Learners' Unit, n.d.). Whilst Jonathan feels that this is a step in the right direction, he also held conflicting views to those expressed by Cynthia regarding the full benefits of this initiative. Although he recognises its advantages, Jonathan also thinks that it operates on a deficit model, thus not truly celebrating linguistic diversity. He mentions the focus being on our two national languages, implying that the child's heritage language is not being considered in this scenario.

Extract 95. Jonathan – The Migrant Learners' Unit

I also think that we need to rethink what we are offering these children. The Migrant Learners' Unit for example is a good idea. But I also think that it doesn't truly celebrate diversity ... in a way it goes against inclusion. "Jaħassra" (poor kids) *they are being pulled out, they miss out on mixing with their friends, they miss lessons ... "u ajma"* (Come on! Discourse marker usually used to emphasise a point. Depending on intonation, it can express distress, disagreement, pleasure, or surprise) *is this true inclusion? The focus is on just English and Maltese!*

Although Cynthia is in favour of these initiatives, she however feels that these should be carried out over a relatively short period of time

Extract 96. Cynthia – Integrating children as early as possible

So we need to first identify at what level they are, then give them the appropriate crash course according to their level, then to integrate them again as quickly as possible ... because then you don't want to integrate them too late. It has to be structured.

Teachers feel that effective learning takes place within a community of learners, and hence we need to prioritise the classroom experience, offering intervention systems as a means of support, rather than replacement, in order to prevent potential systemic failures that may be linked to segregating practices. Additionally, this programme does not value these students' linguistic heritage, as it focuses solely on the two national languages of the host country. These results tie in well with the work of Scaglione and Caruana (2018), who sustain that schools are indeed striving to integrate migrant students through teaching them the language/s of instruction, however, there is a disparity between these efforts and with what is being invested to maintain these learners' heritage language, and that this imbalance may lead to poor academic achievement. The 2019 Eurydice report 'Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures' shows that within the majority of publicly funded schools, a common language model is usually promoted. In many parts of Europe, the emphasis on migrant children learning the country's official language(s) puts teachers in a position where "their sole objective is for these students to acquire the language used in schools", thus limiting them in other ways (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018, p. 150). Nilsson and Bunnar (2016) sustain that as these students are separated from their peers to focus on strengthening language skills, they may instead face problems with content acquisition as a result of being withdrawn from class. Research shows that students' home languages should always be preserved and valued, since this nurtures a child's sense of identity,

promotes academic and linguistic achievement (Little, 2010; European Commission, 2017; Little, 2017; Levine and Swanson, 2019), and also serves affective functions, providing them with "a safe haven" (Ticheloven et al., 2019, p. 15). In this respect, Mazzaferro (2018) sustains that for people who have experienced forced migration, language forms a significant link to their lives and identities, however this link may have different meanings across generations (Little, 2017; Wilson, 2020). For pragmatic reasons, the main language or languages of the host country often become migrant students' favoured means of interaction, eventually resulting in heritage language loss as an unfortunate consequence (Harris, 2006; Kirova and Adams, 2006). Kirova and Adams (2006, p. 325) attribute this to an "interplay between these conflicting forces, paired with the strong influence of the peer group, [which] affects the individual child's sense of self and belonging to either, both, or neither of the cultures."

Children who do not find support for their home language within their educational settings, are often disadvantaged both socially and academically (OECD, 2012). Migrant children are especially vulnerable members of society, and their protection and support are amongst the most pressing humanitarian and policy challenges faced by many European countries (European Commission, 2019b). My participants' responses related to these challenges were emotionally charged. The majority of them strongly voiced their legitimate concerns about not possessing the necessary skills required to primarily "get through" to these children, and to subsequently teach them. Words and phrases such as "exhausting", "unsure", "winging it", "they expect us to perform miracles", and "we are not trained to do so" were prominent in the data which is indicative of the educators' struggles in this area. At the time when my participants were receiving their professional training, the demographic situation in Malta was very different, and they now feel that they require additional support and further training to meet the diverse realities of today's student population. It is interesting to note that Malta,

together with Sweden are the only two education systems facing general teacher shortages in schools with large migrant learner populations (European Commission, 2019a).

The participating educators display creativity and innovation in their pedagogy, including visuals, actions, translations, specially prepared worksheets, signing, together with peer tutoring strategies, to reach out to their migrant students.   Malta's bilingual practice is now expanding into a multilingual one, and teachers are also tapping into their additional language reserves, spontaneously employing translanguaging strategies and using Google translate to communicate with these children. Moreover, many Maltese teachers are able to communicate in one or more other foreign language apart from Maltese and English, thus making it easy for them to naturally shift between two or more languages. These results support previous research which states that although it is idealistic to expect teachers to be fluent in all the languages present in class (García and Seltzer, 2016), teachers in Malta often shift between Maltese, English and other languages as a result of Malta's multilingual legacy and solid support for foreign language learning (Sciriha, 2001; Panzavecchia and Little, 2019; Panzavecchia and Little, 2020). However, these teachers are doing this spontaneously without any clear and formal guidelines on how to deal with the challenges linked to multilingual and multi-ethnic classrooms. In line with the ideas of Tinsley and Board (2016), it can be concluded that within the classroom, teachers are using a variety of strategies to mitigate the challenges related to multilingualism, however, these practices are still embryonic, and many teachers express feelings of insecurity in this area.   Educators do not feel effectively equipped with the necessary skills required to handle linguistic and cultural diversity, and usually support their students through personal compassion rather than through professional expertise (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018).   In this regard, Attard Tonna et al. (2017. p. 84) problematise this issue, inquiring whether education, which is a fundamental right and entitlement of each child, should in effect be supplemented by "acts of mercy". They go on to ask "if education is a right, how

can one speak of mercy in relation to education? If mercy is part of the equation, this becomes particularly problematic, if not outrightly dangerous, with regards to migrant children, as their education is being literally left at the mercy of responsible authorities".

On the other hand, compassion, empathy, together with ensuring that students are receiving what they are entitled to, are all part of the teaching equation, being in itself a nurturing and compassionate vocation. Attard Tonna et al. sustain that ultimately, "education depends very much on the educators' relation with others, their response to them, and the way they act to bring about what is publicly considered to be just". The data emerging from this study clearly indicates that although Maltese teachers are striving to support all their students to the best of their knowledge, they still feel uncertain about the methods they are employing within their classrooms, despite the fact that Malta boasts of a historically multilingual and multicultural legacy. This is indicative of the need for greater attention to teacher training in this area (this shall be discussed further in the following section 4.6 – Recommendations for Policy and Practice).

4.6 Theme 4: Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This research supports the view that language teachers' identities are intricately constructed, especially since the aims of language teaching are wide and dynamic. It is therefore an imperative, albeit complex task,

> to find out what teachers know and believe about fundamental issues such as: the place of grammar in the language learning curriculum and, indeed, what is understood by the word 'grammar'; the most appropriate ways to teach the language skills and sub-skills; the respective roles of teachers and learners in innovatory approaches to language teaching, such as task-based language learning; the appropriate classroom use of the

learners' first language; how language learning could and should be assessed or evaluated – and many other matters (Barnard and Burns, 2012 p. 2).

Malta is presently witnessing a paradigm shift in education, where our exam oriented educational system is not reflecting the current requirements. There is a need to transform our education in order to adapt to a dynamic, globalised, and digital marketplace. Children can nowadays access facts and information at the click of a button, thus memorising material is fast becoming an outdated endeavour. Our students need to be encouraged to think creatively and innovatively, rather than be fed information which they rote-learn and regurgitate at the end of every scholastic year (Panzavecchia, 2018). We also need to foster a respect for diversity in our children, where this is viewed as enriching, as opposed to a hindrance. This theme outlines the current contexts in which educators are presently teaching. It highlights the challenges related to the demographic shifts that are taking place in schools and communities on the island, and those related to the demands of teaching in the twenty-first century, with special focus on the level of English in Malta. This theme explores these concerns voiced by my participants, together with the recommendations they are proposing to ensure a just and equitable education for all.

4.6.1 Subtheme: Level of English as L2 in Malta

All my participants, regardless of whether they teach in state, church, or private schools, feel that the level of English as L2 in Malta is on the decline, however, some feel more strongly than others about this issue. They attribute this to a variety of reasons, amongst which is a lack of reading, and in turn, an increase in the use of technology. They claim that children today seem to spend the large part of their free time using social media and watching Youtube videos.

Extract 97. Maria – The Americanisation of everything

I think in general the level of English leaves a lot to be desired. Some university students cannot hold a proper conversation in English. They need to codeswitch. It shouldn't be that way, even because of the influx of foreigners we have in Malta, we have to use English more often and yet the level is going down. I think it's due to the Americanisation of everything. I see from my own children … for them it's normal. Plus reading is practically non-existent.

Extract 98. Mandy – Oral skills which are Americanised

I think that the level has gone down a lot. But even Maltese. I think that students' writing and spelling skills are regressing every year. Children do not read anymore, and they are not getting any food for their ideas. They just watch Youtube or go on Facebook or Instagram. Most of their oral skills are Americanised now. Their spelling is atrocious. They cannot express themselves properly, it's "like" this and "like" that … and "awesome" this and "awesome" that … they are not articulate … it's sad to see.

Extract 99. Ingrid – A lack of reading and the influence of technology

Maybe I have higher expectations to what children can really deliver today? I think the level is going down maybe because children don't read much anymore, because of the influence of technology, because of Americanisation of the language … also the number of foreigners in class makes me go at a slower pace. Plus children don't read anymore …they're always on Youtube!

Extract 100. Cynthia – The level in view of a free educational system

It varies immensely in my opinion. In the schools where I taught it was very low … you cannot generalise though, I guess it depends on the catchment area. The majority can

understand and speak basic English but having said that I was shocked to find out when I started teaching in government schools that young kids cannot understand almost basic things! Not basic as in "what's your name?", but pretty basic stuff which is shocking really! I don't know if the level is going down really, but it's not where it should be, especially with us having free education.

Extract 101. Jonathan – Children no longer read in a traditional way

I think it's going downhill because children do not read any more. Kind of ... perhaps they read but not in the traditional way ... they're always online! I can see from their spelling and creative writing. Students every year are doing worse.

Extract 102. Laura – A lack of reading as the root of all problems

In Malta the level of English has gone down. It's so low. It's unbelievable. Children don't read anymore. They don't read ... they spend time online and watching Youtube. They all want to become influencers or vloggers when they grow up. The level of spelling is atrocious ... it's terrible! The root is a lack of reading.

Wei (2016) sustains that new linguistic forms are often mediated by digital and mobile technology. Sultana and Dovchin (2017, p. 67) state that popular culture does not only provide young adults with entertainment, but also serves as "a means to borrow voices," through which youths express "various meanings and intentions". My participants however believe that as a result of popular culture, an increasing number of Maltese children are adopting an Americanised way of speaking and writing English.

Extract 103. Elaine – The over-use of slang

Unfortunately, I believe the level of English is regressing. Maybe due to over-exposure to games, television, etc. there is a lot of American slang influence, for example the overuse of words such as "gonna", "wanna", "I ain't", "OMG", "BTW", which is

affecting their spoken English, as well as their written English. Also, children are not reading as much as they used to. Obviously, this is my perspective based on the students at my school.

This data supports the idea that although both American and British English are valid language models, there seems to be a European academic bias towards the British model (Gilquin, 2018). In this respect, Bonnici (2010, p. 67) states that,

> the economic and political prowess of the United States as well as the large influx of American media in Malta and around the world is evidence of the potentiality of linguistic influence from American English dialects on European varieties of English. At the same time, the role of standard British English is still strong in Malta given its predominance as a written medium in school.

Gilquin (2018) notes an increasing American influence on the English language, as a result of popular culture. This influence may be stronger in countries such as Malta, where English is spoken as a second, rather than a foreign language because of the diverse contexts in which the English language is acquired and utilised. Gilquin sustains that "in ESL countries, English is an official or semi-official language that is used for intranational communication in settings like the administration or the media. People in these countries therefore receive English input in their everyday life, in contexts that are likely to be subject to the forces of globalisation" (p. 6). Gilquin specifically mentions the media's influence on language varieties, which is a characteristic of our globalised world. From a sociolinguistic perspective, changing linguistic patterns are linked to the construction of youth cultures, as a result of globalisation. One such example is the use of discourse markers of American origin such as "like", which are distinctive, communicative traits of young people (Harris, 2006).

Another factor to be taken into consideration when analysing the perceived decline of English level in Malta, is the variation of the English language spoken on the island. In many English bilingual countries, the pure, native English form of the language is usually tainted as a result of contemporary multilingualism (Kayman, 2004; Wei, 2016; Cenoz, 2019), and these variations are often erroneously considered to be a poor example of the English language (see Bonnici, 2010; Grech, 2015).

Another point which emerged was the fact that the level of English may also depend on one's educational and socio-economic background. These views echo beliefs and assumptions linked to language use and social class in Malta (Bonnici, 2010; Caruana, 2008; Vella, 2019).

Extract 104. Laura – Language and social circles

The thing is, it depends upon the social circle. We tend to find ourselves mixing in social circles where the level of English is pretty high. But if you branch out to another area, you'll realise how weak it really is. My husband comes home and tells me how astounded he is at how poor the level of English is amongst secretaries ... even colleagues at high managerial level ... they take ages to draft a proper email! They have great difficulty. I think it depends on which school they went to and which social circle they were brought up in.

Participants also mentioned the fact that notwithstanding their concerns about today's students' over-use of technology, they also believe that children are nowadays more digitally literate than ever before, and that this is in effect extremely beneficial in today's technology-dominated world. I shall be discussing this further in the next section 4.6.2 focusing on Challenges and Recommendations.

4.6.2 Subtheme: Challenges faced in today's schools, with recommendations at micro, meso and macro levels

The data focusing on recommendations for policy and practice strongly suggests that although my participants come from different backgrounds, and teach at different schools, they hold similar views on most of the topics discussed. Additionally, I believe that one positive feature of the data presented indicates that all my participants are evidently passionate about education, and genuinely wish to make a difference in their students' lives.

All participating teachers believe that Malta's educational system is currently at a crossroads, and that it needs to be restructured in a way to make it more enjoyable, relevant, and interest-based for our students. They feel that it needs to reflect the cultural and linguistic changes presently happening in our society and agree that their own teacher training was inadequate in view of the challenges encountered in today's schools. Additionally, they believe that they are not being offered enough support or training to meet the needs of today's diverse student population, and that initial teacher training programmes and continuous development sessions for experienced educators need to be restructured in ways relevant to the sociocultural changes taking place within our educational settings. My participants claim that through initial teacher training, and further professional development for experienced teachers, educators should be taught about current research on language practices, which would legitimise their naturally occurring language mixing practices. They also believe that they need to be offered clear guidelines focusing on flexible multilingual pedagogies.

Most of these teachers initially seemed to hold conflicting views towards flexible language use in the classroom, however upon closer inquiry, as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, I could observe that the majority of them are in actual fact naturally utilising translanguaging and linguistic mediation strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students,

however these are often employed as spontaneous coping strategies, rather than intentionally planned pedagogy. In this regard, García (2019) claims that,

> translanguaging discourse … simply exists in classrooms, … despite type of program, language policy, subject instruction, or age and type of learners and teachers. By giving voice to translanguaging, the classroom discourse attests to its presence, despite the tensions that it sometimes produces among students, educators, and policymakers (p. 371).

Cenoz (2017) claims that bridging the gap between teacher devised pedagogical translanguaging and the spontaneous translanguaging occurring naturally within multilingual environments may be the way forward in the field of multilingual education. Scaglione and Caruana (2018, p. 148) describe educational contexts where pupils are "free to use any element of their [language] repertoire", as ideal. Educators need to be equipped with the knowledge to be able to judiciously switch between languages to ensure that the quality of language input is not affected (Mifsud and Vella, 2018b; Vella, Mifsud and Muscat, 2018), but also to ensure that comprehension, communication, and ultimately learning, are in no way compromised as a result of language barriers. García's (2009, p. 79) concept of transglossia, where different languages are "in functional interrelationship, instead of being assigned separate function" is the way forward within today's globalised societies.   Educators need to explore new methods in order to "benefit from the linguistic hybridity of the 21st century" (García, 2005, p. 605). Fluid language practices are also ways in which to preserve minority languages (García et al., 2006).   Language is at the heart of learning and as one of my participants aptly worded it "*It's like you're going to a new job without the proper tools. Before you can learn any subject, you need the tools to understand it … that tool is language*".

My participants' conflicting views about hybrid language practices offer an insight on what influences teacher identities and pedagogies. Primarily, I could observe that their perceived methods of teaching are very much linked to their personal language backgrounds and to the methods passed on to them during their initial teacher training. Secondly, their lack of knowledge about current language learning methods often impacts their views on how to effectively engage in flexible language strategies for the benefit of their students. Additionally, it appears that educators are not actively agentive in their choice of pedagogy in the classroom, as they question whether they are using the right methods, and seek "approval", rather than being decisive about what they believe is right for their student population. Trent (2017) states that teachers often find themselves caught in between the discourses of teaching as an individual accomplishment, where decisions are taken in view of what they believe would provide better outcomes for their students, and teaching as a community accomplishment, where teaching is aligned in accordance to values and practices endorsed by third parties. This was also apparent in the educators' comments about constantly changing educational reforms which are proving to be major challenge for our educators. Laura believes that they need adequate training and time to practise and test new methods, before being asked to alter these to something different.

Extract 105. Laura – The effect of constant reform

There are so many different opinions and things are constantly changing. We are to do it one way, then all of a sudden we are told to scrap the whole idea and do something completely different. It's mind-boggling.

My participants also spoke about what they deem to be excessively crammed curricula and syllabi. Despite their own efforts to include innovative and creative methods in their classrooms, my participants still feel constrained due to crammed curricula and syllabi, some material of which is obsolete, and which favours more traditional approaches. Maria believes

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that although syllabi have recently been narrowed down, there is still room for improvement. Mandy also believes that there is too much content that needs to be covered. She evaluates our educational system against what is being done in some Nordic countries, voicing her concerns about the pressure that we are putting on children in Malta.

Extract 106. Mandy – Less focus on examinations

I think the syllabus needs to be changed ... watered down. We need to provide children with more opportunities to apply concepts ... to actually provide children with an education that would be practical, where they can put what they learn into use. Take the Finnish education ... and other Nordic countries. They don't start formal schooling until "xi" (around) *age 7 or 8, and they don't sit for exams until they finish school at around 16 years of age. And yet they have one of the best Educational systems in Europe! "Aħna"* (we), *on the other hand "naħsbu li aħjar minn kullħadd"* (we think we are better than everyone). *We start formal reading and writing at age 4 or 5 and then we start them off with a lifetime of assessments and exams. Even the parents "iffissati"* (they're obsessed). *They think exams are the end all and be all of life!*

Similarly, Diana voiced her concerns about too much content which needs to be covered. She believes that it would be more beneficial for children to learn fewer topics and develop mastery, rather than learning more topics without acquiring proper knowledge and skills. She advocates setting goals for children which they are encouraged to reach at their own pace.

Extract 107. Diana – Less content and different outputs

We need more resources. We need less content. We know we need to cover all the content even if the children didn't master it ... you have to go on! This needs to change. You set limits and standards yes but not grouped by age. Everyone gets it in their own time. Within say ten years, the children need to get this ... they need to master such

and such skills ... but over a span of time. Each child at their own pace. Even the

lesson. It could still be a whole class approach, but the task given to them would depend

on their level. You need different outputs, different resources used.

My participants believe that teachers' creativity and innovation are being stifled due to too much content, and prescribed material which is sometimes out-dated. This is because educators,

> are sometimes under intense scrutiny and follow highly scripted curricula and rigid
>
> schedules. They must dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort to prepare
>
> children for high-stakes assessments, which might affect their opportunities for critical
>
> review of their own practices and externally imposed policies (Mifsud and Vella,
>
> 2018a, p. 273).

However, regardless of school directives and education policies, there is always room for negotiation of teaching methods (Menken and García, 2010), and teachers need to be made more aware of this. The lack of power which teachers have over educational policies could also be observed in the comments related to the rapidly changing instructions given to educators. Teachers feel at a loss when they would have acclimatised to one new method, and they are suddenly asked to "scrap it completely" and change pedagogy. Priestley et al. (2012) sustain that within the Anglophone world, years of educational policy have attempted to enforce changes on schools, a practice which is often trying on practitioners, as "work has intensified, paperwork and bureaucracy have increased, and teachers have felt increasingly disempowered and professionally marginalised" (p. 3).   The concerns voiced by my participants are mirrored by Ariza et al., (2019), who believe that challenges encountered in today's classrooms, with particular focus on those related to teaching migrant children, "make

the case for autonomy in curriculum decision making during in-service teacher training as well as push-in instruction support more urgent" (p. 217).

My participants feel that there are numerous concerns related to our educational system, and they believe that these need to be tackled to ensure an effective education for all. Educators mentioned the need to focus on interest-based learning approaches, and to give vocational subjects more importance, thus ensuring that children are given ample prospects to succeed in different areas. Cynthia feels very strongly about incorporating the children's interest in their learning, a practice which she feels motivates them to learn better. She also thinks that vocational subjects should be given due importance.

Extract 108. Cynthia – Interest-based learning

I mean, I believe that in general people learn when you are teaching them something that they value, no matter what you're trying to teach them, so even when I'm planning my lessons, and I have something difficult or boring to teach them, I try to do so in a context that appeals to them ... so that I think would be effective ... something that is interesting and they can relate to ... you try to use it so that they can relate to it as a starting point. So even if the students are obsessed with horses ... you try to teach them something through horses for example ... you try to teach it through that. I don't know how exactly it can be done, but definitely students are more often than not being pushed too much towards academic subjects ... the so called smart subjects ... and in reality there are so many other skills that are worth learning and the students have aptitudes for. I've seen it in class and they're lost ... they're not harnessed at all. I'm not saying that you open a school for children who are not performing well academically to be placed there because that would not work. Then it would get a bad reputation and we would go back to the days of streaming. It would defeat the purpose. Sometimes there are students that have a passion for other subjects which are not considered to be as

important. If people worked at what they're passionate about, the world would be perfect. We're like forcing them to learn things which they might not be able to comprehend ... it's true unfortunately there's this mentality that you can do everything ... unfortunately it's not true. You can't always excel at everything. I've accepted it about myself there are some things that unfortunately you cannot do, and others which you might excel at. Why are we scared to tell students ... this is not for you but you are excellent at this ... we harness that ... you see what they are passionate about ... what their physical and natural skills are and harness those to their and our advantage.

My participants also feel that there is a demand to transition from equal to equitable learning opportunities, where students are immersed in differentiated learning environments with different outputs for different abilities. Diana strongly advocates methods focusing on differentiation. She recommends the development of practices built on the concept of guided reading, in order to guarantee that all children are learning at their own pace.

Extract 109. Diana – Guided methodology of teaching

I think it should not be abided by year groups so that teachers would have ample time to differentiate and check levels. We do guided reading at school, and it helps because you start off at the level the child is comfortable in, and we should take it a step further and go into guided methodology of teaching in general, not just reading. Obviously, it is all still about differentiation. Mainly, you would need more human resources because you're teaching smaller groups and a proper assessment tool ... not for exams "ta" (you know), *but to check their level so you know from where to start.*

Laura's ideas are comparable to Diana's, as she strongly believes in teaching children at their own pace, where they can master a set of skills, before moving on to a new topic.

Extract 110. Laura – Skipping fundamental steps in the foundation years

The realisation that we cannot skip any steps especially in the foundation years. We are seeing so many children who are going up on crippled legs all the way through school and it's difficult to get it back. They need to learn step by step. Everything has to be done well. They need to be taught properly. Breaking it down at all levels. We need more time. Less rush in the early years. True, some children would be able to grasp it quicker, but having more exposure will not harm anyone, so that way we are tackling the large number who are being left behind because it is taken for granted that they will catch up.

These methods however necessitate a watering down of syllabi, less focus on standardised tests and more focus on formative, rather than summative assessments, together with more meaningful play and interest-based learning opportunities.

Both Jonathan and Ingrid believe in the importance of fun activities and play-based learning.

Extract 111. Jonathan – Putting the fun into learning

More listening comprehensions, more oral component, more exposure to children's literature. Let's spend a large amount of time reading and strengthening comprehension skills. This could be done creatively through texts and online activities, and music and poetry … but we need time to do this. We need to put the fun into learning rather than obsess on examining everything!

Extract 112. Ingrid – Play based lessons

I think that making the lessons interesting and fun based, especially within the primary is fundamental. Children relate better to what they find interesting. It is a good starting point for any lesson, but even more so for language learning.

The need for more physical and human resources, multimodal teaching, together with smaller class populations were also mentioned. My participants believe that human resources should be given priority, such as more classroom assistants to enable smaller group instruction and differentiated learning strategies.

The majority of the participating teachers strongly believe that language teaching should focus more on the communicative aspect, and less so on grammar taught out of context. Reducing content, especially that which is not relevant in today's world, is another suggestion made by participants.

Extract 113. Maria – Grammar in context

It doesn't make sense if you're doing four grammar lessons a week and then one reading lesson. Exposure is very important. Grammar is boring. A lot of teachers think that because they're seeing blank faces they're not retaining, but they're being exposed ... we need to apply grammar in context. In a sense the aim is already there ... exposing them to the language, getting them to love the language other than grammar. We are very much aware of what needs to be done.

Ingrid also believes that we need to teach children functional language skills which will enable them to communicate effectively in their everyday lives.

Extract 114. Ingrid – Focusing on the functionality of language

I think we need to change our mindset. We need to focus more on the functionality of language so more emphasis needs to be given to oral skills and digital literacy. I think we need to stop focusing so much on grammar and on obsolete things such as teaching children letter writing ... who the hell writes letters nowadays? I mentioned penpals to my students the other day ... they looked at me with blank faces! Yet it is still part of the creative writing genres children need to learn for their Benchmarks (National end

of primary benchmark exam). *It's ridiculous. And there is no choice in genre in the Long Writing section of the exam ... so if for example this year writing a letter comes out in the examination ... it's a choice between a letter and a letter ... ridiculous! Also, there are 20 marks allocated to the oral component of the exam. I think this needs to increase. Children should be taught how to write to reflect the reality of today's world. Let's teach them how to write a blog or a book review for example, instead of a letter or a notice which they will never need to use in their every day lives you see ...*

Both Jonathan and Mandy concur with this view as they also think that we need to focus more on functional and pragmatic language skills.

Extract 115. Jonathan – Teaching the children the skills that they need

I think we need to give the children the opportunity to practice the language in every day situations. Practical stuff. Being proficient in grammar is not enough. It is not even necessary unless they use the grammar well in their every day lives. I think we should focus on teaching the children the skills that they need nowadays more than focusing on things they won't be using! Why teach them to write a letter when nobody writes letters anymore? I haven't written a letter in years! Emails yes, messages yes ... notes ... Why give them passages of texts that do not interest them? Work on their interests ... writing blogs maybe ... or interviews ... what makes them tick!

Extract 116. Mandy - Children need be provided with a practical education

One good thing is that now we are moving towards applying grammar in context. That is brilliant. I used to have students who would excel in a grammar exercise. "Kollox tajjeb!" (Everything correct). *They would write "per eżempju"* (for example) *catch – caught in a past tense exercise. They would then write 'catched' in a creative writing*

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exercise ... or when speaking ... over and over again! Grammar out of context does not work.

There is also a general perception that we should encourage children to write creatively, without assessing them every step of the way, especially in the early years..

Extract 117. Maria – Let children express themselves in the early years

I think maybe the younger years ... don't focus on their writing too much ... more as a free writing exercise. Mux (not) *focus on every word, every grammar point, every full stop, capital letter, testing everything. Let them try to express themselves, write freely, especially in the younger years!*

This style of education is supported by García's 2009 advocacy of combining language and content in meaningful, relevant, and pragmatic ways. Creating sound literacy rich environments was also advocated by the participating educators.   These results evidence that within the primary years, a love for language should be transmitted though interesting and fun learning opportunities, and through the use of classic literature, fairy tales, nursery rhymes and songs.

The provision of literacy rich environments through exposure to nursery rhymes, classic literature, and fairy tales, to foster a love for reading were mentioned by Maria, Elaine, and Jonathan. Reading aloud to older students was also mentioned and research shows that it is beneficial on many levels (Ariail and Albright, 2005).

Extract 118. Maria – Transmitting a love for books

A lot of it (exposure to the language) *is about getting them to love the language ... stories, singing etc. Here we try to be balanced. We are introducing classics as readers too. We've introduced The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, we are also reading something by Michael Morpurgo ... we have a mix. We read them in class. I read to*

them sometimes, time permitting. They love it even though they are older. We do little literature exercises. At least they're reading these books – for some children these are the only books they will read throughout the year.

Extract 119. Elaine – The importance of nursery rhymes and classic tales

I would create a very structured, yet comprehensive language learning programme, starting from KG level. It would include a substantial dose of phonological awareness including, but not limited to nursery rhymes ... something which seems to have been put aside ... I'm going off track here ... but children are not being exposed to nursery rhymes, a good number of children do not know the classic stories ... Snow White, Cinderella and the like ... it is indeed a pity. Children are missing out. Well, that is my opinion. A language programme including nursery rhymes ... which are an asset to the development of phonological awareness skills. I would provide ample opportunities for the children to engage in discussion and meaningful play ... to engage in meaningful reading and to develop a love for reading.

My educators shared their views on the importance of strengthening English language proficiency, which they feel is on the decline as a result of a lack of reading and excessive technology use, however, they also believe that it is equally important to preserve and guarantee the survival of our linguistic heritage by providing equal space for both our national languages in class. My participants believe that children should be equally exposed to both languages, and to be taught to be proud of our bilingual legacy. They also believe that Maltese should be given its due importance, since we risk losing a very essential part of our identity, however, they also feel that English language teaching should be strengthened, in view of the declining levels they are observing.

Extract 120. Maria– Equal quantity and quality of language lessons

In an ideal world you would have to plan out carefully that both languages are given an equal amount of lesson time. But even the quality needs to be the same!

Extract 121. Mandy – Children need to be proud to be bilingual

I think in an effective bilingual education, there has to be full immersion in both languages and teachers need to transmit a love for both languages too … so children need to be aware of the importance of both English and Maltese. They need to appreciate and value and be proud too … proud to be bilingual. It is not just about speaking two languages … it is so much more than that. There's a whole history of our country linked to that … I don't think children realise this.

Jonathan also believes that we need promote both languages in class, but he also stated that additionally, we need to ensure the preservation of the Maltese language.

Extract 122. Jonathan – The importance of preserving our language

I think we should encourage the use of both languages. We should value both languages and work towards improving them both, and also keeping our Maltese language because I think that children are also suffering in Maltese. I am afraid we will lose it. It's happening already. Sometimes I watch TV and it's unbelievable how we're bastardising our language.

Laura feels that children should be exposed to both languages, however, reiterates her previous ideas about switching languages. She also mentions the importance of the English language in education and sustains that teachers should seek parental involvement, especially in view of the value of the English language.

Extract 123. Laura – Advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism

I think an effective education would include having exposure to both languages and the chance to be fluent in both. There are no disadvantages to being bilingual unless one language takes over. The advantages are enormous to be fluent in both. The disadvantage would be if you need to speak in one language and keep on reverting to the other. The most important thing I believe, is to make parents realise how important it is for a child to grow up having a good command of the English language. It will not only help them in the language but also to pursue all their studies. They would be able to write a great Environmental essay, a great Biology essay. They would have a great advantage at every subject, so making the parents understand that it is really beneficial would help. Some parents don't understand. They think it's fine to just get it from school and that's it. Their level of education obviously makes a great difference too. Ideally parents would speak to them in both languages, but they're exposed to English in the wrong way.

This view is also supported by Jonathan, who thinks that parents should also be informed of current teaching methods, as he believes that parental involvement is correlated with children's academic success.

Additionally, although my participants believe that nowadays, children are overly immersed in technology, and that this may be hindering them academically, they believe that that traditional learning methods could eventually make way for digital learning and educational technology, and that this necessitates educators to leverage, rather than resist this phenomenon.

Extract 124. Mandy – Digital literacy at the expense of other areas

They are weak in many areas, their spelling is atrocious, but to be fair, their computer skills are amazing. I feel like an idiot in comparison. But this is at the expense of everything else.

Extract 125. Ingrid – Leveraging technology skills

I think teachers need to accept these new realities and work on ways to leverage their amazing tech skills. I mean digital literacy is very important today. It's the new education perhaps. Perhaps we are not channelling the children's skills in the right direction. It's not easy. Sometimes ... anzi (actually) *most times ... they know more than us. Plus, things are constantly changing. It's difficult to keep up.*

The data collection period of my research project was concluded prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the data analysis phase actually coincided with this global crisis. Although remote teaching and learning have currently replaced face-to-face education only as a crisis response, I could also effectively link my research results to the way schools have rapidly evolved and transitioned online in an unprecedented manner. Children's digital skills have actually proven to be extremely advantageous, rather than a hindrance during this crisis, since these enabled students to quickly grasp and transition to online learning, having already been fully conversant with information and communications technology. Therefore, it is becoming more apparent that channelling children's excellent digital skills appropriately is indeed imperative in the 21st century, as digital learning is fast reshaping education in a variety of ways (Mulenga and Marbán, 2020). The pandemic was in effect a catalyst which required students, teachers, and parents to embrace and harness digitally enhanced pedagogies, and it seems that these will continue to be pivotal in educating future generations. Therefore, it is also worth considering that educators need to be further supported to incorporate digitally enhanced technology, and to gradually transition to blended learning models of education.

The increase in multilingual classrooms has created diverse learning environments for both students and teachers, and my participants are all in agreement about the challenges that they feel they are encountering as they strive to reach out to all their students, including, but not limited to language barriers (please refer to section 4.5 – Multilingual Classrooms, in this chapter).

Elaine compares the frustration that some children probably experience when being fully immersed in a language they don't understand, to her own experience as a young student learning a foreign language.

Extract 126. Elaine – Using the native language as a tool to learn the second language

I think that in reality both students and teachers feel more at ease knowing that it is ok to use their native language sometimes. More than feeling at ease, I think that using the native language as a tool to learn the second language helps them learn more effectively. I remember when I used to learn French at school, the approach was full immersion, but I found it extremely difficult to cope. Instead of trying to use the cues to learn it, I completely switched off when it came to that lesson. For me it was as good as nothing ... perhaps even worse, because I remember being very frustrated ... not to mention that unfortunately I barely learnt anything in three years.

The data suggest that teachers believe that Initial Teacher Education programmes and professional development sessions for established educators need to be rethought in ways to support professionals within an ever-changing society. Linguistic diversity calls for teachers to be prepared for the new reality that challenges the education system, curricula, pre-service and in-service teacher training, since teachers do not feel that they are suitably skilled to deal with these rapid changes (Scaglione and Caruana, 2018; Bonello, 2020). The results of my study are in line with the Council of Europe's Framework of Teacher Competences for

Engaging with Diversity, (2010), in the European Commission's, (2017) report on Preparing Teachers for Diversity and the role of Initial Teacher Education (p. 25), which highlights the following as key areas which teachers should acquire, amongst others:

- Knowledge of the range of teaching approaches, methods, and materials,

- Recognising and responding to the communicative and cultural aspects of language (s) used in school,

- Involving parents in school activities and collective decision-making,

- Addressing socio-cultural diversity in curriculum and institutional development,

- Establishing a participatory, inclusive, and safe learning environment,

- Selecting and modifying teaching methods for the learning needs of pupils,

- Using a variety of approaches to culturally sensitive teaching and assessment,

- Systematic self-reflection and self-evaluation of teachers' practice.

This should also include further training in the area of Language Acquisition, since bilingual speakers in Malta are often unaware of their personal language acquisition process, which may well prove beneficial when supporting multilingual students in their care (Ariza, Calleja, and Vasallo Gauci, 2019). Additionally, the results of this study indicate that there is a need for expert guidance and support in extending García's (2009) concept of transglossia to include pupils' native languages, as educational settings which cherish and value different languages, improve children's self-esteem, encourage integration within their communities, build cultural identities and ultimately contribute to children's academic success.

Notwithstanding the fact that additional teacher training and professional development in certain areas is definitely required, it is interesting to note that the teachers participating in my study did not demonstrate much initiative in pursuing intrinsically motivated self-directed learning, but rather "expected" to be provided training by the state, or through school led in-

service courses. This is indicative of a culture where professional development usually serves a means to an end (usually career development), and where training is usually provided by third parties. The Accelerated Progression Scheme for Teachers, developed by the Ministry of Education in 2018, is one such example, where a defined number of hours of professional development, or pursuing a Masters, or Doctoral degree leads to career progression and/or salary advancement. This mentality could also be linked to Malta's culture of competitive achievement, where, as indicated by the participants of my study themselves, the educational system is heavily reliant on examinations, thus based on extrinsic, rather than intrinsic motivation. The findings of my study, therefore indicate that Maltese teachers do not generally pursue independent learning unless it reaps tangible rewards such as promotion or a salary increase, and hence I believe that there may be a need to change this mindset through the promotion of more self-directed learning for personal satisfaction and growth, and/or simply to keep abreast with current trends, which is imperative in today's ever-changing learning scenario.

Human resources such as the employment of a more linguistically diverse teacher workforce was another recommendation which emerged from my data. Mandy believes that native language or subject teachers could be one solution to the decline in English proficiency amongst children. Similarly, Jonathan and Elaine are both of the opinion that teachers need to be either native speakers or very proficient in the language because they are role models, passing on their knowledge and attitudes towards the language.

> Extract 127. Mandy – Native speakers and specialised teachers to teach in English at primary level

> *I think being bilingual as teachers helps us in ways because we can help speakers of both languages and promote values towards both languages. However, sometimes it can be a problem because many teachers tend to switch languages, or else they are not*

confident in one. This I can see with English. Some teachers don't use proper pronunciation, then it is very difficult or children to unlearn bad habits! I think teachers who are native speakers or subject teachers who are specialised might be better to teach English ... especially the junior years and middle school.

This is in line with Ariza et al.'s (2019) description of an ideal scenario where "bilingual teachers … are proficient in the multitude of languages students speak" (p. 220). Diversifying the teacher workforce is hence one way "to help students bridge between home and school experiences" (Martin and Strom, 2016, p. 29). The European Commission's (2017) report on Preparing Teachers for Diversity and the role of Initial Teacher Education, states that notwithstanding the diversity of student populations, "the teaching population remains largely homogenous and lacks experience in teaching in diverse schooling environments" (p. 20). European education systems, including Malta also find the recruitment of teachers from migrant backgrounds a challenging task (European Commission, 2019a).

Language maintenance programmes should be available in schools in order to preserve heritage languages. Parental involvement was also recommended by my participants as a possible way in which to tap into the community and mitigate these challenges, even though due to linguistic and cultural barriers, this may not be easy to achieve. Additionally, teachers also mentioned educational programmes for parents which would inform them about innovative educational methods, together with others focusing on the inclusion and integration of migrant students. Parents and the public in general need to be educated with a focus on eradicating racial intolerance with the aim of creating a more inclusive society, and which would in turn foster a respect for diversity in our children.

The results of my study therefore indicate that harnessing community resources, may also be one way to promote effective student integration and learning. This corroborates Moll's (2015)

recommendations to "[engage] teachers strategically within their cultural environments for teaching – an absolute necessity in today's rapidly changing sociocultural contexts of schooling" (p. 114). According to Facciol et al. (2015), one factor that can act as language barrier to migrant learners is a lack of parental involvement. However, this is not always easy to achieve due to language and cultural barriers, together with issues related to "entitlement gaps", since Maltese parents may feel it is their right to be actively involved in their children's education, whilst migrant parents may not "feel empowered enough to do so" (Attard Tonna et al., 2017, pp. 86 - 87). Ariza (2000) cautions against misinterpretations of behaviour as a result of linguistic or cultural differences. Parental involvement in education, for instance, is largely considered to be typically expected and accepted within westernised societies, nonetheless, conversely, migrant parents "do not appear to involve themselves in their children's education because they are not aware of, do not practice, or are uncomfortable with, this cultural expectation" and are therefore considered to be apathetic or uninterested in their offspring's academic progress (p. 36 – 37). This situation hence also necessitates additional teacher training on issues related to immigrant children's parental involvement (Ariza, Calleja, and Vasallo Gauci, 2019). Parental involvement could also include educational programmes for parents focusing on current pedagogy, the inclusion and integration of migrant learners, eradicating racial intolerance and fostering a respect for diversity. This is in line with the notion that discrimination, xenophobia, exclusion and racism need to be eliminated from schools, and the country in general (Facciol et al., 2015; European Commission, 2017), where the integration of citizens and migrants goes beyond ethnic, cultural and religious differences (Attard Tonna et al., 2017).

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings, analysis and discussions of my study related to my research questions. The data was presented through rich quotes from the transcriptions, which provided

me with key findings on how Maltese primary school teachers' experiences related to their bilingual identities impact their current pedagogical perceptions and perceived practices, together with a focus on demographic changes and multilingual classrooms. These results have also offered insights into additional challenges encountered in today's classrooms, which although to some extent, may be considered outside the main scope of my study, I feel also warrant a mention as subsidiary, but equally salient findings.

Underpinned by the theoretical foundations of Social Constructionist and Transformative Interpretative frameworks, together with Bilingualism/Multilingualism, Teacher Cognition and Language Acquisition Theories, the key findings presented in this chapter posit that educators' language choices and language pedagogies are often linked to their previous personal and professional experiences. As a result of rapidly changing demographics and an ongoing paradigm shift in education, my participants are feeling insufficiently equipped on a professional level, to effectively mitigate the challenges which they are regularly facing in their classrooms. The results indicate that educators require additional training in the field, both in initial teacher education and continuous professional development, "to maximise the potential of multilingualism and multiculturalism, and to provide their students with a socially just, culturally responsive education for the benefits of all their students alike" (Panzavecchia and Little, 2020, p.111). This can be achieved through innovative pedagogies which may include cross-linguistic strategies, programmes that endorse the preservation of the Maltese language, programmes that endorse the universal value of English as lingua franca, and school environments which support, value and nurture children's own cultural identities and linguistic heritage. Additionally, the findings evidence that there is a lack of teacher agency, both over their classroom practices and over their own professional learning. Teachers need to be given more power over decision-making related to curricula, syllabi, and teaching methods to meet the requirements of all the children in their care.

The next chapter will conclude this study by answering the research questions through a reflection of the major findings presented in this chapter. Additionally, in view of these findings, key recommendations to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners are made, and a set of guidelines is presented. Finally, suggestions for future research, and the identified limitations of this research project will be reviewed.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous sections have discussed the salient themes that emerged from the interviews with the study's participants. A detailed analysis of the main themes has been presented, and these have in turn been linked to existing research on the subject. This research is a representation of my participants' views and perceived practices related to language use and teaching. I am confident that this work has provided insights into the current linguistic landscape of Malta, our schools, and the ways in which teachers' language biographies impact their perspectives and pedagogies. Within the parameters of this research, I hope that language education in Malta will benefit from my participants' contributions, and that the proposed recommendations and guidelines would be valuable to future policy making processes.

In this chapter I will focus on how the elicited data has contributed to answering my research questions. Subsequently I will make recommendations for policy and practice, and present a set of guidelines, the primary aim of which is an equitable education for all the students in our care. Finally I will discuss the strengths and limitations of this study, reflect on my doctoral journey, and propose areas for future research.

5.2 Reflection on Key Findings to Address Research Questions

Following the detailed analysis of data presented in the previous chapter, I shall now present a reflection of the major findings through which I shall be answering my research questions.

5.2.1 Research question 1

Have Maltese primary school teachers' own personal and professional experiences related to bilingual identity and language use shaped their pedagogy in any way?

My first research question sought to explore my participants' biographies, to discover the relationship between their own personal and professional experiences related to their bilingual identities, language use, and their perceived classroom practice. The results of my study, as elaborately discussed in Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Results, indicate that educators' language choices and language pedagogies are often linked to their previous personal and professional experiences. This can be observed through the extensive transcriptions of my participants' discourse, presented in the previous chapter, highlighting how these experiences often leave an indelible mark. This is because social context, language dominance, linguistic competence, emotional and affective factors, together with the family background and linguistic views of my participants are all influential in their language preference and use both in and outside of the classroom. Hence the data emerging from my interviews accentuates Malta's socio-linguistic situation, which is heavily influenced by a person's culture and background.

Although the bilingual linguistic situation in Malta does not classify either of the two languages as high or low function, the results of my study nonetheless indicate that English is highly valued for its importance in education and employment, and that this notion is often implicitly carried into the classroom and transmitted to our students. The inherent, albeit unspoken notion of language divide in Malta is also acknowledged by my participants, who generally inherited ideas related to an elitist preference for the English language, or a language purist partiality for Maltese, from their families. This legacy often had implications on the teachers' views on language, language practice, confidence, and proficiency - ideas which are inevitably part of the baggage they also carry into the teaching profession. My participants' own education from primary to tertiary, together with their own teaching experiences, and professional development are also influential in their linguistic preferences and pedagogical choices.

The results of my study thus conclude that the use of language within bilingual and multilingual educational contexts is closely linked to educators' personal beliefs, attitudes, identities, learning experiences and social backgrounds. My interviewees' own dominance in either of the two languages, particular preferences over language use, and the ubiquitous practice of codeswitching employed by the majority of bilingual speakers, all naturally impinge on their linguistic interactions in class.

However, one point which emerged throughout the course of my research substantiates the fact that identity is not static, but rather dynamic and fluid. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that my participants' views and linguistic traits are often moulded by their personal, educational, and professional experiences, it is interesting to note that these had also been reshaped throughout the course of their lives, as a result of new experiences, encounters and events. Additionally, it could be observed that notwithstanding some voiced reservations linked to multilingual pedagogy, my participants are still willing to keep an open-mind on the subject, and are eager to explore innovative methods, as long as they are given appropriate training and support.

5.2.2 Research question 2

What are the participants' current perceived practices and perceptions of using codeswitching and translanguaging strategies in bilingual ELT classrooms? What benefits, if any, are associated with their use?

My second research question focused on my participants' experience of bilingual and multilingual classrooms, their views on cross-linguistic pedagogy, and if/how they believe they were implementing this in their everyday classroom practice. My participants' views on cross-linguistic practices in the classroom are contradictory in nature. They acknowledge that codeswitching and by extension, translanguaging, are natural and spontaneous occurrences in

class. They also admit that they could recognise the potential benefits of multilingual strategies, mentioning the following as potential advantages:

- One way of reaching out to students who are experiencing linguistic difficulties in English, Maltese, or another language.

- A reflection and recognition of the constant interplay between Maltese and English.

- Enabling children to "feel safe" within the classroom environment.

- Fostering integration and inclusion.

- Encouraging children to express themselves and participate more during lessons.

- Celebrating students' identities.

- Reaching out to migrant learners.

The teachers however also admitted to experiencing feelings of guilt when employing such strategies and endeavoured to do so only when absolutely necessary. They felt unsure of how to implement these practices, and whether it was in fact recommended to adopt these concepts as pedagogy, believing that they were not skilled enough to do so appropriately, thus highlighting the need for further training in the area. The majority of my participants were not familiar with the concept of translanguaging itself, which is perhaps indicative of a lack of awareness and training on relevant and current topics, be it through organised continuous professional development, or self-directed learning. Nonetheless throughout the course of the interviews, it became apparent that both teachers and their students were utilising translanguaging strategies spontaneously at some point throughout their English language lessons and beyond.

Therefore, in conclusion, it is evident that my participants and their students are naturally utilising cross-linguistic methods (including translanguaging) in class, and that teachers are aware of the many benefits that these practices may have on education. However, there are

incongruences between their views on the subjects and what they are actually practising at school. Notwithstanding the fact that they acknowledge that cross-linguistic practices do occur instinctively in the classroom, and although they recognise the beneficial effects of such practices, the majority of my participants still hold negative attitudes related to codeswitching and translanguaging, and experience feelings of doubt when utilising these methods in class. This is possibly stemming from the general stigma attached to the mixing of languages, and their own schooling and initial teacher education. This study also indicates the need for further support and professional training on the subject as an issue which needs to be addressed.

5.2.3 Research question 3

What recommendations can be made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners in view of these findings?

My third research question is answered through the development of a list of recommendations and guidelines based on my participants' views and perceived experiences. The issue of teacher agency emerged strongly throughout the course of my research, where educators voiced their concerns about a lack of consultation regarding syllabi, curricula and pedagogy, the fact that they their opinions are seldom factored into decision-making on a national level, and how this is negatively impacting classroom practice.

The main findings of this work focus on my participants' concerns about their experience of the current challenges they are presently facing in class, particularly those related to language teaching and learning. The participants expressed concerns related to language barriers, lack of teacher training and professional development in the area, lack of teacher agency, outdated syllabi and curricula, a perceived decline in the level of the English language, and one-size-fits-all methods of teaching and assessment, amongst others. The study is stimulating change in our schools, with the aim of enhancing the overall experience of teachers and students alike.

A framework of guidelines and recommendations was formulated in an attempt to address these issues and to ameliorate aspects of bilingual and multilingual primary education in Malta.

The recommendations proposed are mainly a result of the data collected from my participants, as they shared their ideas, beliefs and perceived pedagogical practices in view of the bilingual and recently multilingual situation in our Maltese classrooms throughout the course of our lengthy discussions. My study is hence a representation of my participants' voices and views, and I am therefore committed to harness these very voices to bring about positive changes in the field. Many of the ideas proposed are a reflection of what my participants themselves believe they are utilising as classroom practice, as they voiced what strategies they are instinctively employing, including what they perceive to work and not work on a practical level, and what they believe needs to be done in order to improve their practice further. In addition to the ideas recommended by the participants themselves, I have also taken their voiced concerns into consideration. These concerns were shared by my participants during the interviewing process, where they spoke about areas in which they feel they are facing significant challenges, and in which they believe they require further support. Taking the challenges and demands of my participants into account, I endeavoured to find ways to address some of the issues detailed by the teachers themselves, through the research I conducted on the topic whilst compiling my literature review. I did this through analysing in depth where our local policies and documents fall short on offering concrete examples to support our practitioners, the practices which are being currently recommended and employed in Maltese schools, and how other bilingual and multilingual countries are utilising and managing flexible language practices within their schools. Throughout the course of my review of literature on the topic, I analysed a variety of international concrete examples of how this was being done in practice, and subsequently, amended these to suit the Maltese scenario, whilst combining them with the recommendations provided by my participants, thus ultimately developing

guidelines for practitioners, policy-makers and stakeholders, which are much needed as highlighted throughout the course of my research.

The recommendations and guidelines proposed therefore reflect the views and perceived experiences of my participants, whilst taking into account relevant theories of flexible language pedagogy, and international recommendations informed by evidence-based practice. I believe that these recommendations and guidelines are presented in a practical, clear manner, taking into account the professionals who would be employing them, together with the students who would be impacted by these measures. The recommendations listed in the following sections of this chapter, were therefore formed keeping in mind that they would have a possible effect on professional practice, and the design of professional development and initial teacher education programmes.

The proposed guidelines and recommendations are merely suggestions which have been driven by the views of the participants who have so generously accepted to share aspects of their personal and professional lives with me throughout the course of this study. These suggestions are by no means all encompassing, and it is therefore important to point out that these recommendations are merely a starting point and hopefully a catalyst for change, and that therefore additional research on the topic is highly recommended.

5.2.3.1 Recommendations for policy and practice: English language teaching

- The majority of Maltese schools teach English as a second language (ESL). Rapidly changing demographics necessitate a shift in pedagogy, where English as a foreign (EFL) or additional language (EAL) are also made available to students who are not fluent in the country's official languages. Some private independent schools in Malta already offer language teaching in this manner. However, this needs to be done in a balanced manner, otherwise it may have implications on inclusivity. Therefore,

children should still be grouped together for lessons as much as possible but divided into separate groups for certain tasks. Pull-out classes may be held sporadically for particular activities/tasks but should be the exception rather than the rule.

- The role of the two languages of instruction (Maltese and English) needs to be reconsidered. Cross-linguistic practices such as codeswitching and translanguaging can be harnessed to bridge existing language gaps.

- The idea that language teaching should be conducted monolingually, excluding L1 and focusing entirely on the target language is being challenged by more fluid and flexible approaches. Multilingual instructional strategies for the teaching of English need to be sought.

- Bilingual and multilingual instructional strategies need to consider that students build on their previous knowledge in order to acquire a new language, resulting in eventual language transfer. Therefore, the use of L1 in the English language classroom is necessary for this process to occur.

- The use of students' L1 in the classroom which supports and values their identities needs to be legitimised. This can be achieved through innovative pedagogies which may include multilingual strategies, programmes that endorse the preservation of the Maltese language, programmes that endorse the universal value of English as lingua franca, and school environments which support, value and nurture children's own cultural identities and linguistic heritage.

- This shift in pedagogy would entail curricular, syllabi, and assessment changes, together with training programmes at ITE (Initial Teacher Education) and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) levels.

- Restructuring language learning to focus more on the communicative aspect, on interest-based, functional, and relevant (as opposed to outdated) material, and on teaching and learning grammar in context. This would necessitate combining language and content in meaningful, relevant, and pragmatic ways.

- Restructuring assessment on creative writing to encourage children to express themselves more freely, and to foster a love for writing in our young learners.

- Creating sound literacy rich environments, where a love for language is transmitted through interest-based and fun learning opportunities, and through the use of classic literature, fairy tales, nursery rhymes and songs. Reading aloud should also be practised with children in the upper years of primary schooling, rather than just the early years.

- The use of multimodal texts, combining both written and spoken language, and where learning takes place through visual, audio, gestural, tactile and kinaesthetic means.

- Providing children with authentic and functional literacy resources, which would aid them when applying their language skills in context.

- Focusing on strengthening English language proficiency, through nurturing and promoting a love for reading, which may be on the decline as a result of excessive technology use. This can be done through the provision of a variety of high quality, relevant and interesting readers, and texts in class, and through creative literacy-based activities which would be planned to ignite a passion for reading in our students.

- Giving equal importance to English and Maltese, by providing equal space for both national languages in class. Whilst focusing on strengthening our L2, it is pivotal to strive to guarantee the survival of our linguistic heritage.

- Encouraging parental involvement by keeping them abreast of innovative teaching methods through parent meetings and educational talks/sessions, which could also be held online/recorded in order to reach out to a larger audience.

- Fostering a culture of systematic self-reflection and self-evaluation of practice, and the effect this has on learners.

5.2.3.2 Recommendations for policy and practice: Teacher education

- Initial teacher education programmes and professional development sessions for established educators need to be rethought in ways to support professionals within an ever-changing society. Particular focus on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching should be given main priority.

- Educators may be encouraged to learn an additional language in order to foster more language awareness amongst teaching professionals.

- Educators should be encouraged to include cross-linguistic practices, particularly translanguaging, as pedagogy (see section 5.2.3.4 Translanguaging guidelines in this chapter).

- Collaboration with other educators in Europe and beyond to share good practice may be a step in the right direction.

- More research on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is necessary, as to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject.

5.2.3.3 Recommendations for policy and practice: The way forward for Malta

A paradigm shift in education is necessary to bring about changes which would ensure inclusion, equality, and success for all our young learners. The following educational reforms which are being proposed by the participating educators in this study aim towards a more

holistic and inclusive view of teaching and learning, where all children are encouraged to reach their full potential in enjoyable and meaningful ways, and where diversity is viewed as an enrichment, rather than a hindrance through the following recommendations.

- Classrooms promoting and celebrating diverse language backgrounds.

- Classrooms as "safe spaces" where students are free to use any language they feel comfortable with.

- Less traditional, more flexible language practices in pedagogy.

- The provision of signage and short phrases in different languages in the classroom.

- More use of technology to mediate different languages (especially those languages which educators are unfamiliar with).

- The provision of bilingual/multilingual and multicultural books and resources.

- Multilingual and multicultural story telling (with various subtitles) to foster language awareness and to promote language maintenance.

- Basic multilingual greetings and commonly used phrases in the classroom for language awareness/appreciation, and for integration purposes.

- Mother-tongue instruction and heritage language maintenance programmes to value and celebrate each child's identity.

- Peer tutoring strategies for language mediation and support.

- The employment of a more linguistically and culturally diverse, suitably qualified teacher workforce.

- Harnessing on community resources such as involving parents as language ambassadors/assisting with language challenges and cultural understandings.

- Developing educational programmes for parents focusing on current pedagogy, the inclusion and integration of migrant learners, eradicating racial intolerance and fostering a respect for diversity.

- Countries facing similar challenges in their multilingual classrooms should work closely together in order to share good educational practices.

- The development of initial teacher education programmes and professional development sessions for established educators with the aim of developing a more culturally and linguistically responsive teacher workforce.

- A complete modification of present curricula, syllabi, and assessment methods (more flexible, fluid and suited to the needs of each individual student), to cater for the increasingly diverse student population.

- Nationwide campaigns aiming at educating the general public and educators about the child's right to education.

- Further investment (material and human resources) in schools to reflect changing demographics and the resulting paradigm shift in education.

- Campaigns to promote and give more importance to vocational subjects, to ensure that children are given ample opportunities to succeed in different areas.

- More focus on equitable rather than equal learning opportunities, where students are immersed in differentiated learning environments with different outputs for different abilities.

- Focusing on more meaningful play and interest-based learning opportunities in the Early Years and Primary Sectors.

- Smaller class populations to guarantee more individualised learning opportunities.

- Traditional learning methods to make way for digital learning and educational technology. The training requirements of our teacher workforce in this area need to be further addressed, hence educators need to be further supported to incorporate digitally enhanced technology, and to gradually transition to blended learning models of education. Teachers should be encouraged to leverage, rather than resist this phenomenon.

- Further training in the area of Language Acquisition since bilingual speakers in Malta are often not adequately knowledgeable of their own language acquisition process. This awareness is pivotal in order to support the multilingual students in their classrooms.

- More local and nation-wide campaigns aimed at encouraging self-sought professional development and self-directed learning to encourage teachers to keep abreast with current trends, which is imperative in today's ever-changing learning scenario.

5.2.3.4 Translanguaging guidelines

The following are guidelines for planning and implementing translanguaging pedagogy for language learning. These are ideas which are suitable to be used within early childhood and primary language programmes, and focus on the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), together with general recommendations for a successful multilingual classroom environment.

TRANSLANGUAGING GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (Adapted from Celic and Seltzer, 2011; Hesson, Seltzer, Woodley, 2014, and Daniel and Pacheco, 2016; García et al., 2017, together with findings from the present study).

LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	GENERAL
Provide children with songs and rhymes in multiple languages, through physical or online resources, or with the participation of the children and their families.

Encourage young children to engage in "show and tell" activities, or to participate during "circle time", in both languages.

Provide audio versions of books in both the home and target language. If these are not commercially available, teachers or other bilingual speakers could record | Encourage very young speakers of different languages to join forces for collaborative storytelling. This could be done with the aid of drawings, drama, dress-ups, crafts, roleplays, gestures, and songs.

Encourage children to use language in authentic ways during playtime. Model functional ways of using language to socialise, ask questions, express feelings, and solve problems.

Provide young children with a variety of nursery rhymes and songs in | Storytelling with young children can be done in multiple languages. This can be achieved with the help of multilingual speakers (such as parents), older peers at school, or through physical and online resources with subtitles.

Comprehension can be scaffolded through visual clues such as gestures, drama, photos, images, video clips, music, and oral translations.

Provide translations of books or a synopsis/summary of the story in student's home | Very young children can be encouraged to draw pictures and to label them or write short phrases/sentences in both languages.

Provide pictures of everyday items with spaces for young children to label them in both home and target language.

New vocabulary can be noted in the target language, and students can explain their understanding of the word in home language or through visuals (drawing, pasted pictures, photographs etc.)

Students can write main idea statements of a text in the target language but elaborate | Within Early Years environments, provide the children with toys and resources reflecting the children's diverse cultures and home languages. Tap into community resources where families can be asked to assist in selecting pretend foods, dress-up clothing, and playthings that encourage children to share their cultures and languages as they play.

Provide a variety of resources that support |

chapter summaries or a brief synopsis in the home language of books written in the target language. Students with low literacy levels should be encouraged to listen to audiobooks as they are following the text. This would help with comprehension whilst supporting their language learning. Allow children to take notes in their native language whilst listening to texts in the target language. Encourage children to engage in oral discussions and debates in both languages, with the final presentation being done in the target language.	different languages. Encourage the children to share traditional heritage language songs/rhymes with the rest of the class. Have multilingual students teach their peers a greeting or common phrase in their home language, practising regularly until the class is able to use a variety of multilingual greetings on a daily basis. This could also be done for verbal signals which are used in class to transition between activities. Speakers can read and discuss texts and books in both the native and target language. When students read texts and books in the target language, encourage them	languages whenever possible. Use bilingual dictionaries or picture dictionaries for younger learners, when learning new vocabulary. Create reading groups that are conducive to translanguaging practices. Encourage the children to preview the text in their home language whenever possible, prior to reading the text in the target language in class. Subsequently, the children are encouraged to discuss it in either language with same language peers. Guided reading groups could be grouped to include children with diverse language backgrounds, same language pairs, or switching group members half-way through the	in the home language for their own understanding. Encourage children to write about their language biography using examples of language use in their writing. Encourage children to write a journal entry about their use of languages at home with their families, at school with their teachers and peers, and in other contexts within the community, providing examples when possible. Provide opportunities for students to brainstorm ideas for creative writing tasks in home language. This can be done individually or in same language pairs/groups. Draft writing assignments in home language, and work with a peer/teacher or through the use of online dictionaries/translators to	multimodal learning and translanguaging, such as audio, video, and tangible resources. Harness community resources such as migrant family members to act as language ambassadors, to assist with transitions, or to share cultural backgrounds and language awareness. Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting and other curriculum-related activities. Provide students with a multilingual

Bring in multilingual community members to talk about their experiences, traditions, and culture, together with teaching the children a few commonly used phrases in their home language.	to have discussions about main characters, plots, and themes in both native and target languages. Discuss texts or schoolwork/homework tasks with same language peers for deeper processing and understanding. Have students interview classmates about their multilingual and multicultural traditions and practices and report these findings in the target language. Students can research a topic in home language, but present it in both home and target language through translations, subtitles, drawings, flashcards, mime etc.	session, depending on the lesson's objective. Complement target language readings with supplementary texts in students' home language about the same topic or theme. This provides the students with valuable background knowledge about the subject before reading the text in the target language, and aids to develop deeper discussion when students examine the readings collaboratively. Students with low literacy levels can be provided with abridged versions of texts and readers. Translated summaries and/or synopses would also provide necessary support.	translate final version into the target language. Model sentence starters or sentence frames in the target language which children can refer to during independent writing activities. Providing sentence frames and bilingual dictionaries gives L2 students additional support during creative writing tasks. Have students share drafts of their work, and peer edit each other's work for both language and content. Rewrite notes in home language whilst studying for tests.	audience to share their work with whenever possible. This could consist of peers, teachers, parents, and community members. Provide students with ample opportunities to practise both languages in meaningful, authentic, and functional ways, which they can relate to their lives and interests. This would encourage them to utilise translanguaging strategies in natural and spontaneous, as opposed to structured ways. Encourage students to create or translate texts, presentations, e-books, blogs, audio-

	Encourage children to interview family members in the home language, and report findings in the target language.	Speakers can read and discuss the book in both the home and new language. Support student diversity by providing multilingual and multicultural texts in the classroom with subtitles for online resources whenever possible. Choose books with characters that are culturally relevant for the students in class. Provide labels, signage, and basic greetings in a variety of home languages, together with multilingual word walls, charts, and instructional flashcards (using online translation). Provide rules and routine charts in different languages (using online translation).		recordings etc. in both languages. Encourage multilingual students in class to assist other children through language mediation, scribing or translation, utilising their all their linguistic knowledge and repertoires. Strategically partner students so that they can engage in peer tutoring/mediation, or to provide them with the space to utilise their home language judiciously during target language lessons. Assessment of bilingual and multilingual students' language use must

		Group students into literacy circles based on home language. Group students into literacy circles based on different stages of proficiency in either language. Group students into multilingual literacy pairs for peer mediation. Provide books in both students' home and target languages for literacy activities, and also for leisure reading in class. Make cross-language comparisons when reading (cognates, universal vocabulary, figures of speech/idiomatic language, cultural comparisons). Encourage students to read texts and books in one		distinguish between general linguistic and language-specific achievements.

		language but have discussions in both languages. Allow students to draft short answers and notes in both home and target language during comprehension tasks. Subsequently, they can use dictionaries, online translators, and student partners to translate the answers into the target language. Students can find pieces of text evidence in target language, but focus on deeper analysis of characters, settings, themes, and plot in home language. Read together in target language. Students can subsequently be divided into language pairs/groups to discuss plot, themes,		

		setting and characters in native language. One spokesperson per pair/group would share points of view in target language.		

5.3 Implications for the Study

This research presents implications for the Maltese context that warrant further exploration. These implications are linked to the Maltese educational system, pedagogy in bilingual and multilingual classrooms, initial teacher education, and continuous professional development for experienced educators.

Since cross-linguistic practices are naturally and spontaneously occurring, especially when pupils and teachers share a common language (usually L1), educators need to harness codeswitching and translanguaging as resources, rather than attempt to avoid using multilingual practices unless absolutely necessary. It is therefore important that our educators are supported and trained in ways to use bilingualism advantageously, and to leverage multilingual pedagogies as beneficial resources in class, as opposed to a last resort (García and Wei, 2014; Beres, 2015; Milton, 2011, 2016; García et al., 2017; Milton and Panzavecchia 2019a) .

Secondly, the views and concerns voiced by my participants suggest that changing demographics are causing unprecedented demands on our educational system and the teaching profession (Facciol et al., 2015). The Educational authorities are aware of these challenges, and as a result of this understanding, we are presently in the process of a paradigm shift in education (Panzavecchia and Little, 2019; 2020). The redesigning of policies and documents which focus on mitigating the challenges brought about by increasingly superdiverse classrooms, and the development of programmes which support the integration of learners into mainstream education, are most certainly steps in the right direction. However, the participating educators voiced strong apprehensions about not feeling adequately equipped to support all the students in their care, and not receiving appropriate guidance in this area (Farrugia, 2017; Scaglione and Caruana, 2018; Ariza et al., 2019). Additionally, the teachers also believe that they should be more autonomous and agentive in decision-making processes

(Mifsud and Vella, 2018a). The initiatives, proactiveness and commitment exhibited by the participating educators in this study are indicative of their openness and willingness to improve their practice with appropriate support and training. Additionally, my results indicate that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and therefore, one must take the particular context of each specific school, and the classroom intake and population of each individual year into consideration when designing programmes.

The main aim of the recommendations developed through the feedback given by the educators, and the resulting set of guidelines about multilingual pedagogies, is not to provide a general solution for all, but to suggest ways through which we can further support all or students in an equitable way. These proposals should serve as a starting point, but require open-mindedness and flexibility, as they would undoubtedly need to be enhanced and adapted according to the particular requirements of each and every student. In addition, teachers should be given more opportunities to share examples of good practice at local, national, and international levels, and be encouraged and empowered to carry out further research in the area.

Finally, providing our educators with the right support and knowledge would in turn foster the development of a more autonomous and agentive teaching workforce. The findings presented in this research also hold salient implications for Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development, which need to emphasise more on the shifting demographics in Malta, requiring teachers to become more culturally and linguistically responsive to meet the demands of our increasingly multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

5.4 Strengths of the Study

Although there is a vast body of research dedicated to flexible and fluid language practices within bilingual and multilingual classrooms, there appears to be a gap in literature concerning language teachers' perspectives and views on language pedagogy, and this is especially lacking

at a local level.   This study's main strength lies in that it is shedding more light on several lacunae in current cross-linguistic practices, educators' perspectives, and the use of Maltese in local English language classrooms.   Another problem driving this research was the unavailability of guidelines for educators in Malta focusing on multilingual pedagogy.   This study aims to address the scarcity of literature available on bilingual and multilingual pedagogy in Malta and offers guidelines on how teachers should mitigate challenges they are faced with as a result of changing demographics on the island. In many ways this research is proverbially navigating unchartered waters at a local level, and hence, the results of this study may offer important insights for the future of Maltese education.

Another strength of my study is that it delves into the unique stories of my participating educators, accentuating their concerns about an absence of adequate training and professional development in current relevant areas, together with a lack of agency and participatory power in the development of policies and documents, and in the drawing of syllabi and curricula. As an educator myself, one of my aims was to give "voice" to my participants, the opinions of whom are often not given the importance they deserve (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Richards, 2009). Through this research I hope to have given these teachers the opportunity to tell their stories, to express their views and concerns, and to make recommendations for the benefit and future of our students and our education system.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Although my study is important in shedding more light on teachers' beliefs and perceived practices of language use in Maltese primary schools, it does pose a number of limitations. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into teachers' views on language practices and pedagogies within Malta's bilingual and multilingual classrooms. However, it must be noted that owing to time constraints, and the restricted sample size of my participants, the conclusions drawn from this study are not representative of all Maltese educators. However, this limitation

could also be perceived as a strength, since my primary objective was to conduct in-depth interviews with a small number of participants which would enable me to answer the research questions through a rich and detailed analysis of teachers' "voices". This would not have been pragmatically possible to achieve with a larger number of participants. Therefore, I believe that within the limitations of my research, the results are nevertheless indicative of some of the challenges which educators in Malta are currently facing.

Another limitation of this enquiry is that due to time constraints, and for pragmatic reasons, the focus was narrowed down, and I had to work within the boundaries of what I had originally set out to explore. Seeing that the increase in Maltese multilingual classrooms is a fairly recent phenomenon, further longitudinal research built on this study would eventually paint a clearer picture of the linguistic situation in Malta, particularly that pertaining to education. Moreover, this research focused mainly on English language teaching within local bilingual and multilingual classrooms, however there is room for additional research which would explore cross-linguistic pedagogy in other subjects, which would also provide a more comprehensive insight of what is happening in Maltese classrooms. Additionally, this study might have been enriched if it had also provided contributions by the students themselves, drawing from their own experiences, and observing cross-linguistic methods in practice, thus providing dual perspectives on these issues. However, once again, this would not have been possible on a practical level, taking the time factor into consideration, and moreover, this was not the primary objective of this study. However, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that the implications emerging from the findings of this study would eventually be impacting our young learners, hence, it would be interesting to extend this research in the future, and to investigate bilingualism and multilingualism from Maltese primary students' point of view.

Another limitation of this enquiry constitutes the issue of researcher bias. This includes my own personal linguistic background linked to my family, educational and professional

experiences, and my work as an English teacher and university lecturer, together with my present role as an educational leader. All these experiences have undoubtedly influenced my views on the Maltese educational situation, however, as elaborately discussed in Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology, I have endeavoured to take all necessary measures to maintain my responsibility as a researcher, and to mitigate any possible bias which I might inject into my study.

Finally, one other limitation is that I was building my knowledge and developing my theoretical framework on literature that is available on the subject. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of research focusing on the disadvantages of multilingual pedagogies (Vaish, 2019), on the benefits of translanguaging in diverse bilingual educational contexts (Lyster, 2019), and on translanguaging in other languages apart from the English/Spanish domain (Vaish, 2019). Additionally, there are incongruencies between cross-linguistic theory and practice (Ticheloven et al., 2019). The large part of the research available is international literature, with only a few recent Maltese studies which I felt I could include to build my framework upon. Additionally, the majority of the work carried out both locally and internationally mainly focuses on the benefits of fluid and flexible language practices. The bulk of the research available is built upon English/Spanish dual language scenarios, although I have also included a few recent studies on other bilingual language pairs. Although I endeavoured to maintain a neutral view when developing my study, and while I made sure to include a critical analysis of the issues I was investigating, I acknowledge the fact that the literature I read built the foundations of this research, and that perhaps the potential availability of research in the above-mentioned areas, would have enriched my study further. These shortcomings also need to be taken into consideration when interpreting my findings, and these limitations themselves should be the catalyst for future research on the subject.

Notwithstanding all these limitations, I am confident that the overall findings of this research study have offered valuable insights on bilingual and multilingual education in Malta.

5.6 My Journey

Undertaking a doctoral degree whilst juggling full-time work and a family is an arduous task, one which is riddled with uncertainties, frustrations, and tensions along the way. Life does not stop simply because one is immersed in reading for a doctorate, and work pressures, the passing of my beloved father, pressing family matters, together with a global pandemic were all a part and parcel of my experience. This meant that although I believe that reading for a PhD is all-consuming, I still had to make space in my mind, in my heart and on my clock for other priorities. This was by no means an easy task and I believe it took a toll on me on a mental, emotional, and physical level. However, I look back upon the four years of this research process as an enriching and worthwhile experience, through which I have grown on both a personal and professional level.

As an educator myself, I feel that giving teachers' a much deserved "voice" was the most important achievement of my study. These voices are unfortunately often unheard or silenced, as education is becoming more focused on standardised tests and statistical results, and where an educator's value is often measured according to the grades they can produce. I feel privileged that I was given the opportunity to delve into my participants' lives, who so graciously and generously gave me an insight of their personal and professional experiences, of the many challenges they face, and how these are impacting their teaching.

This study has also helped me to reflect upon some assumptions I held regarding language use, in particular that of the use of L1 in teaching L2 in primary school classrooms. I became more conscious of the fact that these assumptions were a product of my own personal, educational, and professional experiences, which inevitably influenced my beliefs about language use.

These perceptions were all instrumental in the way I communicate with friends and family, and also in the way I use language on a professional level. These reflections also made me question the messages I might have or might still be transmitting to the children at school, to the educators which I currently support, and also to the future educators I lecture. Therefore, I believe that this enquiry was an essential journey for me as a Maltese bilingual, as an educator, as an educational leader, and as a researcher.

5.7 Chapter Conclusion

As a result of the in-depth interviews with my participants, I strongly believe that their experiences, views, and perceived professional practice may be used to pave the way for further studies, and to make recommendations for future practice. This research study was conducted from the perspective of educators and hence offered insights solely from their point of view. It would be interesting to conduct future studies focusing on students' perspectives at a local level, where learners themselves are given a "voice" about their views on cross-linguistic practices, and where observation sessions of multilingual pedagogy in practice are included as part of the data.

A more comprehensive perspective and further research and longitudinal studies on fluid language practices such as translanguaging, together with evidence based research on cross-linguistic classroom practice within the Maltese scenario (where Maltese and English, together with additional language/s are the main languages in use), would hence provide further insights into bilingual and multilingual pedagogy. I strongly believe that this is a niche area in education, especially at a local level, an area certainly worthy of further exploration due to its extreme significance and relevance, and where the possibilities for future studies are exciting and endless.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical approval

Michelle Panzavecchia
Registration number: 160243550
School of Education
Programme: PhD

Dear Michelle

PROJECT TITLE: The best of both worlds? Maltese primary school teachers language backgrounds, and their translanguaging perceptions and pedagogies in bilingual English language classes.
APPLICATION: Reference Number 021935

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 10/07/2018 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 021935 (dated 30/06/2018).
- Participant information sheet 1048140 version 1 (30/06/2018).
- Participant consent form 1048141 version 1 (30/06/2018).

The following optional amendments were suggested:

All three reviewers thought that in general this application be approved. However we all found the language in the information form to be alienating. The title should be simplified and so should the language and level of detail in the info sheet itself. For example the term 'translanguaging' is a fairly new academic concept and lay terms should be used in order not to avoid sounding elitist; the tone of the info sheet needs to be more sympathetic to the experience and language used by practitioners or lay people.

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Michelle Panzavecchia <mpanzavecchia1@sheffield.ac.uk>

Re: Ref number 021935 - Request for additional participant

edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk <edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk>   21 May 2019 at 15:18
To: Michelle Panzavecchia <mpanzavecchia1@sheffield.ac.uk>

Hi Michelle,

Your application has been updated with the ammendment. Just a reminder that the new participant will need to recieve an information sheet and sign a consent form.

Kind regards
Rachel

On Tue, 21 May 2019 at 09:40, David Hyatt <d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk> wrote:
Hi

Yes i had this conversation with Michelle and in my view this doesn't add to the overall ethical burden - simply one more participant. We can approve this as a minor amendments without the need to undergo a new application - please just remind her that the new participant needs to receive an information sheet and sign a consent form. Please add this email to the file as evidence of approval for this change.

Thanks

David
Dr David Hyatt
Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
Senate Award Fellow for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
Faculty of Social Science Deputy Director of Teaching Excellence
Director for Teaching Excellence Framework
Deputy Director of Learning and Teaching
Chair, School of Education Ethical Review Board
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Appendix B: Authorisation letters

MALTESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

Secretariat for Catholic Education

The Head

25ᵗʰ July, 2018

Ms Michelle Panzavecchia currently reading for a PhD in Bilingualism and English Language Teaching at the University of Sheffield, requests permission to carry out interviews, with three Primary School Teachers regarding their views on English language pedagogies within bilingual educational settings, at the above-mentioned schools.

The Secretariat for Catholic Education finds no objection for Ms Michelle Panzavecchia, to carry out the stated exercise subject to adhering to the policies and directives of the schools concerned.

Rev Dr. Charles Mallia
Delegate for Catholic Education

Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

Tel: 25982265   researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 3rd August 2018

Ref: RI2018/135

To: **Head of School**
From: **Assistant Director (Research and Innovation)**

Title of Research Study: The Best of Both Worlds? Maltese Primary School Teachers Language Backgrounds, and their Translanguaging Perceptions and Pedagogies in Bilingual English Language Classes.

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to **Michelle Panzavecchia** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Grazio Grixti
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MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Appendix C: Information sheet

30th August 2018

Dear Participant,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a project on Bilingualism and English Language teaching that I am carrying out as part of my PhD dissertation at the University of Sheffield. Kindly be informed that participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this project at any time.

Please see the attached information sheet about the project and get back to me if you have any questions. I will be grateful if you will return the consent form to me stating if you do or do not agree to take part in this project.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Panzavecchia

B. Ed. (Hons)
M. Sc. (LACIC) (Sheff)

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project Title

The best of both worlds? Maltese primary school teachers' language backgrounds, and their translanguaging perceptions and pedagogies in bilingual English language classes.

You are invited to participate in a project about Bilingualism and English Language Teaching. Before you decide whether or not to give your consent, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Kindly ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you will like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this project. Thank you for reading this.

1. **What is the project's purpose?**

The purpose of this project is to provide a basis for critical reflection and discussion amongst English language primary school Maltese teachers, in order to explore how being bilingual may affect their pedagogical practices, and to investigate whether or not they draw on the Maltese language in ways relevant to the teaching of English. The study will further probe into teachers' perceptions on whether, why and how translanguaging pedagogies may be beneficial within a bilingual English language classroom setting

2. **Why have you been chosen?**

You have been chosen to participate in this project because you are a primary school teacher who teaches English with ten years + teaching experience.

3. **Do I have to take part?**

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may stop taking part at any time. It is up to you to decide whether or not you are interested in taking part. If you do decide to take part then please keep this information sheet. You can still withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason. Whatever your decision, please return the consent form attached to me by ....

4. **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to take part you will be interviewed twice in the space of 3 – 4 months. Each interview will last for approximately an hour, however, its length will also be determined by how much you feel you wish to share with me, and after I will have asked all the questions relevant to my study. I will be bringing an initial data analysis with me to the second interview, asking you for your response and views. This will enable me to ensure that my interpretation of your perspectives was truthful and accurate. You will be asked to read the transcripts of your interviews and give me oral feedback prior to commencing the ensuing interview. You will also be given the opportunity to correct or add to any parts of the interview transcripts which were inaudible or unclear. We will then meet up on a further third occasion in order to repeat the exercise with the transcripts of your second interview. Throughout the course of the research you will give permission for the researcher to have access to your anonymised responses and you will also give consent for the data collected from you to be used

in future publications or future research, understanding that your name will not be linked with the research materials and that you will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

5. What are the disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no risks involved in taking part in this project. However, if for any reason, at any time throughout the project you feel uncomfortable answering any question/s, you are free not to answer or to withdraw from the project entirely without giving a reason for doing so. The main disadvantage of taking part in this project is that it is time consuming and therefore requires a level of commitment on both parts. Nonetheless, if at any point you feel that you no longer have enough time to dedicate to this project, or if you change your mind about participating for any reason, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason for doing so.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The main aim of my research is to "listen" to the voices of teachers, through their language biographies, in order to gain a deeper insight into their ideas, perspectives and pedagogical practices. As a teacher myself, I firmly believe in the importance of teachers' views, as I feel that these are not always given the importance that they deserve. The results of my research will be valuable because in Malta, there has been relatively little research done in the area, and this study hopes to shed more light on several lacunae in current translanguaging practices, educators' perspectives and the use of Maltese in local English language classrooms. In view of these findings, recommendations could be made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners in order to improve the effectiveness of our professional practice. Your participation in this project will give you the opportunity to voice your opinion about matters concerning language teaching in Malta, whilst contributing to the limited body of research conducted locally on the subject.

7. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

In the case that the research study stops earlier than expected, the reasons behind this will be explained to you and any information collected will be destroyed accordingly.

8. What if something goes wrong?

In the event that any complaints arise with regard to the project, these will be professionally attended to immediately. Should you wish to raise a complaint you are requested to contact the researcher Ms Michelle Panzavecchia on mpanzavecchia1@sheffield.ac.uk or the project supervisor Dr Sabine Little on s.little@sheffield.ac.uk. Should you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you could also contact Dr David Hyatt, the Head of The Malta Programme at the University of Sheffield who will then escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels. If you would like to speak to someone not related to the project you can contact the Head of The School of Education at the University of Sheffield: Professor Elizabeth Wood. If you are not satisfied your concerns have been dealt with satisfactorily then you can write to The Registrar and Secretary of the University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TN.

9. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly secure. Pseudonyms or codes will be substituted for the names of all participants and the schools, therefore all the information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and you will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Apart from assigning pseudonyms to my participants, I shall be further safeguarding their anonymity by making sure that any identifiable information (such as location of school, number of primary classes/children within the school and other distinctive information or identifying characteristics which might emerge during the course of the interview) will not be included in my study.

10. **What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

The aim of this study is to investigate whether Maltese primary school teachers' own personal and professional experiences related to bilingual identity and language use has shaped their pedagogy in any way. The participants' current practices and perceptions of using translanguaging strategies in bilingual ELT classrooms will also be explored. Therefore throughout the course of the interviews focusing on your personal and professional language background, teacher identity, teaching methods and perceptions of drawing from the Maltese language in order to teach English, I will be collecting data which is central in order to achieve the said objectives.

11. **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of this study will be used for my PhD dissertation, and may be used anonymously in an educational report for the school and/or journal articles and potentially for future research. The participants will not be identified in any report or publication.

12. **GDPR-compliancy paragraph.**

The University of Sheffield is the sponsor for this study based in Malta. The University of Sheffield will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that the University of Sheffield is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Any identifiable information about you will be kept by the researcher until the study has finished and grades have been assigned. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as the University needs to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, the University will keep the information about you that they would have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, the minimum personally-identifiable information possible will be used.

The researcher will collect information from you for this research study in accordance with the University of Sheffield's instructions. The researcher will keep your name and contact details confidential. The researcher will use this information as needed, to contact you about the research study, and make sure that relevant information about the study is recorded for your care, and to oversee the quality of the study. The University of Sheffield will only receive information without any identifying information.

13. **Contact for further information.**

If you wish to obtain further information about the project, you may contact Ms Michelle Panzavecchia on xxxxxxxx or on the email addresses given above.

Thank you for considering taking part in this project!

Appendix D: Consent form

Participants' Consent Form

Kindly initial each question to confirm your agreement.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 30th August 2018 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future publications and future research.

5. I agree to my being audio-recorded during interview sessions as part of this project.

_____   _____   _____

NAME   **SIGNATURE**   **DATE**

Appendix E: Interview questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME _____

PSEUDONYM _____

AGE _____

_____

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to meet me today. I am researching issues related to English teaching within a bilingual environment. It would be very helpful if you could kindly take some time to answer a few questions. The data are to be used as a basis for my PhD dissertation and will focus on the whole teaching cohort and not individuals. The material will be reported anonymously and confidentiality is assured. The interview should take around one hour to complete. Please feel free to refrain from answering any questions as you deem fit. You may also withdraw from the interview at any time. Thank you.

1. Where do you teach and which grade?

2. How long have you been teaching for?

3. What do you understand by the term bilingualism?

4. What are your thoughts on bilingualism in Malta?

5. What part of Malta did you grow up in? Where do you live now?

6. What is your first language? *(Prompt: the language you feel most comfortable in using, the language in which you usually "think" and communicate).*

7. How would you rate your proficiency in your second language?

8. How confident are you in speaking L2?

9. Do you prefer to read in English or Maltese?

10. When do you use Maltese? English? *(Prompts: Socialising, family, writing, texting, shopping, emails, other)*

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11. Can you tell me about your family background with regards to language use? *(Prompts: Language used at home, family attitudes towards Maltese/English).*

12. Can you tell me about your school background with regards to language use? *(Prompts: language used at school, language used with peers, favourite subject, experiences of learning Maltese/English, how were you taught?)*

13. Can you tell me about your post-secondary experience with regards to language use?

14. How do you feel about your bilingual identity?

15. Has your bilingual identity affected your teaching in any way?

16. Can you tell me about your perceived strengths weaknesses in your own English language teaching?

17. Can you tell me about language use at your school and in class? *(Prompts: What is the language policy at your school? How do you feel about this? What is the primary language of instruction in your class? How many of your students are native Maltese/English speakers? When do you use Maltese/English? Why? Do you prefer to use English/Maltese? Why? Do you code-switch? When do you feel it is appropriate/inappropriate to code-switch?)*

18. Do you have to adjust to speakers of other languages in your English language class? How do you go about this?

19. What are your views on teachers using Maltese in the English language classroom? *(Prompts: When do you feel this is appropriate/inappropriate? When do you feel it is necessary for them to do so? Why?)*

Michelle Panzavecchia

20. How do you feel about students using Maltese during English language lessons? *(Prompts: When do you feel this is appropriate/inappropriate? When do you feel it is necessary for them to do so? Why?)*

21. What are your views on code-switching by teachers and students in class?

22. Within which contexts do you feel the use of Maltese/code-switching by both teachers and students is appropriate/not appropriate during English language lessons? *(Prompts: discussions, assistance to peers, clarifications, brainstorming, explanations, drilling, describing vocabulary, classroom management, feedback, other)*

23. Which methods do you normally adopt in your English language classrooms? Which methods do you find to be most effective? *(Prompts: pedagogy? Full immersion? Code switching? Translation? Discussion? Peer tutoring? Visual aids and other resources? Building on Maltese language learning pedagogies? Other methods?)*

24. Have you ever heard of the term translanguaging? What do you know about it? What are your views on this instructional method?

25. In your opinion in which situations is using Maltese during and English lesson beneficial/detrimental?

26. What are your views on the level of English amongst Maltese students?

27. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective bilingual language education?

28. What are the advantages/disadvantages of being bilingual for teachers?

29. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being bilingual for students?

30. Describe what you think constitutes an effective educational programme for English language learners?

Michelle Panzavecchia

31. If you could change one thing about the way English is taught in Maltese primary schools, what would this be? What suggestions would you pass on to policy makers and stake holders in the field of education?

32. Is there anything else you would like to share about your perception of use of Maltese during English lessons by both students and teachers?

Michelle Panzavecchia