

HADRIAN LANKIEWICZ  
*University of Gdańsk*

# The language teacher as a supporter of the linguistic ecosystem among young immigrant learners: Beliefs and practices

**ABSTRACT.** The objective of the article is to analyze the attitudes of foreign language teachers towards students' mother tongues or heritage languages, as migrant students to the city of Gdańsk, Poland, use them as a compensation strategy in formal language learning. On the basis of a survey methodology, the author will try to explore language teacher beliefs regarding the perception of the coexistence and the use of other languages (including Polish) in mainstream FL education and attempt to compile good practices in this regard, reported by the teachers surveyed. Referring to his earlier research (Lankiewicz 2013, 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021), the author hypothesizes that language teachers manifesting higher levels of critical language awareness will be more prone to draw upon students' linguistic repertoires in the education processes, while others will suppress any form of intercomprehension, code-switching or language meshing.

**KEYWORDS:** language learning, plurilingualism, multilingualism, translanguaging, ecolinguistics, heritage language, minority language, critical language awareness.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Applied linguistics research has recently drifted away from viewing language in terms of Saussure's dyadic relation between the *signifier* and *signified*, a basically structuralist vision of language, in which semiotic activities are inscribed in the constitutive elements of language. This view additionally assumed that via language people can construct and objectively communicate knowledge. Contemporary, practice-driven theories considering language-mediated communication perceive language as a resource rather than "the exclusive target of research" (Infante 2021: 125). Therefore, applied linguists posit the need for language theories which "capture the dialectic between social structure and human agency and how social beings, with their diverse motives and their diverse intentions, make and transform the world" (Li Wei 2018: 10), and Li Wei (2018) similarly puts forward the concept of translanguaging (to be explained below)

as a candidate for a more practical theory of language in contemporary contexts and linguistic communities. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the myth of a pure language as a self-contained system needs to be dispelled, since language users, as agents, not only change linguistic resources, but also mesh (Canagajarah 2013) apparently separate language systems. Li Wei (2018: 26) further underscores the fact that translanguaging is not merely a descriptive label for certain practices typical of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, since it rather “offers a practical theory of language that sees the latter as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource that human beings use for thinking and for communicating thought”.

This perception of language, dictated by observed practices of language users, necessitates a more flexible approach to language use (both L1 and L2) in educational contexts as a means of instruction and ultimately within its teaching practice in order to match the evolution of natural communication processes. This is of particular importance in an era of human mobility and growing multilingualism. On the other hand, it entails a greater level of language awareness of, among others, foreign language teachers who should adjust their teaching methodology to the current times, which may not correspond with their thought processes as shaped by their previous educational experience. One of the essential issues to re-evaluate is the use of students’ mother tongues (L1s) or other linguistic repertoires in the foreign language (FL) classroom, or, in the case of immigrants, their heritage languages. Therefore, the objective of this article is to explore possible attitudes of foreign language teachers towards the use of students’ mother tongues or heritage languages in the language learning classroom, and their use as a valid compensation strategy in formal language learning contexts among migrants in an educational setting.

The research context of the study presented here is the city of Gdańsk, Poland. By using a survey-based methodology, I will attempt to explore language teacher beliefs (both of Polish and other foreign languages) regarding the co-existence and the use of other languages in mainstream education settings of foreign language classrooms and compile, if possible, proposed good practices reported by the sample teachers surveyed in this study. Referring to my earlier research (Lankiewicz 2013, 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021), I shall hypothesize that language teachers manifesting higher levels of critical language awareness will be more prone to draw upon students’ own linguistic repertoires in the education processes, while others will suppress any form of translanguaging practice, such as intercomprehension, code-switching or language meshing.

The theoretical underpinnings are based on the tenets of ecolinguistics in language education and the notion of educational linguistics as suggested by van Lier (2004), a sociocultural theory which aims to explain the relationship between cognition and the milieu in which it takes place (Lantolf 2000; Wertch, Del Rio

& Alvarez 1995), as well as the foundations of critical language awareness, and the vision of the language teacher as a transformative intellectual (Kumaravadevelu 2012; Lankiewicz 2015). Due consideration will be given to plurilingual/multilingual competences and their use as learning strategies (Mazak & Carroll 2017). Ultimately, bi- and plurilingualism and the maintenance of the heritage language will similarly be interpreted as a means of targeting social justice (García & Leiva 2014).

## 2. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE ERA OF PLURILINGUALISM

School-based educational practices have long been criticized for failing to match real life social or future professional needs. Therefore, schooling has frequently been the subject of ongoing reforms with the objective of making it more in line with academic thought or educational realities. Language teaching policy is generally shaped by state governments. However, the member countries of the European Union are also guided by a Language Policy Programme coordinated by the Council of Europe, with the basic document regulating language teaching practice within Europe, corresponding to *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001), describing language proficiency standards and recommended teaching practices. Its updated version from 2018 allows for incorporating students' linguistic repertoires into the language learning process (cf. Lankiewicz 2020).

One of the basic constituents of students' linguistic repertoires is, without doubt, the use of their mother tongues (L1s) in unfamiliar linguistic contexts, which the Linguistic Reform of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or later 20th century methods promoting oral interaction in foreign language learning contexts – such as the so-called “Communicative Approach”, alternatively referred to as “Communicative Language Teaching” (CLT), or simply the “Communicative Method” – limited to an absolute minimum during foreign language classes. It would not be considered an exaggeration to claim that the strong version of this method recommended abstaining totally from the use of the mother tongue in FL classes. This stance was fostered by the assumption that maximized exposure to comprehensible input will do its job naturally as a learning aid, a conviction based on the observation of natural L1 acquisition processes (cf. Richards & Rodgers 2001). In consequence, classroom practices relegated any form of translation as an unwelcome activity, hindering students' development of communication strategies in the target language and interfering with linguistic authenticity and the so-called accent of the target language. Recent reflection in Applied Linguistics, fostered by the concept of multicompetence (Cook 1991, 2016), however repo-

sitioned students' L1s in the process of foreign or L2 learning (cf. Rodríguez & Oxbrow 2008; Cook 2010; Lankiewicz & Wąsikiewicz-Firlej 2019). This, in turn, triggered the criticism of the Communicative Approach (Komorowska 2017: 166), which is echoed in the updated version of the CEFR (Council of Europe 2018).

Keeping abreast with a plurilingual Europe, or as some suggest the post-multilingualism era, marked by the death of pure linguistic systems (Li Wei 2018: 15), the new edition of the CEFR (Council of Europe 2018) breaks with monolingual approaches to plurilingual minds and promotes translanguaging practices (cf. Lankiewicz 2020). Even if the document refrains from a recommended pedagogy, it recommends real-life tasks and, with reference to what is most essential to this paper, it abolishes the four skills paradigm of language teaching, typical of the monolingual vision of language learning. The concepts of plurilingual and pluricultural competences, moved to the forefront in this document, in fact transgress the previously dominant skill paradigm consisting of listening, reading, writing and speaking. The mode of communication defined as mediation among people speaking many languages, as evidenced by psychological and neurological research, accounts for the fact that plurilinguals<sup>1</sup>, guided by their translanguaging instinct (Li Wei 2011), activate all their linguistic resources, which constantly influence each other. This is a space in which translations and interpretation come into play with a whole array of other activities, and where a participant may:

- switch from one language or dialect (or variety) to another;
- express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another;
- call upon the knowledge of a number of languages (or dialects, or varieties) to make sense of a text;
- recognise words from a common international store in a new guise;
- mediate between individuals with no common language (or dialect, or variety), even with only a slight knowledge of oneself;
- bring the whole of one's linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression;
- exploit paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.) (Council of Europe 2018: 28).

---

<sup>1</sup> In professional literature, there is a general overlap in the use of the terms of plurilingualism and multilingualism. However, even if the former is more of a psycholinguistic nature, pertaining to the existence of more than one language in a person's mind, and the latter belongs more to sociolinguistics, accentuating the coexistence of languages in a certain society, the two notions are used interchangeably to denote the ability to speak many languages. This terminological inconsistency may occasionally appear in this paper, while citing scholarly theories or opinions.

All these activities are ultimately evocative of the fact that plurilingual competence entails activation of all semiotic repertoires by individuals knowing more languages, which I have previously construed elsewhere as accounting for the need to recognize translingual practices (to be explained below) in the educational context as natural linguistic behaviour, a derivative of mediation (Lankiewicz 2020), which “emphasises the two key notions of co-construction of meaning in interaction and constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning, mainly through its vision of the user/learner as a holistic social agent” (Council of Europe 2018: 33).

Therefore, modern L2 or foreign language teaching cannot be sterile and resort to compartmentalized teaching of separate languages without regarding the native language and other languages which the student has in mind (typical of the monolingual approach exemplified by CLT). This is not to say that we should stop teaching German, English or Italian as discrete courses; rather, it implies that the process of learning new languages may be made more successful by activating other linguistic repertoires, or allowing students to translanguage as a means to communicate personal meanings in a more effective way, or simply recognizing linguistic hybridity as a sign of their identity (Lankiewicz 2021).

### 3. FROM LANGUAGING TO TRANSLANGUAGING IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

One of the key notions which the updated version of the CEFR redefines is that of “language”, which is substituted with “*linguaging*”. The document informs that plurilingual and pluricultural competences “were developed as a form of dynamic, creative process of ‘*linguaging*’ across the boundaries of language varieties, as a methodology and as language policy aims” (Council of Europe 2018: 28). In the same context, the notion of ‘*translinguaging*’ also appears, defined as “an action undertaken by plurilingual persons, where more than one language may be involved” (Council of Europe 2018: 28). Since the teacher questionnaire administered in the study reported here alludes indirectly to the two notions, it may be necessary to elucidate them further.

Nowadays, both terms are considered fundamental for the theories of multilingualism/plurilingualism. The notion of *linguaging* is used in different contexts, from philosophy, or linguistics, to psychotherapy and language teaching (cf. Lankiewicz 2014). Putting it succinctly, it stands for a natural continuum of human linguistic activity reaching beyond the traditional, political perception of pure discrete languages cementing nations. It also underscores the fact that people use linguistic resources in a very personal way in the process of exchange-

ing meaning by either conforming to, or flouting, conventions. In this way, if we want to study human meaning-making activities, we should consider the active process of languaging rather than the concept of language. By extension, García (2009: 45 cited in Mazak 2017: 2) argues for “translanguaging to the constant, active invention of new realities through language”. In other words, plurilinguals create hybrid forms, by meshing language codes in the processes of meaning making, according to their interlanguages, thus drawing on multicompetence.

Historically speaking, translanguaging originally appeared in the context of describing bilingual education in Wales (English/Welsh) and related to intercomprehension, offering the provision of input in one language and output in another (cf. Mazak 2017: 1). At present, intercomprehension is only one of many communication modalities applied by plurilinguals. In short, translanguaging pertains to the hybrid linguistic repertoires of plurilinguals, which include “the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users” (Li Wei 2011: 1223) “across all modalities of language, from code-switching and mixing to translation and transliteration” (Androutsopoulos 2013).

Apart from being presented as a language ideology or theory of bilingualism, translanguaging offers pedagogical implications as a stance “that teachers and students take on that allows them to draw on all their linguistic and semiotic resources as they teach and learn both language and content material in the classroom” (Mazak 2017: 5). In this article, I shall restrict my focus to the necessity of making use of translingual practices within foreign language classes, which occur naturally in the communication habits of plurilinguals (cf. Lankiewicz 2021). Consequently, allowing them in class may enhance the L2 acquisition process and foster students’ identities as legitimate users of a foreign language. Code-switching between a mother tongue or a heritage language and a foreign language may be important in this regard. Ultimately, allowing translanguaging in foreign language classes may be transformational. As Mazak (2017: 6) posits, “[t]he acceptance of these practices – of the creative, adaptable, resourceful inventions of bilinguals – transforms not only our traditional notions of ‘languages’ but also the lives of bilinguals themselves as they remake the world through language”.

#### **4. LANGUAGE TEACHER BELIEFS AND TEACHING PRACTICES**

Within the broad concept of teacher cognition, teachers’ beliefs are only seen as a small portion of the pie, but, as it turns out, they seem to be significant factors in shaping teaching practices. Research on teacher knowledge, in general, is extensive and somewhat overwhelming, and so is that pertaining

to language teacher cognition (cf. Borg 2003a, 2003b, 2006). However, we might divide up the different types of teacher knowledge, since research shows the existence of a strong overlap between teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices. Kumaravadievelu (2012: 32–34) classifies them within the category of personal knowledge – “an offshoot of teachers' reflection and reaction, insights and intuition”, manifesting “identities, beliefs and values” (Kumaravadievelu 2012: 32). It is agreed that this type of knowledge dictates everyday classroom behaviour. Nonetheless, language teacher beliefs may be indicative of an uncritical application of personal educational experiences, or high critical language awareness, as is in the case of well-informed reflective language teachers who intuitively know how to facilitate natural language acquisition processes.

Essential in this regard are language teacher beliefs referring to the theory of language and theories of language teaching. Thereby, language teachers who exhibit a higher level of critical language awareness (those going beyond the monolingual paradigm) will be more prone to appreciate the value of the use of the mother tongue (L1) in the process of L2 acquisition, or accept translanguaging practices in a foreign language class, while those conforming to the myth of language fixity (Harris 1981), typical of the monolingual paradigm, will most probably try to exclude any “tones alien to the target language”. The latter stance will stifle students' personal voices and identities in the illusory hope of producing native-like bilinguals.

The era of plurilingualism and globalization requires more open attitudes from the foreign language teacher community. In the context of the inquiry presented in this article, it would be expected that the teacher should be eager to draw on and support the micro-linguistic ecosystem (multicompetence) of immigrant language learners and ultimately contribute to the sustainment of the macro-ecosystem (social multilingualism). Kumaravadievelu (2012), alluding to critical pedagogy, in this regard, presents a vision of the language teacher as a transformative intellectual, who understands that language teaching involves more than purely language training, and “who strives not only for academic advancement but also for personal transformation, both for themselves and for the learners,” (Kumaravadievelu 2012: 9) as well as one who targets social justice through linguistic means (see also Lankiewicz 2015: 183–193). Therefore, personal teacher knowledge in the form of beliefs and values is certainly indicative of their own critical language awareness and how ready they are to educate legitimate L2 language users, ready to mediate their identities via genuine voices belonging to plurilinguals who make perfect use of their full semiotic resources, rather than parrots devoid of agency in the process of meaning making.

## 5. RESEARCH

### 5.1. Research context

The Polish city of Gdańsk forms part of the metropolitan area of the Tricity, three adjacent cities stretching along the coast of the Baltic with Sopot, and Gdynia, along with several other smaller ones. Altogether, the area is populated by more than a million people. It has always been a multilingual and multicultural region, due to its historical past, geographical location, and economic potential. It is undoubtedly the site of the natural coexistence of the Polish, Kashubian and German languages. The vicinity of Russia and Scandinavia increases the linguistic diversity of the region. The shipyard industry, the port, and international business activities have attracted representatives from many nations to spend short- and long-term stays in the region.

It is also worth mentioning the fact that it is one of the biggest educational centers in Poland, with several well-respected and highly ranked educational institutions. In recent years, increased European mobility, and the influx of refugees from Ukraine and other eastern European countries, has diversified the linguistic landscape even more. One, for example, might also be surprised by the number of Italian professionals living in the region, who not long ago were considered a rare novelty. Accordingly, finding an Italian native speaker teacher used to be a problem, while these days it is common to go to a restaurant and be served by native Italians. The multilingual chatter, typical of the tourist attractions of the main street in the old town in Gdańsk, nowadays extends to construction sites, offices, business units, and schools, since many of the migrants come with their families, or start bilingual families in their new country of residence.

Since, in the current article, I intend to concentrate on the educational milieu, it is worth illustrating the linguistic range of students attending both primary and secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> The data was obtained from the Office of Social Development (Wydział Rozwoju Społecznego) of the City Hall of Gdańsk,<sup>3</sup> the entity which coordinates the financial and organizational activities of state schools within the boundaries of Gdańsk. The figures reveal the number of young people who are not Polish citizens and who most probably need additional language assistance to be fully able to participate in mainstream education carried out in Polish. As we can see in Table 1 below, there is a significant number of foreign pupils, most of whom are recent migrants from Ukraine and other Eastern countries.

---

<sup>2</sup> To avoid terminological ambiguity, the school types mentioned pertain to *szkoły podstawowe* and *ponadpodstawowe* (Polish classification).

<sup>3</sup> The data presents the state of affairs for November, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022.



Table 1 does not include children of bilingual families with Polish citizenship. It is also noticeable that the majority of foreign pupils attend primary state schools, yet their number is proportional to the number of schools at a particular level (there are more state primary schools than private primary schools). But it is worth mentioning that private schools have a more diverse clientele regarding nationalities, not only from Eastern Europe. Altogether, there are 6,825 foreign pupils in primary and secondary schools in the city of Gdańsk, which constitutes 10.2% of all pupils (66,553)<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 1.** Distribution of foreign pupils in the City of Gdańsk

| Nationality    | Number of pupils in each school type |                 |                   |                 |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                | Primary schools                      |                 | Secondary schools |                 |
|                | State schools                        | Private schools | State schools     | Private schools |
| Afghan         | 1                                    | 0               | 2                 | 0               |
| Algerian       | 2                                    | 0               | 94                | 0               |
| American (USA) | 3                                    | 8               | 1                 | 2               |
| Armenian       | 4                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Australian     | 1                                    | 2               | 0                 | 0               |
| Azerbaijani    | 2                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Belarussian    | 769                                  | 149             | 0                 | 29              |
| Belgian        | 0                                    | 4               | 0                 | 0               |
| Brazilian      | 7                                    | 3               | 1                 | 1               |
| British        | 4                                    | 21              | 0                 | 1               |
| Canadian       | 2                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Chinese        | 1                                    | 2               | 1                 | 1               |
| Croatian       | 2                                    | 2               | 0                 | 0               |
| Czech          | 3                                    | 6               | 2                 | 0               |
| Danish         | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Dutch          | 0                                    | 2               | 0                 | 0               |
| Ecuadorian     | 1                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Emirati        | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Estonian       | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Filipino       | 3                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| French         | 3                                    | 4               | 1                 | 0               |
| Georgian       | 5                                    | 0               | 0                 | 2               |

<sup>4</sup> Data from Educational Information System of November 14, 2022 (System Informacji Oświatowej).

| Nationality   | Number of pupils in each school type |                 |                   |                 |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|               | Primary schools                      |                 | Secondary schools |                 |
|               | State schools                        | Private schools | State schools     | Private schools |
| German        | 3                                    | 8               | 1                 | 1               |
| Greek         | 0                                    | 2               | 0                 | 0               |
| Hungarian     | 0                                    | 3               | 0                 | 0               |
| Icelandic     | 0                                    | 0               | 1                 | 0               |
| Indian        | 11                                   | 34              | 0                 | 3               |
| Indonesian    | 2                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Iranian       | 0                                    | 0               | 0                 | 1               |
| Iraqi         | 3                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Irish         | 1                                    | 2               | 0                 | 1               |
| Italian       | 0                                    | 3               | 0                 | 2               |
| Kazakh        | 2                                    | 2               | 3                 | 0               |
| Kenyan        | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Kirghiz       | 0                                    | 0               | 1                 | 0               |
| Latvian       | 1                                    | 2               | 0                 | 0               |
| Lithuanian    | 3                                    | 5               | 1                 | 1               |
| Mexican       | 1                                    | 0               | 1                 | 0               |
| Moldavian     | 5                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Montenegrin   | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Nigerian      | 3                                    | 0               | 1                 | 0               |
| Norwegian     | 2                                    | 2               | 1                 | 0               |
| Pakistani     | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 1               |
| Romanian      | 25                                   | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Russian       | 74                                   | 37              | 24                | 4               |
| Rwandan       | 1                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Slovak        | 0                                    | 3               | 0                 | 0               |
| Slovenian     | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| South African | 0                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| South Korean  | 1                                    | 2               | 1                 | 0               |
| Spanish       | 0                                    | 0               | 0                 | 1               |
| Swedish       | 0                                    | 2               | 0                 | 0               |
| Swiss         | 0                                    | 0               | 0                 | 2               |
| Turkish       | 2                                    | 1               | 0                 | 0               |
| Ugandan       | 0                                    | 0               | 0                 | 1               |
| Ukrainian     | 3889                                 | 445             | 766               | 248             |

| Nationality           | Number of pupils in each school type |                 |                   |                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                       | Primary schools                      |                 | Secondary schools |                 |
|                       | State schools                        | Private schools | State schools     | Private schools |
| Uruguayan             | 1                                    | 0               | 0                 | 0               |
| Uzbek                 | 2                                    | 0               | 1                 | 0               |
| Vietnamese            | 1                                    | 1               | 1                 | 0               |
| Zimbabwean            | 0                                    | 5               | 0                 | 1               |
| Total for school type | 4844                                 | 773             | 905               | 303             |
| Total for Gdańsk      | <b>6825</b>                          |                 |                   |                 |

Source: current study.

## 5.2. Research objectives

Informed by ecolinguistic considerations upon language and multilingualism (e.g. van Lier 2004; García 2009; Lankiewicz 2019, 2021) and new reflections regarding the use of native languages (L1) in foreign language classes (e.g. Cook 2010), as well as critical ecological language awareness (e.g. Lankiewicz 2015) and teacher cognition and teacher attitudes (e.g. Borg 2003a, 2003b, 2006), I intend to determine whether foreign language teachers in our local context are adapting their teaching practice to the needs of the era of multilingualism or (post-multilingualism, as suggested by Li Wei 2018) or if their teaching practice is more evocative of the traditional Communicative Approach methodology, exemplifying the enduring monolingual paradigm in language teaching. In particular, the following research questions will come under scrutiny:

1. What is the general level of FL teachers' critical language awareness?
2. Do FL teachers include practices incorporating students' native language use in foreign language classes?
3. Do FL teachers make use of students' linguistic repertoires by allowing translanguaging practices (e.g. code-switching) to enhance their teaching?

## 5.3. Respondents

Taking into account the main objective of the study, the research respondents were teachers of foreign languages from primary schools and secondary schools in the city of Gdańsk. Details regarding their profile are considered in the analytical section below.

For further clarity in the present study, it needs to be highlighted here that Polish children start learning a compulsory foreign language in grade one of a primary school. This decision was introduced by the educational reform of the Core Programme on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008,<sup>5</sup> which took effect in the new school year 2009/2010. The main idea behind this was to enable the early start of foreign language learning. Both the ministerial recommendations of successive governments as well as parental choice resulted in the predominance of English as the main foreign language to be taught to children. Presently, according to the Ministerial Ordinance regarding the Core Programme in state schools dated 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019,<sup>6</sup> the compulsory minimum of foreign language education looks as follows. At primary schools, in grades 1–3, compulsory foreign language education is 2 hours a week, which increases to 3 hours a week in grades 4 to 8. An additional foreign language is introduced in grade 7 and continues in grade 8 with two hours a week. At secondary schools, the minimal language exposure is 3 hours a week of a continuing language (the one students had previously been learning at primary schools) and 2 hours a week of a second foreign language, which does not have to be the same one as that started in primary school. The situation in the schools surveyed here has only minor fluctuations depending on the type of school (cf. the Programme 2019). The predominant first choice language is English with the second being German, Spanish, French, Russian, Italian, or Chinese (the latter only in some private schools).

#### 5.4. Methodology

The research part of this article is based on a specifically-designed survey for practicing foreign language teachers. The preparation process of the questionnaire as a research tool was informed by recommendations suggested by Dörnyei (2003) and Brown (2001).

The uneven concentration of foreign students in schools (not depicted in Table 1, but in the Microsoft Excel file delivered by the City Hall) dictated my research endeavors by requiring me to visit those with the largest number of foreign youngsters (four primary and four secondary schools), taking along

---

<sup>5</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 23 grudnia 2008 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20090040017>.

<sup>6</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 3 kwietnia 2019 r. w sprawie ramowych planów nauczania dla publicznych szkół, <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/ramowe-plany-nauczania-dla-publicznych-szkol-18837121>.

a paper version of the questionnaire as a means to secure a higher rate of return. One of the assumptions in the research is that teacher cognition and classroom behavior is more influenced by the majority situation than by particular cases, if only because of lesson dynamics and lesson management.

To guarantee the representativeness of the research data, the questionnaire was prepared with the use of the online application *Google Forms* and the link to it with a covering letter was distributed to various schools, whose addresses were included in the document supplied by the City Hall of Gdańsk. In the course of research, due to the low rate of return of the online questionnaire, I also decided to send the link to other personal contacts, counting on a snowball effect. If some of them reached beyond the City of Gdansk, the data should not distort the general findings since, in my opinion, teacher cognition is very much universal in any one country. As mentioned before, the rate of return of the online questionnaire was rather low in comparison to conducting the survey in person in 8 schools. The ratio is 48 personally administered questionnaires to 37 responses obtained via *Google Forms* (85 in total).

### 5.5. Data analysis

The data obtained in the study will be analyzed based on the research questions. However, I will start by presenting the profile of the sample teachers surveyed, since the initial items on the questionnaire were aimed to elicit information regarding the respondents' personal and professional profiles (items 1–8).

The respondents were mostly teachers of English as a second language (45%). The rest of the respondents taught German (19%), Russian (10%), Spanish (10%), French (8%), Italian (6%) and Chinese (2%). Some of them indicated that they were teaching two foreign languages (19%). In accordance with the research target group, they confirmed they were teaching at primary schools (48%) and secondary schools (52%) with some teaching at other levels, including the tertiary one (19%). The duration of their teaching careers ranges from 3 to 26 years, for which the statistical dominant is 15 and 20. Thereby, most of the respondents are experienced professionals. For my further considerations, the data on the maximum number of foreign students in a single classroom is similarly of interest. The amounts are between 1 and 15, with the statistical dominant being 6 students per class, who are mainly Ukrainian and Belarusian. The majority of them cannot communicate fluently in Polish (79.2 %).

I shall now address the three research questions which have guided the research reported here.

1. *What is the level of teachers' critical language awareness?*

By teachers' critical language awareness (CLA), I understand such an approach to refer to the target foreign language and its learning that takes into account reflections derived from the ecolinguistic coexistence of languages and a heteroglossic approach to multilingualism, along with the activation of the translanguaging instinct (cf. Lankiewicz 2015, 2019, 2021), and the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism offered by Herdina and Jessner (2002) as well as empirical and theoretical reflection pertaining to the role of a native language in language learning with reference to translation or mediation. This is the driving concept that has driven the formulation of the survey questions.

**Table 2.** CLA as measured by the valuing statements related to the process of foreign language teaching

| Statements | Cronbach Alpha | Distribution of answers (percentage) |      |      |      |      |
|------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
|            |                | 1                                    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
| a)         | .72            | 5.3                                  | 15.8 | 10.5 | 36.8 | 31.6 |
| b)         | .47            | 7.1                                  | 4.7  | 25   | 47.4 | 15.8 |
| c)         | .58            | 14.8                                 | 16.8 | 15.8 | 21.1 | 31.6 |
| d)         | .21            | 44.4                                 | 25.3 | 5.3  | 19.1 | 5.9  |
| e)         | .04            | 57.9                                 | 21.1 | 11.7 | 5.3  | 4.1  |
| f)         | .54            | 10.5                                 | 5.3  | 15.8 | 52.6 | 15.8 |
| g)         | .44            | 15.8                                 | 10.5 | 0    | 15.8 | 63.2 |
| h)         | .67            | 10.5                                 | 5.3  | 15.8 | 31.6 | 36.8 |
| i)         | .63            | 10.5                                 | 15.8 | 5.9  | 31.6 | 36.2 |
| j)         | .35            | 15.8                                 | 15.8 | 21.1 | 15.8 | 31.6 |
| Total      | .46            | 19.3                                 | 13.6 | 12.7 | 27.7 | 27.3 |

Source: current study.

Answers to Question 9 may be indicative of the teachers' CLA level. The statements were created in such a way that the lower the rating figure, the higher the CLA (see Table 2). However, I did not take into account the fact that teachers' personal beliefs may be in conflict with the classroom reality and hence the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of internal consistency within the 'test' for some statements is rather low.

The table above (Table 2) shows rather low or moderate CLA in my respondents, a fact highlighted by the high frequency of 4 and 5 ratings for some statements, which would not be recommended by contemporary reflections on multilingualism. Even if the conclusions need to be drawn with caution, since

teachers may be guided by classroom practicalities and educational feasibility against their own beliefs (see items 9d and 9e in Table 2), the general hypothesis that teachers will be informed by their own educational experience in language teaching seems to be confirmed. The vast majority of their ratings corroborates the dominance of the communicative monolingual paradigm. Teachers disclose a rather low level of CLA, which is comparable with my other studies (Lankiewicz 2013).

2. *Do FL teachers include practices incorporating students' native language use in foreign language classes?*

As to the use of students' mother tongues (L1) in the classroom, it is most frequently Polish, which is occasionally allowed in the foreign language classroom. Teachers' open-ended answers suggest that they prefer to keep the class going in the target language. The situations in which Polish students use or are allowed to use their native language (items 10 and 11) are not perceived as linguistic capital to draw upon. For example, only a small number of teachers mention the use of translation activities. In the majority of cases, the use of Polish is perceived as a compensation strategy during conversation breakdowns or a conversational short-cut to communicate important organizational issues. Unfortunately, this may have a backwash effect that important information is communicated in the native language, while the foreign language is used for trivial things. One instance of the use of Polish is grammar-related clarifications. Teachers themselves claim to switch codes when explaining grammar (question 13) to explain or facilitate rules.

3. *Do teachers make use of students' linguistic repertoires by allowing translanguaging practices (e.g. code-switching) to enhance their teaching?*

Teachers do seem to recognize that some foreign students have problems coping in foreign language (FL) classes (question 14). Neither their foreign language skills nor their Polish, is good enough to understand the teacher's instructions. Yet, the way of dealing with this problem (question 15 and 16) is very much traditionally monolingual in nature, such as paraphrasing, reformulation or eventually code-switching to Polish. Not many teachers mention the technique of looking for parallel constructions across languages, cross-linguistic mediation during speaking activities, or occasional use of students' native languages in presenting cultural differences and students' fields of interest. Some teachers state plainly that they do not know how they could use foreign students' linguistic repertoires in the foreign language classroom. Others, simply, try to see through the intention of the questionnaire and, assuming that must not be a good practice not to make use of them, they excuse themselves by not having

enough time for these practices, despite the fact that quite a large number of students are multilingual, and able to understand messages in a range of European languages (see item 2).

In the teachers' responses, there is no mention of the use of students' natural translanguaging practices for language learning purposes, although they admit that students use strange grammar forms, calques from native languages, and apply intercomprehension or frequent code-switching. They perceive all these instances as disturbing and unwelcome. Quenching natural linguistic processes, foreign language teachers assume the vision of their profession as skill-developers rather than transformative intellectuals (Kumaravadivelu 2012; Lankiewicz 2015), targeting social justice and meeting the needs and expectations of the multilingual era.

## 5.6. Findings

Even if the respondents in the present study seem to exhibit a rather monolingual mindset in foreign language teaching, typical of the Communicative Approach from the late 80s. (allowing for the fact it became popular in Poland with a delay), they are aware of the fact that their teaching reality and recent social changes require a more flexible approach to the language learning classroom. Yet, only few of them are going beyond their own educational experience and adapting to the new situation. There are those, for example, who appear to see a place for students' native languages in a foreign language class, which can be used, e.g. while establishing the classroom code of conduct, or when making sure that students understand texts or apply grammatical items in a conscious way. Significantly, some teachers have highlighted their return to including translation activities in the language classroom. Yet, they are not very forthcoming about their actual use. Some respondents associate them only with online machine translation or the use of personal translator devices.

Promisingly, some respondents report the use of parallel information in three or four languages in student projects. It is easy to see the benefits of such an approach. This is to guarantee better understanding, and enhance language learning opportunities in many languages simultaneously by making lexical and grammatical comparisons. By presenting their interests to others in their native language, parallel to the foreign language, students are able to accentuate their own cultural identity. The text in a native language also guards against the effect of being taken for intellectually incapacitated learners due to their linguistic inefficiency.



## 6. CONCLUSION

Being aware of the limitations of my study and the need for careful generalizations, I am sure that at least one implication seems to be grounded in the data obtained in the study. Namely, this is the need to raise teachers' CLA regarding the heteroglossic perception of multilingualism. Teachers' beliefs are either shaped by their own educational experience, informed by the previously dominant Communicative Approach or dictated by classroom practicalities. It is easier to be guided by a monolingual vision of language as a separate entity than open up to the relative world of linguistic hybridity, even if this is where all multilinguals belong.

This, in turn, may suggest the need for teacher training sessions which would offer practical methodological solutions to how to cross language borders in foreign language teaching and make use of the linguistic repertoires of students to enhance language learning processes and educate them for the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Funding acknowledgement and disclaimer

The author does not declare any financial support for writing this paper.

## REFERENCES

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19 (2), 185–205.
- Borg, S. (2003a). Teacher cognition in grammar teaching: A literature review. *Language Awareness*, 12 (2), 96–108.
- Borg, S. (2003b). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81–109.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education. Research and practice*. London / New York: Continuum.
- Brown, J.D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, G. (2010). *Translation in language teaching: An Argument for reassessment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, V. (1991). The poverty-of-the-stimulus argument and multi-competence. *Second Language Research*, 7, 103–117.
- Cook, V. (2016). Premises of multi-competence. In: V. Cook / Li Wei (eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of multi-competence* (pp. 1–25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: CUP. <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1bf>.

- Council of Europe (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume with New Descriptors*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction administration processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O. / Leiva, C. (2014). Theorizing and enacting translanguaging for social justice. In: A. Creese / A. Blackledge (eds.). *Heteroglossia as practice and pedagogy* (pp. 199–216). New York: Springer.
- Harris, R. (1981). *The language myth*. London: Duckworth.
- Herdina, P. / Jessner, U. (2002). *A dynamic model of multilingualism: Perspectives of change in psycholinguistics*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Infante, P. (2021). Review: Applied linguistics: Towards a new integration? Lars Sigfred Evensen (2013). *Language and Sociocultural Theory*, 7 (2), 123–127.
- Komorowska, H. (2017). Europejski system opisu kształcenia językowego – nowe potrzeby i nowe rozwiązania. *Konińskie Studia Językowe*, 5 (2), 165–183. doi: 10.30438/ksj.2017.5.2.1.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012). *Language teacher education for a global society: A modular model for knowing, analyzing, recognizing, doing and seeing*. New York / London: Routledge.
- Lankiewicz, H. (2013). Dialect and L2 teaching: Measuring teacher language awareness. In: E.M. Nikolaeva (ed.), *Sbornik naucznych trudov: Sovremennyyj mir* (pp. 22–39). Dmitrov: Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Torgovo-Ekonomiceskij Universitet Dmitrovskij Filial.
- Lankiewicz, H. (2014). From the concept of languaging to L2 pedagogy. In: H. Lankiewicz / E. Wąsikiewicz-Firlej (eds.), *Languaging experiences* (pp. 1–32). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lankiewicz, H. (2015). *Teacher language awareness in the ecological perspective: A collaborative inquiry based on languaging*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.
- Lankiewicz, H. (2020). Translanguaging: Implications for the language classroom derived from a revised version of CEFR. *Glottodidactica*, 47 (2), 137–152.
- Lankiewicz, H. (2021). Linguistic hybridity and language identity: Translingual practice among plurilinguists in the educational settings. *Neofilolog*, 56 (1), 55–70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/n.2021.56.1.5>.
- Lankiewicz, H. / Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, E. (2019). Theoretical considerations for developing intercultural sensitivity through translation activities: Beyond the monolingual premise in foreign language education. *Neofilolog*, 52 (2), 313–333. <https://doi.org/10.14746/n.2019.52.2.8>.
- Lantolf, J. (ed.). (2020). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Li Wei (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43 (5), 1222–1235.
- Li Wei (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39 (1), 9–30.
- Lier van, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Mazak, C.M. (2017). Introduction: Theorizing translanguaging practices in higher education. In: C.M. Mazak / K.S. Carroll (eds.), *Translanguaging in higher education: Beyond monolingual ideologies* (pp. 1–10). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Oxbrow, G. / Rodríguez Juárez, C. (2010). Language learning motivation and learner autonomy: Bridging the gap. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 61, 57–72.
- Richards, J.C. / Rodgers, T.S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 23 grudnia 2008 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz kształcenia ogólnego w poszczególnych typach szkół. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20090040017>.

Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 3 kwietnia 2019 r. w sprawie ramowych planów nauczania dla publicznych szkół. <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/ramowe-plany-nauczania-dla-publicznych-szkol-18837121>.

Wertsch, J.V. / Del Rio, P. / Alvarez, A. (1995). *Sociocultural studies of mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT.

## APPENDIX

The questionnaire (originally delivered in Polish)

*The following questionnaire is anonymous and pertains to your beliefs as a foreign language teacher regarding the use of the students' mother tongues during foreign language classes. Remember, there are no good or bad answers to this questionnaire, so be honest and provide information according to your personal beliefs and your classroom practices. The data obtained will be analyzed in an academic publication.*

1. Which language(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been teaching foreign languages? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In which languages do you understand basic information? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your mother tongue? \_\_\_\_\_
5. At which level do you teach:
  - a) primary school
  - b) secondary school
  - c) university
  - d) other schools
 (You can mark more than one answer!)
6. What is the highest number of foreign students in one classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does it happen that foreign students do not speak fluent Polish? YES/ NO
8. What are your foreign students' nationalities? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How much do you agree with the following statements  
(1 meaning *I absolutely disagree*, 5 meaning *I absolutely agree*): **Circle!**
  - a. The teacher should avoid the use of students' mother tongues in foreign language classes.  
1 2 3 4 5
  - b. Students **should not** be allowed to respond occasionally in their mother tongue.  
1 2 3 4 5
  - c. Homework should also be given in a foreign language since it makes students more attentive and increases communication opportunities in that foreign language.  
1 2 3 4 5
  - d. If the teacher occasionally uses the students' mother tongues, they are not consistent as a teacher.  
1 2 3 4 5
  - e. If the student does not respond in the target language (the language of the lesson), the teacher should pretend not to understand.  
1 2 3 4 5
  - f. The job of the teacher is to discourage foreign accents as far as possible.  
1 2 3 4 5
  - g. Creating neologisms in a foreign language or playing with language is a waste of time.  
1 2 3 4 5

- h. The teacher should discourage students from making language calques in their native language or other languages they know at all costs.  
1 2 3 4 5
- i. Teachers should not make the use of students' linguistic diversity while teaching a foreign language.  
1 2 3 4 5
- j. Keeping to a foreign language in the classroom should be the target of the teacher  
1 2 3 4 5
10. If your Polish students use their native language during classes, what are the situations and the reasons for this?  
.....
11. Are there any situations in which Polish students can use their native language in foreign language classes?  
.....
12. Are your foreign students allowed to use their native language during foreign language classes? If yes, in which circumstances? If no, why not?  
.....
13. Do you yourself consistently use a foreign language in the classroom? Why yes? Why not?  
.....
14. What are the most frequent problems your migrant learners face during foreign language classes?  
.....
15. How do you deal with the moments when your foreign students do not understand what you are saying or they cannot express themselves in a foreign language?  
.....
16. Do you use students' linguistic repertoires while teaching a foreign language? If yes, how? If no, why not?  
.....

**Received:** 30.11.2022; **revised:** 10.03.2023

HADRIAN LANKIEWICZ  
University of Gdańsk  
hadrian.lankiewicz@ug.edu.pl  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5124-7861