

Sociolinguistic settings and the construction of linguistic repertoires among immigrant pupils in Catalonia

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Abstract

The present work is part of research¹ that includes the study of sociolinguistic patterns of use in thirty school students, aged from 10 to 15 years, attending various educational centres in Barcelona, Lleida, Molins de Rei and Salt (all in Catalonia). These are schools and *instituts* (upper schools and sixth form colleges) with a substantial number of pupils on role who were born outside the European Union. The research has as its objective the description of the variables that affect the learning of language and communicative skills among immigrant pupils, to be able to go on to formulate, at a subsequent stage, proposals for action in the school setting.

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1. Introduction

The presence of migrant students in the classrooms of Catalonia has raised issues and initiates a debate between educationalists, politicians and the general public on the management of diversity and interculturality. It also creates debate on related issues, such as discrimination, school failure, interethnic tension, etc. (Heller, 1999). additionally, in Catalonia itself, the immigrant population stimulates debate on the balance between the use of Catalan and Spanish, and the future of the Catalan language (Junyent & Unamuno, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003).

From the sociolinguistic point of view, the presence of young immigrants in school –the institution strongly linked to official language policy in Catalonia– provides an opportunity to observe the dynamics of language use and language learning. Indeed, in multilingual contexts, people learn the various different languages involved by using them in different sociolinguistic settings. The latter are the range of physical and symbolic spaces that may define specific practices. And it is precisely this situated use of languages which awakes in the individual the capacity to categorise each setting to then be able to perform therein in an effective way –sociolinguistically speaking– in one or more languages. Taking the view that verbal interaction between speakers is a context both for use and learning, it would seem relevant to ask how the new users of the languages of the school understand the activities in which they participate. And how they categorise their interlocutors and position themselves, highlighting specific identities by means of the linguistic resources at their disposal (Zimmerman, 1998).

We consider verbal interaction as a context of use and as a place where repertoires become visible and are restructured. (Mondada, 1999), bringing about modification in the perception of the relationship between social norms and language use. In this way, the social norms regulating for example the use of one language or another, or which explain a language switch, cannot be accessed by imagining the processes of reproduction or invoking the established rules. Rather, these practices have to be seen as the responsibility of the language users themselves, who carry them out to achieve practical ends. The way in which speakers orientate themselves conversationally vis-à-vis their own or collective objectives in a particular verbal activity thus reveals the manner in which they articulate linguistic usage,

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identity and local activities. They effectively define and describe (drawing on linguistic resources) the setting in which they find themselves. The detection of recurrent patterns in particular procedures illustrates the relationship between local and broader functions; such patterns provide the analyst with an indication of social fact in the widest sense (Auer, 1984b; Schegloff, 1987) such as the relationship between languages and a specific community.

For a study of this type there is a need for an interaction-orientated brand of sociolinguistics that has as its object of study specific patterns of language use, demanding great care in the construction and description of the area of research, and the processing and meticulous analysis of data. These principals in turn imply that theoretical studies with this orientation should take due care in designing the approach to sociolinguistic phenomena as an integral part of the data

The present article is divided into four sections. In the first, we consider the framework of the research, the population and the data under consideration. Next, we come to the ambits of language learning –the sociolinguistic setting– of these young people and looking at the categorisation that they make of the different languages basing ourselves on the analysis of data derived from the interviews. In the third section, we consider some ways of managing the multilingual resources at the disposal of boys and girls when carrying out tasks in language-learning classrooms (learning Catalan, Spanish and English). Lastly, there are some final comments and conclusions.

2. The study of competences situated within the languages of the schools

The present work is part of research that includes the study of sociolinguistic patterns of use in thirty school students, aged from 10 to 15 years, attending various educational centres in Barcelona, Lleida, Molins de Rei and Salt (all in Catalonia). These are schools and *instituts* (upper schools and sixth form colleges) with a substantial number of pupils on role who were born outside the European Union. The research has as its objective the description of the variables that affect the learning of language and communicative skills among immigrant pupils, to be able to go on to formulate, at a subsequent stage, proposals for action in the school setting.

Our way of analysing linguistic and communicative competence was by observing these from three angles. Firstly, we consider the performance of the language learners in terms of the demands of the activity itself and what the speaker can or cannot do. In second place, we take stock of the way each individual understands the activity which they are carrying out, co-ordinating it with their interlocutor. Lastly, the verbal performance of the young immigrants is contrasted with that of their Catalonia-born classmates carrying out the same activity.

It is proposed to adopt a theoretical and methodological approach that examines learning in socially situated activities, in which the individuals use language for practical ends (Mondada and Pekarek, 2000; Unamuno and Nussbaum, 2005). This approach is far-removed from those with an abstract perspective that take the ideal speaker, the norms and monolingual repertoires as the point of reference (Nussbaum i Unamuno, 2000).

The activities studied included, on the one hand, interviews with school students carried out by the research team and, on the other, recordings of group activities in the classroom, carried out in similar fashion by foreign-born (“immigrant”) boys and girls and by locally-born boys and girls. The interviews were conducted by adults (based on a script), in a school setting and, almost always, in Catalan.

These oral data were complemented by observational data –at times with participation. The transcripts were produced by the interviewer-observer in question and were checked by other members of the team. The symbols used in the transcript² reflects both linguistic and paralinguistic elements.

3. Sociolinguistic setting: the description of settings and methodology

Here we set out to answer a complex question: *how do the young adults in question represent the sociolinguistic setting and how do they depict this interaction with an adult?*

We see the interview not just as a tool for obtaining factual information but as a social activity that takes place in the conversational history of the subjects and which, therefore, places the event in relationship with others with a similar format in which the subjects have participated. These include tutorials and the welcoming or induction interviews which adults give the young newcomers (Nussbaum, 2003). The format becomes an index of contextualisation (Gumperz, 1982) which allows those interviewed to place the interview within the institutional framework and to categorise those conducting it as educationalists or people linked to the school. Accordingly, in the majority of cases complimentary identities are attributed: on the one hand there is the interviewer, seen as an adult linked with the institution, and on the other, there is the student with varying degrees of identification with the school. Description of the relationship between settings and language use has to be understood as the result of *ad hoc* construction of identities. Let us consider a representative case. Here is a fragment of an interview between Cecília, the interviewer, and Jony, a boy of Filipino origin.

Fragment 1

109. CEC: and in the street/ with people like that _ how_ if you go to a shop or-|
110. JON: Spanish\|
111. CEC: Spanish\|
112. JON: yes \|
113. CEC: and-| and you don't speak Catalan with anybody./|
114. JON: no·· \| [laughs] just here at the school\|
115. CEC: at school/|
116. JON: = yes=
117. CEC: = and= who with?|
118. JON: with my friends and with the teachers\|
119. CEC: with your friends you speak Catalan/|
120. JON: yes \| sometimes Hafi speaks to me in Catalan as well\|
121. CEC: with Hafil/| ah-| that's good\| and so| in the playground-| when you're playing, and in the dining hall and so on\|
122. JON: in the dining hall-| Catalan \| sometimes\| though in Spanish in the playground \|
123. CEC: mm\| and in_ in the dining hall who do you speak Catalan to?|
124. JON: with the monitors\|

In this fragment, Jony explains that Catalan is the language which is only spoken at school, with friends, with the teachers, and with the dinner monitors. The sequence of turns 113-114

² Appendix: Symbols used in the transcripts

- Capital letters: names of the interviewees; CEC and TER: interviewers
- Tonal contours: descending: \ ascending: / question with a pronoun? maintained level -
- Pauses: short | medium || long <number of seconds >
- Syllable prolongation, depending on duration · · ·
- Overlap
=text speaker A=
=text speaker B=
- Interruptions: text_
- Intensity:
• piano {(P)text} pianissimo {(PP)text}
• forte {(F)text} fortissimo {(FF)text}
- High tone {(A) text} low {(B) text}
- Accelerated tempo {(AC) text} deceleration {(DC) text}
- Laughing delivery {(@) text}
- [+text+] non alphabetical transcription
- Comments [text]
- Incomprehensible or indistinct fragments (seconds duration): XXX | XXX XXX | XXX XXX XXX
- Doubtful fragments {(?) text}

allows us to see that language choice is not just Jony's responsibility. In the preceding turns he explains that Spanish is the usual language in his neighbourhood. But Cecilia equates Catalan with "not spoken with anybody", something which Jony at first confirms and then goes on to laugh. This laugh implies that Jony has categorised what he has said to a certain extent as a transgression which he attempts to mitigate by introducing settings and speakers for Catalan. In response to Cecilia's comment (115) Jony he says he uses Catalan with the teachers and with his friends, and cites the case of Hafi, a Pakistani boy. The syntactic structure of this utterance (120) is significant. Cecilia has asked Jony for confirmation of part of his preceding utterance which contradicts his observations, since he has indicated that the children speak Spanish amongst themselves. Her utterance (turn 119) seems to challenge what Jony has said. Accordingly, he opts for limiting the scope of his previous affirmation, by inserting "sometimes" (as opposed to "always"), with one of his classmates -Hafi- (as opposed to friends in general), and "as well" (as opposed to "exclusively"). The same type of sequence is repeated in lines 122 and 124.

Beyond the correlation with empirical reality, the interaction shows that the description is the result of the articulation of interactive movements which show mutual orientations and adjustments between the interviewer and the interviewee. It could be said that the description of language use presented here suggests diglossic distribution (distributing language use between more or less institutional and asymmetric domains). Now, the analysis of the way in which the speakers here continue to deal with questions and answers over the course of the interview suggests that it is the discursive contributions of the researchers that delimit settings as monolingual and having complementary language use. Even so, most interviewees answer these suppositions in the way that can be observed in the next fragment:

Fragment 2

53. CEC: you give a lot of work, I'm sure\| and what language do you speak with your brothers and sisters?|

54. HAF: ah-| sometimes in Spanish but_ and _ and_ more times I speak in Urdu and Panjabi\|

55. CEC: Panjabi\| because_ you are from the Panjabi(-speaking) area./|

56. HAF: yes\|

57. CEC: with your parents-| what language do you speak?|

58. HAF: to_ the same\| ah-| Urdu and Panjabi\|

Here Cecilia wants to know *the language* which Hafi uses with his brothers and sisters and his parents. After the first question, Hafi stops and begins an utterance that opens with "a vegades... més vegades" (sometimes... more times) and this serves to introduce Spanish as the focus in his organisation of the phrase. He immediately mitigates the statement, with an adversative particle which is a corrective addition, bringing in the two other languages which he also uses, and indeed uses more often. Formulations of this sort highlight or point up the speaker's orientation to his interlocutors. That is, it recognises the relationship between the two turns, putting in first place that which he considers relevant to the connection between the two turns. This orientation, a basic procedure in cooperative communication, shows that Hafi understands the interviewer's intention, but also his ability to resist, without actually ceasing to be cooperative. Hafi thus introduces multilingual spaces and practices beyond the insistence of his interlocutor (Cecilia) (turn 57) in situating everything in terms of monolingual practices.

As the study shows, a large part of the corpus that we have collected, in the inner and outer settings of the school world, shows multilingual language use, in which the Spanish language is categorised as the local language, which at times alternates with other family languages in settings not institutionally regulated (conversations in the family setting, with classmates in the class room, in the playground, with neighbours in the neighbourhood, etc.). Catalan on the other hand, is attributed to settings where practice is regulated by the educational institution. In the orientations speakers evince towards institutionally regulated activities, Catalan emerges as an important presence in the range of language use. However, it is also true that the statement about the use of Spanish among peers is not categorised or perceived as a transgression, but rather as a correlate of the usage observed in non school settings where boys and girls learn languages. According to their descriptions, there Catalan has a minority presence, restricted to the internal practices of a group (among people known as "Catalans") and functionally limited.

At the same time, the description of the sociolinguistic settings has to be linked with the identities that make the speakers relevant during the interview. Thus, certain interviewers seek to make less institutional identities more relevant and therefore initiate sequences involving language negotiation. As the following fragment shows, these movements are not always acceptable to the interviewees, who make it clear they want to play the role of pupil, and show their adhesion to institutional practice.

Fragment 3

8. PAC: I'll ask you some questions-| and if you want to ask me questions too, you can \all right?| if there is anything that_ that you're interested in <2.0> em-| let's see-| we'll start| we'll talk_ we'll do it in Catalan in Spanish/| how do you want to do it\ <2.0> just as you prefer\| I don't care\|
9. SAN: {@ Catalan\}|
10. PAC: Catalan/| yes/| if you want it in Spanish/ as you like\| not in Fre.._ not in French\|
11. SAN: {@oui\}|
12. PAC: Français-| =je _je ne parle pas français\=|
13. SAN: =[laughs]=
14. PAC: I can't do it in French\| [laughs] Catalan or Spanish, which one will it be?=
15. SAN: ={(P)Catalan\}= Catalan\|
16. PAC: in Catalan\ very good\|| so| eh-|you can do it better in Catalan than in Spanish?<3>
17. SAN: yes\|understanding it but not speaking it\| [laughs]<0>
18. PAC: not speaking it\|
19. SAN: [laughs]
20. PAC: there is someone__
21. SAN: writing it too_ I can write it\|
22. PAC: mm\|
23. SAN: in Catalan\|
24. PAC: why? why do you think?|
25. SAN: the thing is I like it a lot\|
26. PAC: you like Catalan\|
27. SAN: yes\|more than Spanish|
28. PAC: mm\|

Paco is interviewing Sandrine, a girl who was born in Cameroon. At the beginning of the interview, Paco begins a sequence in Catalan to negotiate language use, bringing up the possibility of using Spanish. Turn 19 is significant. Here Sandrine laughs at the paradox of wanting to do the interview in Catalan, and being able to speak Spanish better. This paradox is resolved by relating Catalan with writing, an activity linked to the school. The sequence ends with a clear position taken by the girl with respect to the two languages, with a clear expression of linguistic preference. The identity of the student, linked with the use of Catalan and the use of discursive practices that this usage endows with an institutional tone, all become relevant in a privileged way in the linking of Catalan with reading and writing practices. There is the profession of adherence –or *affiliation*, in Colon's terms, 1993– to the rules of the institution, and scholastic evaluation. This is clear in the next fragment.

Fragment 4

214. CEC: {(& for example} {@ I really used to like sleeping at my friends' houses-| I don't know_}{(P) really\}| and what I was going to ask-| that_ you liked reading/|
215. SAL: reading/| I like that very much\|
216. CEC: and what do you read?
217. SAL: {(P) in Catalan\}| a book that_ that I _ I chose from the classroom to read and learn\||
218. CEC: because you think it's important to know Catalan\|
219. SAL: yes\|
220. CEC: to speak to?|
221. SAL: to speak to the teacher so that way you'll see that I'm getting better and that_ that {(& she_} || [laughs]
222. CEC: {@ why are you laughing?} || why are you laughing?| [laughs] you can_ speak Spanish if eh/ you want\ I don't mind \|| just say_ what_ what you prefer / what you want\}| what was I going to say to you-| eh-| what do you want to do when you grow up?|
223. SAL: well-| I want to be-| eh_ a playground lady looking after little children\|
224. CEC: {(A) Oh really/}|
225. SAL: because I like it a lot \|

Salma, the daughter of a Moroccan family, answers the question on what she has been reading by saying "in Catalan" –that is, the language in which it is done. Her contribution in turn 221 is even more significant: after explaining that Catalan is important because you speak it to the *teacher* and to recognise her function in institutional evaluation, she laughs. The researcher / interviewer takes this laugh as irony, and acts –doing prospective repair? – an instance of language negotiation of the language in which the interview is being carried out. After this there is a silence, which Cecilia interprets as a rejection of the language – causing her to propose changing language. Salma immediately goes on to ratify her adhesion to the norm of the institution, expressing the desire to form part of it in the future (turn 224).

We will close this part by returning to the original question. According to interactional analysis which we have done on the interviews, these young immigrants represent the sociolinguistic setting where they learn languages as a cluster of settings for language use which are more or less regulated. The use of Catalan gives the interaction an institutional cast in the way that no other language can do. In the multilingual situation, Spanish enters into relationship with other familiar languages in the configuration of the practices (patterns of language use) not regulated by the institution. At the same time, Spanish is differentiated from the other languages owing to its belonging to the territory and its majority status in the settings relevant to these young people (house, neighbourhood, playground, etc.), and is thus describable as a bridge language. The language use ascribed to the spaces in the mid zone, such as the playground, are a clear metaphor of this.

This description is constructed interactively with an adult, someone who might be a member of the institution, and active in this description, for example, through the delimitation of settings that distribute monolingual complementarity. It is in the logic of this functional division of linguistic practices (language use) that we have to understand the movements of those interviewed, their friendly but firm resistance to the questions that assume monolingual usage and their insistence that they speak from an identity linked with the institution. It would seem pertinent to recognise Spanish as the habitual language, Catalan as the language of schooling, but also the minority status of other possible languages.

4. The management of linguistic resources in the accomplishment of language activities

Complementing the interviews, as interactive activities with an adult, we will now look at activities carried out in pairs (pairwork) where we can see linguistic usage among equals in contexts that are more or less institutionally regulated. The parallel activities of this sort may be described as events that are doubly regulated, in fact. On the one hand they are classroom activities regulated by a single adult person, thus submitted to a certain didactic contract which includes clauses that are more or less explicit on the language or languages that have to be used. On the other hand they are, *a priori*, symmetrical because both participants share the place of learning, the classmates, the school etc. (Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2004).

In this section we will set out to answer a second question: *in what way do these young people categorise and manage their linguistic resources to complete the language tasks and their aims?*

Interactions when doing the Spanish language tasks are the most homogenous, in that frequent or recurrent switches are not observed. At the same time, Catalan does not disappear completely from the repertoire which is activated in these activities. Perhaps the most recurrent case of the use of other languages is where they are used metaphorically (Gumperz, 1982) and they introduce, in this wise, different voices. We shall now take a particular instance:

Fragment 5

97. CEC: [to all the group] pair off the cards\| yes\| come on\| we have five minutes for this\| it's three twenty-five\
98. JON: from right now\
99. CEC> [to all the group] from now- | right now\
100. JON: molt bé (very good)\| {(PP)look\ XXX this and this\}
101. SAL: {(PP) well let me see\}| where is it?| I can't see that here\|

Notice, sequentially, that Jony's utterance in Catalan, in turn 100, does not seem to be triggered by a Catalan language marker –rather it appears to be an imitation of the teacher-researcher, a game which he played in the previous sequence, getting in before her in saying the kind of thing she says in her instructions. This, then, is an interesting language switch because it invests his turn with a polyphonic tone and assists Jony in organising the discourse, marking the boundary between two parts of the task.

In contrast, in the tasks carried out in Catalan, recourse to Spanish is frequent. Within pair work, switching from Catalan to Spanish marks the boundary between different stages or parts of the activity. The use of Spanish signals sequences in which they handle or regulate the task. Observe the following fragment:

Fragment 6

97. RAQ: I ne_ need an overcoat sca_ an overcoat a scarf a_ a_ <0>
98. KAM: what colours does he like?|
99. RAQ: some gloves the red, the blue _\|
100. KAM: for example this \ <6>
101. RAQ: ho_ how much are the gloves and the scarf and the _ ?<2> [laughs]
102. KAM: *where are we?*|
103. RAQ: {(P) search me\}| *I think_ <2> how much are_ <4> the anorak the gloves and the scarf?*| everything\|

In this instance, Raquel and Kamal are preparing role play in Catalan based upon a written script. At the same time, in turn 101, Raquel stops, there is a long pause, and she laughs. Kamal starts a new sequence (turns 101-103) in which both carry out another activity: reaching agreement on the script, to be able to continue the task. Raquel apparently looks for the information, pointing to the place in the script, and marking the boundary of this sequence (turn 103) returning to Catalan.

Activities in English are the most heterogeneous in terms of multilingualism, since here we find sequences, speech turns and even utterances in three languages. The explanation for this lies, on the one hand, in the pupils' low level of competence in English, and on the other hand, the fact that these tasks are defined as more or less neutral vis-à-vis Spanish or Catalan. I shall look at this aspect briefly.

From the interaction point of view, in carrying out a practical activity, language switching is an effective resource when organising the discourse and refers to local and wider contexts, which can be described or labelled by the analyst using ethnographic data (Auer, 1998b). In the case of English lesson activities, recourse to other languages can be explained by considering that conversation is most clearly defined towards the exolingual pole (Porquier, 1979; Lüdi & Py, 1986); that is, towards a style of conversation where there are statements from the participants commenting on a lack of resources to be able to complete the task in hand. In this context, recourse to other languages suppletes the lack of competence in English and seems a more economic and habitual sort of facilitating strategy. Consider, for example, the following fragment.

Fragment 7

41. SAN: door and-|
42. LAU: window\|
43. SAN: and window porque_
44. LAU: {(DC) because-}|
45. SAN: porque_ bueno\| por_ because be_ because they are used for_ tra_
46. MON: {(A) oh yeah\} <0>
47. LAU: why do they have to·?|
48. SAN: window ("finestra", switch to Catalan)\|
49. MON: ah\|
50. LAU: mm-| because-<3> a_
51. MON: a a\|
52. TER: a window- <6>
53. MON: *what?*| ah/<6>
54. SAN: *this*-| {(P) because_ you put it like this\| |
55. MON: *this*/|
56. SAN: {(P) xxx xxx \| when you do something\| something_ something like that\}|
57. MON: {(A) oh yes\}| banana and

58. LAU: a.nd| and ioghurt/| and-
59. MON: banan
60. TER: apron apron\|
61. MON:banana and apron because if you do a banana so as not to get yourself dirty\|
62. SAN: door and-|
63. LAU: window\|
64. SAN: and window porque
65. LAU: {(DC) because-}|
66. SAN: because wel\| be because be because they are used as tra
67. MON: {(A) oh yeah\} <0>
68. LAU: because they are what-?|
69. SAN: window\|
70. MON: ah\|
71. LAU: mm-| because-<3> a_
72. MON: a a\|
73. TER: a window- <6>
74. MON: what?| ah/<6>
75. SAN: this-| {(P) because you put it like that \| |
76. MON: this/|
77. SAN: {(P) xxx xxx \| quan fas una cosa\| una cosa una cosa així\}|
78. MON: {(A) oh yes\}| banana and
79. LAU: a.nd| and ioghurt/| and-
80. MON: banan
81. TER: apron apron\|
82. MON:banana and apron because if you do a banana so as not to get yourself dirty\|

Sandrine and Montse are carrying out an activity where they pair objects represented by drawings on cards. Laura, one of the researchers, offers the participants (turn 44) the English connector "because" to assist in the discussions over the pairing of the cards, they way they have paired them off. For example in turn 45: Sandrine begins her contribution in Spanish, and then carries out self-repair. Immediately afterwards she uses the connector which Laura has supplied her, but stops again and continues in Spanish until the last word "finestra" (Catalan for "window"). There is no indication that Sandrine recognises there has been a switch. It seems to be the placing of the word 'finestra' in a paradigmatic relationship with "window", a word which Teresa –the other researcher– introduces in turn 52. The difficulty that is involved for the girls in pairing off the cards is resolved by recourse to Spanish and Catalan, codes which seemingly form a complementary repertoire to English.

The use of the other languages comes into this activity not just as a lexical base for certain words or as a structural model for certain phrases, but also as a tool for asking for assistance or clarification (turn 53), guaranteeing comprehension (turn 56), etc. It is interesting to note that in terms of recurrence, Catalan is the language most fallen back on to handle words or invent new ones (creolisation), while Spanish seems to be the language used to manage the task, most often marking the internal and external boundaries of the tasks. As we see in the following fragment:

Fragment 8

1. RAU: money\|
2. HAF: *what about money?* <0>
3. CEC: in English\| only in English\|
4. HAF: yes\|
5. RAU: XXX XXX\|
6. HAF: with money\|
7. RAU: the picture XXX\|
8. HAF: XXX apple\|
9. RAU: apple [+aipel+]/|
10. HAF: apple [+eipl+]/\|
11. RAU: ah\| hello\| XXX\ yes\| XXX\|
12. JON: hello\| this is a Hafi\|
13. RAU: banana\|
14. JON: this is Hafi\| Hafi/ this is Hafi\|
15. RAU: hello hello my name is Raül i sóc el millor del món\|
16. JON: no\| ets el David Bisbal\|
17. RAU: sí\| jo sóc el David Bisbal XXX una merda XXX\|
18. HAF: *tienes que preguntar*\| cuánto valen er- las las manzanas?| XXX XXX\|
19. CEC: *bueno*\ una diferència\ heu de trobar set\|
20. HAF: *hala*\|
21. RAU: XXX XXX\ er ioghurt\| ioghurt/| is-| vale\| llavors-| tu_

22. HAF: las diferencias/|
23. RAU: XXX\|
24. HAF: er-| *claro*\|

In this fragment, the sequence between 12-17 is interesting. Jony bursts in (turn 12) changing the constellation of the participant (Auer, 1984). This is now a group of three, playing with the cassette recorder and simulating a radio interview. The use of Catalan indexes this change of activity, at the same time as it suspends the pupil-pupil identities in order to establish others (journalist, for e.g..). In the next turn, Hafi suggests returning to the designated school activity and does this in Spanish, the language in which activities are usually managed. Next (turn 21), Raül proposes a new object (yoghurt) and cedes his turn to Hafi. In this case, management of the activity is done in Catalan.

Our data show that the use of Catalan and Spanish during the English language activities are open and available for different ends. At the same time, in terms of recurrence, it seems that Spanish occurs most –as in the Catalan language activities– in the sequences that are categorised as external to school activity. Catalan, on the other hand, shares with English the status of school language, and, from this vantage point, often shares with English the sequences tagged as school tasks, and which (as in the above fragment) establishes identities other than the habitual ones of friends, classmates, etc.

5. In closing

The ability to categorise spaces and linguistic resources that are available or in the process of being acquired, makes part of the communicative competence developed by the speakers. This capacity permits them to appropriate the languages for themselves socially, in a situated way. This is a practical competence, in the sense that it offers users the opportunity of predicting and articulating local contexts with language use.

Indeed, the use of Catalan (the language of the school) in the interviews points to the fact that language use has to be seen as a set of resources drawn on for specific purposes. Here, use of Catalan allows the interviewees to make relevant: (1) the orientation to an institutional and monolingual activity and use with the speaker, and (2) an institutional (and not for example, "immigrant") activity. The exploitation of this resource makes it possible, in short, to carry out efficiently the task in hand.

Observation of the interviewees orientation to the interview situation also makes it possible to observe the sociolinguistic setting on behalf of the speakers. In this situation, the family or original languages are relegated to minority usages, Spanish is the language of practices not regulated by the institution and acts as a bridge between school and non-school settings. Catalan is the language which accords institutional associations to language and social usages.

The description of language practices, and more specifically of language switching enables us to define the environment of these school activities. A difference that seems fundamental for the participants is that existing between the teaching-learning tasks and the sequences characterised by them as lying outside this. From the participants' point of view, the sequences pertaining to the task itself have a *strong linguistic requirement*, while the others can be realised in any language. In the case of the English learning activities, this requirement comes into conflict with the availability of speaker resources. The gap is frequently bridged by the use of Catalan, the language categorised by the speakers as institutional. In terms of frequency of language switching there is a dominant direction here: speakers switch from Catalan to Spanish to define sequences external to the school task; English alternates with Catalan in task-internal sequences and gives way to Spanish for the management of the activity. The employment of language switching to mark internal boundaries within the activities is not a procedure foreign to the school community, rather it is habitual also with teachers in the classroom (Unamuno, 2000).

Both the interview and the language activities illustrate the way in which users learn and manage a part of their linguistic resources. They learn to categorise the setting and to use the languages to differentiate activities, to solve problems and to manage simultaneously complex identities that become fundamental in the definition of the work with an adult or with peers. The languages enter into differentiating relationships (e.g. in changes in activity) or in convergence (in the solving of language problems), at the same time that they are manipulated to achieve different ends in an effective way. This, clearly, contrasts with the normative and monolingual view of the languages and their teaching, frequently visible in official dispositions and often found, too, among researchers. As researchers carrying out the research, we articulate our own vision of the languages and their social complementary distribution with those that we discover through ongoing analysis of the data.

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